

# THIRD SECTOR LEEDS: Four Key Messages

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## Third Sector Leeds' Four Key Messages

1. Tackling poverty: Household Support Fund must continue for at least a further year, and further investment in communities is urgently needed in the longer term to address the root causes of poverty
2. Improving housing: Community-led housing and planning is central to moving out of the housing crisis and preventing homelessness
3. Prioritising local: Limit the profit that private businesses can make from public money
4. Prioritising third sector: A stronger third sector prevents people from living in poor health as they age



**Tackling poverty: Household Support Fund must continue for at least a further year, and further investment in communities is needed in the longer term to tackle destitution**

### TSL's recommendations

- Extend Household Support Fund for at least a further year
- Address barriers to people accessing welfare support, as outlined in [Deep Poverty: Everyday Financial Crisis in Leeds \(2022\)](#). Suggested measures include:
- Scrap No Recourse to Public Funds, delays in issuing Biometric Residence Permits, the two-child limit and benefit cap
- Abolish the five-week wait for Universal Credit which saddles people in need of an advance payment with benefit debt from the outset of their claim
- In real time, uprate benefits in line with inflation to address the growing gap between social security entitlements and the rising cost of living
- Longer term investment in community infrastructure, to support those most impacted by the cost of living and tackle the root causes of poverty

Throughout the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, the third sector in Leeds has worked closely with Leeds City Council and wider partners to support communities living in Leeds through HSF. Over the course of the year April 2023 to March 2024:

- Over £3.4m of HSF will have been distributed and spent on direct support to individuals and families
- 133 third sector organisations received funding to provide direct support
- In Q1 and 2, 53,144 households in Leeds received direct support through HSF – 52% of households with children present, 48% comprising pensioners, those with a disability or otherwise in need of support

#### Examples of support HSF has enabled:

- Leeds advice organisations - Providing some basic support to people presenting with no established source of income, due to delays in the processing of benefit claims and in resolving disputes.
- Leeds Baby Bank - Providing outreach, which is still limited – 35 families regularly attend an outreach station where Leeds Baby Bank only have the resources to support 25 families.
- Leeds Women's Aid - Supporting women and their children fleeing domestic abuse for food vouchers and payment of ineligible service charges which cover utility costs.
- Carers Leeds – Supporting unpaid carers who are more frequently unable to meet basic living costs. For example, they report a carer who had been forced to give up full time work to care for their family member, who had used their award to stock up a freezer with quality food items with a view to maintaining the household's food security over the winter period. This issue was causing huge stress and impacting the wellbeing of the whole household.

There is no current indication from central government that funding beyond the current round of HSF4 will be made available extending support beyond March 2024, with no means within the stretched council budget to replicate a budget of £14.2m over the course of a year. Consequently, it is anticipated that without an extension to HSF:

- More people will be unable to heat their homes over winter;
- More people in crisis will be at risk of not being able to feed themselves or buy essentials;
- Increased pressure on third sector organisations which will receive less funding;
- Less funding for the Local Welfare Support Scheme which seriously limits provision.

## 2

### Improving housing: Community-led housing and planning is central to moving out of the housing crisis and preventing homelessness

#### TSL recommendations:

- Significantly increase resources to disadvantaged and minoritised communities to enable them to engage in neighbourhood planning processes and help put them in control of development in their areas
- Commit funding to build 90,000 social homes per year for the next 10 years and immediately unfreeze Local Housing Allowance, restoring it to a level that will cover the lowest 30th percentile of market rents
- A clear, consistent and long-term approach to reviving derelict land and buildings, which makes these spaces more accessible to people that live locally
- Funding for councils to build and renovate good quality social housing

*“Ensuring people on low incomes have access to truly affordable housing is the single biggest step we can take to prevent homelessness, both now and in the future.” ‘A Home for Everyone’ Manifesto*

Third Sector Leeds is in agreement that the housing market in Leeds has become increasingly difficult to navigate in the last 2-4 years, due to the lack of affordable mortgaged homes, rented accommodation (in general, but specifically good quality, ground floor, affordable rented housing with outdoor space, or for single people and those eligible for local housing allowance), and almost no council properties. Where houses are council-owned, they tend to be high rise flats or maisonettes, which are not suitable for everyone. The waiting list for council-owned properties is often 3-4 years, which has significant impacts on people's lives whilst waiting for suitable accommodation.

#### Examples of this include:

- Better Leeds Communities report that rent levels are particularly prohibitive for people trying to access specialist housing, as even poor quality housing (e.g. small back to back terrace houses with damp and no outdoor space) have rents of £900+ pcm, which is often more than 75% of people's monthly income.

