



# TSL GOES LOCAL

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TSL Goes Local in Partnership with Leeds  
Community Anchor Network: Cost of Living  
Crisis

# TSL GOES LOCAL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LEEDS COMMUNITY ANCHOR NETWORK: COST OF LIVING CRISIS

## Context

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the third sector played a critical role in mobilising our city’s resources and working collaboratively across boundaries to support communities. The pandemic highlighted the unique insight the sector has into the strengths and needs of different communities, and how we bring the agility and flexibility that is needed to a system response.

At Third Sector Leeds (TSL) we believe that the third sector has a crucial role to play in reaching and supporting people and communities that may ‘slip through the cracks’ between statutory services. Communities often already have solutions and are working together in innovative ways to address challenging situations. Although there is no easy fix for the cost of living crisis, TSL wanted to hear from communities in different areas in Leeds about the impacts they are experiencing, and how we can learn from communities who are working together to support one another.

In this round of ‘TSL Goes Local’ events, TSL worked in partnership with Leeds Community Anchor Network (LCAN) to gather intelligence from a wide range of third sector organisations from different localities across Leeds.

We held three events, in West Leeds, South Leeds, and Outer North Leeds, with 51 people attending from across 33 third sector organisations. The Community Anchors and other supporting organisations were:



## Aim

To share local intelligence about the effects of the cost of living crisis on communities, coping strategies people are using, and sharing work that LCAN members and other local organisations are doing to support local people.

## Presentations

### Chris Hollins, Independent Chair of TSL

Chris set out TSL's position on the impact that the Cost of Living crisis is having on both communities and on the third sector. Rising costs and the need to increase salaries alongside demand that is increasing and becoming more complex is having a significant impact on third sector organisations and their staff and volunteers.

TSL has been working with statutory partners to agree some shared principles for working through this crisis, including doubling down on partnership working to ensure that the third sector can continue to support communities.

### Leeds Community Anchors

At each event, some of the local community anchor organisations talked about work they were doing to people around the cost of living. Examples of this work included:

- Distributing the Household Support Fund in different ways – for some communities this meant giving people supermarket vouchers, for others this meant topping up pre-payment energy meters
- Opening their building as a Warm Space, inviting people to spend time in a safe, supportive and warm environment, often with free or 'pay as you feel' food available
- Different models of emergency food support, from delivering food parcels, to food pantries and social supermarkets

### Ashley Lucas, Leeds City Council – UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Ashley presented on the national funding coming into Leeds, and through the local authority and the plan to spend this through priorities on cost of living, community infrastructure, culture and engagement, and supporting businesses, innovation and productivity.

## Group discussions and key findings

Following the presentations, attendees were asked to consider how the cost of living crisis was impacting people living in their local area, and to share ideas about what was working well in terms of supporting people with this. From the discussion a number of key findings emerged:

### Food

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### What do we need more of?

- Cultural food, or appropriate sustainable swaps
- Recipe cards and bags
- Communal cooking classes
- Support to grow your own food
- Hot food provision to address immediate need

### Fuel/Homes

- The Household Support Fund was useful as it allowed organisations to support people on pre-payment meters, who are most impacted

- People have lots of questions about energy support schemes and social tariffs as the information is often only online and not always clear
- People's homes are falling into disrepair as small problems escalate when there isn't the money to address them, which is leading to accidents and longer-term health impacts
- Organisations are seeing more people who have received Section 21 notices (for non-payment of rent) at risk of losing their housing

### What do we need more of?

- Long term solutions – including a focus on renewable energy and retro-fitting
- Sharing of practical advice and support around DIY and saving energy
- Flexible funding to allow money to go directly to people – vouchers can be problematic
- More clear information for practitioners on social tariffs for energy, phones and broadband

### Increase in crime

- As people are struggling to pay their bills, organisations are seeing more people who have engaged in sex work or criminal activity to raise money
- Some organisations are seeing more people who have experienced domestic abuse
- Some organisations are seeing more people who are struggling with alcohol or substance dependency

### Increased and more complex demand

- The services that organisations would ordinarily refer to, e.g. Green Doctor, Money Buddies, foodbanks, are already at capacity
- People who are looking for support have usually already exhausted other routes, and are therefore requiring more in-depth support
- Services have had to expand their reach and audience to help people who need it, rather than just focusing on over 60s, for example

- More people are looking for support applying for benefits as many are accessing this support for the first time
- Several organisations are opening their support up to their own staff and volunteers, who are struggling themselves

## What do we need more of?

- A different approach for funding/supporting those who have fallen into hardship for the first time – e.g. working families, ‘asset rich’
- Capacity to engage with wider partners (e.g. schools to understand how the whole system is supporting families)
- Continue to develop relationships between organisations that support similar groups, for example organisations in the same area that support older people vs families
- More funding for community centres/hubs where people can access a wider range of support from different specialists
- Some participants felt that the sector needs to collectively campaign and lobby for change – particularly seeking to influence national government.

## Decline in Social Activities

- Many organisations are seeing people ‘do less’ and cut back on socialising as it is seen as an additional, non-essential spend
- Those who are already more isolated (e.g. those with long term conditions, unpaid carers, and older people) are becoming more so, which is impacting on mental health
- Many organisations are focusing on extending social activities and community celebrations and ensuring they remain free for people to access

## Transport issues

- Many organisations reported that some communities are not adequately served by public transport, particularly those living in more rural areas and those on minimum wage
- Reduced public transport has impacted on people's ability to get to work, to health appointments, and to buy more affordable food

## Impact on children and young people

Many organisations were concerned about the impact they were seeing on children and young people, including:

- Mental health impact, including the shame that children and young people experience in school for example, where some are going hungry
- Wider health impact, for example some organisations are seeing less children attending immunisations due to travel costs
- Socialising including sports or activity clubs are an additional cost that some families are having to go without, leading to further isolation
- Less options for young people when they leave school, as less can afford to go into higher education and go onto buy a house, for example.

## What do we need more of?

- Longer-term funding for Healthy Holidays and excursions/trips for children, young people and families who would not otherwise be able to access such activities and experiences
- More domestic violence support specifically for children around the effects of a break down in parental relationships

## Differences between areas

### Outer North Leeds

- Some outer areas don't connect with the council, so there is a resistance to take up the offer of council support, so this support falls to the local third sector organisation
- The breadth of services in North Leeds is less and public transport is seen as less frequent/reliable, so it falls to existing organisations without specialist knowledge to help where they can
- North Leeds is seen as a more affluent area, some people are 'asset-rich but pocket-poor,' leading to a stigma of not 'looking' like they need help

### South Leeds

- Some services are seen as being 'for' a particular community and therefore don't reach those who need support most, despite efforts to do so
- The impact of not heating homes can be greater in intergenerational households, where the young and the elderly need warmer temperatures

## Recommendations

- Third sector infrastructure to continue supporting third sector organisations to access funding to support the cost of living response in communities
- Third sector infrastructure to feed into relevant strategic groups the need for clear information around social tariffs and making homes energy efficient
- Third sector infrastructure to feed into Leeds Food Strategy Consultation around people's changing needs and what is working so far, for example food growing projects
- Third sector infrastructure to lobby and campaign for social change at a national level



- Where funding is made available to support communities, this should be allocated in partnership with the third sector to ensure that it:
  - a. Supports the resilience of the sector – enabling them to continue supporting those who need it most
  - b. Maintains a focus on groups with specific needs/barriers to address, e.g. children and young people, culturally diverse communities, unpaid carers, sex workers
  - c. Can be used as flexibly as possible to address barriers and meet increasingly complex needs
  - d. Reaches across the city, including rural areas