# Leeds City Council Areas of Research - Culture, Digital, Food, and Inclusive Growth

September 2022

Leeds City Council has worked in partnership with the University of Leeds to develop a series of Areas of Research Interest (ARI) that set out their knowledge needs in the priority topics of: Culture, Digital, Food, and Inclusive Growth.

These include:

* **Culture**: Measuring cultural impact meaningfully; People, place and interculturalism; Culture and local democracy making; Culture and the City; Leeds2023 Legacy.
* **Digital**: Digital divide; Health inequality; Digital identities and footprints; Valuing skills; Alternative structures; Critical perspectives on the digital agenda.
* **Food:** Food consumption data; Food system and asset mapping; Changing food choices and behaviours; Farming environment; Carbon footprint of food; Food waste; and Food economics.
* **Inclusive Growth:** Supply shocks and cost-of-living crisis; Financial exclusion / inclusion; Productivity; and the Economic health of the City.

Please see the following pages for full details of each Area of Research Interest.

The Leeds City Council Areas of Research Interest include both short and longer term needs, and vary in size and complexity. It is not expected that the larger and more complex questions identified will be addressed in one go.

The Areas of Research Interest are intended to facilitate conversations by:

* Making it clear what existing research would be of interest
* Highlighting areas where Leeds City Council would have an interest in future research and collaborations

While the Areas of Research Interest have been developed between Leeds City Council and the University of Leeds, this is set within the Team Leeds approach envisaged by the Council’s [Best City Ambition](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/plans-and-strategies/best-city-ambition). As such, the Council and University welcomes other city partners joining the conversation.

For University of Leeds members, if you have any questions on the Leeds City Council Areas of Research Interest or would like to be put in touch with a relevant Leeds City Council colleague, please contact: Juliet Jopson, Policy Leeds [policyleeds@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:policyleeds@leeds.ac.uk).

Researchers and knowledge providers from other organisations should contact Mike Eakins at Leeds City Council [policy@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:policy@leeds.gov.uk).

## Culture

Leeds City Council is about to embark on development of its next Culture Strategy, likely to bring the current Culture Strategy (2017-2030) to a close earlier than anticipated. This is due to reasons including and not limited to: Covid-19; Black Lives Matter and the Council’s Statues Review (2020); integration of Leeds2023 legacy and learning.

Cultural Investment for the next four years will remain aligned to the current priorities as outlined in the 2021-2025 Cultural Strategy Framework: A Hive of Creative Innovation; Children Families and Young People; People, Communities and Place; International and internationalism; Leeds2023.

The Council is keen to maximise learning and capture impact of their current activity whilst also informing development of their next Culture Strategy. Action-led commitments that support, represent and, crucially, are co-owned by the 169 nationalities currently living in Leeds are a priority.