TSL believes that limited housing in Leeds is a significant issue and want to see a whole system, long-term creative approach, moving towards community-led planning. This could include consideration of the following ideas:

- Limits placed on the private rented sector by local authorities, taking account of local incomes.
- Fund councils to build and renovate good quality social housing for their waiting lists, prioritising anyone vulnerable and in need.
- Ability to use brownfield sites and empty buildings.
- Housing directives that are longer-term (30+ years).
- Unlocking free small plots of unused land for third sector providers to build on.
- Issue compulsory purchase orders where properties are in poor repair (particularly in licensing areas) or empty so these can be used.

- Funding to explore creative modular housing solutions for homeless people, for example ideas to use “meanwhile” sites to put “pods” on.
- Prioritise affirmative housing for marginalised communities close to existing networks and support.

# 3

## Prioritising local: Limit the profit that private businesses can make from public money

### TSL recommendations:

- Local authorities supported to invest in shaping the market to meet a range of needs, including the development of new, not-for-profit provision through existing third sector organisations.
- Implement a cap on profits made from public funding.

Third Sector Leeds supports the reform set out in Locality’s Manifesto around making collaboration – not competition – the guiding principle of public services. Leeds has some strong examples of partners developing long-term public service partnerships with local community organisations in order to provide better services for people in Leeds. TSL believes that a critical part of this reform is limiting the private profit generated by public money for the care of some of the most vulnerable in our society.

A report by Revolution Consulting found council spending on privately run children’s services, including residential homes and foster care services, has more than doubled in the past six years. In 2023-24 the spending on children in care is due to be £6.1 billion, a 13.5 per cent increase from 2022-23.

In January 2024, Leeds City Council projected an overspend of £35.3m, with £17.2m (almost half) of this overspend made up of external children’s placements, largely provided by private businesses. Behind every care package is a vulnerable child or young person who deserves the best care and home available. Meanwhile, providers can choose which children they do or do not accept, and at what price. TSL believes that placements must be driven by children’s needs rather than profit, and that this means prioritising local not-for-profit provision. A wider market for care placements will also allow local authorities to shift away from profiteering providers and develop a more sustainable, locally-rooted approach to children’s care, ensuring vulnerable children are kept close to people they know and trust and not placed out of the city.

*“[The government] should prioritise long-term partnerships between the public sector and local communities, replacing the current focus on competitive tendering with mechanisms which support collaboration.”*  
*Locality Manifesto*



## Prioritising third sector: A stronger third sector prevents people from living in poor health as they age

### TSL recommendations:

- Improved funding to local authorities for community and third sector development.
- Recognition of the impact and value of the third sector in supporting the wider determinants of health, and in turn, a better quality of later life.
- Embed social prescribing within existing community infrastructure, with organisations resourced to deliver activities that prioritise community development for long-term health creation.

Communities and third sector organisations are critical factors when it comes to equality in how long we live and how good our health is as we age. TSL is calling for central government to recognise this and fund local authorities appropriately so they can support local communities and third sector organisations to support people to start well, live well and age well.

*“There is a growing understanding that the pressures on elective, urgent and emergency, and primary care will only worsen if people aren’t supported to live healthier lives in their communities. Increasing resource in this area and coupling it with wider policy shifts to support collaboration – particularly with community organisations led by and supporting those most at risk of health inequalities – can help local organisations shift the focus of the health system towards prevention.”* Locality Manifesto

Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy varies greatly across the country, but is particularly stark in Leeds. The Leeds Director of Public Health report 'In Our Shoes' states that "women living in Leeds Dock, Hunslet and Stourton have the lowest life expectancy in all of England."

Beyond simply living longer, TSL believes that as a society, we have a responsibility to plan to ensure that older age is as healthy, independent and enjoyable as possible in the future.

The third sector supports people with better quality housing; with volunteering opportunities and a sense of purpose and belonging; with support to find employment; with better access to food and fuel – all wider determinants that make up 80% of what it means to be healthy. Strong communities and a well-developed third sector can mean the difference between living until 75, with 50 years of good health, and living until 85, with 70 years of good health (CMO report). This has impacts on family life, including ability to provide care for family members; health and social care systems; economic productivity and much more.



## Supporting views and resources

- [Letter to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury: The future of the Household Support Fund \(Local Government Association\)](#)
- [Local Government Association survey report on the impact of Household Support Fund ending](#)
- [Joint public letter on the need to urgently extend the Household Support Fund from 120+ organisations \(Barnardo's\)](#)
- [Leeds City Council Household Support Fund briefing note \(January 2024\)](#)
- ['A Home for Everyone' manifesto \(Homelessness Link\)](#)
- [Comment: Profiteering in the children's placements market \(The Association of Directors of Children's Services\)](#)
- [Profit making and risk in independent children's social care placement providers \(Local Government Association\)](#)
- [Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report 2023 - Health in an Ageing Society](#)
- [Leeds Neighbourhood Network evaluation \(Centre for Ageing Well\)](#)