### Table 1. Leeds City Council Areas of Research Interest (ARI) for culture

| **Area of research interest** | **Overview of research area** | **Key activities, including emerging study questions** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Measuring Cultural Impact Meaningfully | Ensure meaningful measurements of cultural impact to date are integrated into policy making.  Explore alternative ways to gather and use city-wide data (quant and qual) to represent the complexity of culture as it’s lived. | * How can residents co-own and participate in meaningful data capture and evaluation? * How can the lens of everyday culture provide new insight into how culture impacts on people living across Leeds’ 33 wards? * How can big data sets (LSOA) be integrated with story-based, qualitative approaches? * How might ABCD provide a framework through which to measure cultural impact in new and more participatory ways? * What is required to ensure learning is fully integrated into the policy cycle? |
| Culture and The City | Use interdisciplinary research to better understand how the city’s (and, potentially, region’s) infrastructure (housing, transport, connectivity etc) impacts on cultural access, engagement and production. | * How does the transport system affect access to and engagement with culture in and across the city? * What impact has regeneration had on the varying cultural offer across the city? * What shared challenges exist between cultural engagement and digital inclusion in a post-pandemic world? |
| People, Place & Interculturalism | Articulate how Leeds’ cultural strategy contributes to a sense of place for Leeds’ 169 nationalities: what this currently and could look like.  Explore how culture contributes to Leeds’ vision as an intercultural city whilst empowering people to retain ownership of their own stories. | * How might public art be re-envisioned to be more representative of the story people of Leeds’ want to tell about their place? * What impact does cultural engagement in schools have on CYP’s understanding and engagement of culture in the wider city? * What does Leeds’ Intercultural Cities commitment mean for culture in the city? * How can communities feel more ownership of both their places and the cultural activity that happens within them? |
| Culture & Local Democracy Making | Better articulate current and explore new ways in which the democratisation of culture and culture’s capacity to shape local democratic processes bring value to the city and region. | * How can culture both articulate and provide new ways of ‘doing democracy’? * What has the value been of prioritising participatory and co-production approaches to date and how has this impacted city growth and development beyond culture? * How might the new Cultural Strategy be more iterative, responsive and democratic in its development and application? |
| Leeds2023 Legacy | Ensure learning from Leeds2023 is incorporated into development, aspirations and ambitions for the city’s future, across all areas. | * How will learning from Leeds2023 be articulated, championed and integrated into future policy development? * How can Leeds2023’s co-production approach at ward-level be continued? * How can Leeds2023’s significant focus on internationalism continue to grow in a way that is meaningful for local communities? * How has Leeds2023 impacted on other areas of council policy, directly or indirectly? |

## Digital

The main digital strategy priorities for LCC are centred around the person, that is, how can digital help us ‘Start Well, ‘Live Well’, ‘Work Well’ and ‘Age Well’. To achieve these objectives and deliver against their priorities, LCC wish to get the foundations right, namely; digital inclusion (designing interventions to support digitally excluded communities in collaboration with different organisations from the healthcare and third sectors), digital skills (promoting their availability for everyone), adequate infrastructure (ensuring the availability of broadband fibre network), data management access and usage (aiming to deliver personalised services to the right people at the right time) and finally digital and data ethics. The digital strategy is aligned with Leeds’s new Best City Ambition and its three key pillars: health and well-being, net zero carbon and inclusive growth.

### Table 2. Leeds City Council Areas of Research Interest (ARI) for digital

| **Area of research interest** | **Overview of research area** | **Key activities, including emerging study questions** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Digital divide | Understanding outcomes of interventions in this space so that local citizens have access to better education, increased health and improved well-being. | * What evidence demonstrates the returns on investment of different local organisations’ interventions to address the digital divide? * How could we use longitudinal data sets to understand the digital divide in the Leeds city region? Born in Bradford provides an example. |
| Health inequalities | Demonstrating the impact of health inequalities using digital data sets. | * How do we use big data effectively to understand the magnitude of health inequalities in the Leeds City region? |
| Digital identities and footprints | LCC is interested in exploring the value of interventions in this space. | * How can we track different digital identities and footprints? * How do these digital identities and footprints reflect on different interactions and engagements? |
| Valuing skills | Understanding digital skill requirements for new digital ways of working, including hybrid (i.e. online/offline). | * How do digital/data policies invisibly shift responsibilities? * Are we undervaluing and failing to support the skills of those working as intermediaries in an underdeveloped hybrid landscape? Is this forcing public sector workers to work outside the ‘rules’/frameworks, and if so, how can we honestly and transparently monitor the effectiveness of new approaches? |
| Alternative structures | Understanding the role of grassroot movements in addressing digital exclusion in the city of Leeds. | * How appropriate are alternative structures that move away from the corporate capture model and are instead grounded in civic or community action models? How might interdisciplinary research approaches help us better understand them? |
| Critical perspectives on the digital agenda | Understanding on the ethics connected to greater use and integration of digital approaches. | * How do we balance the digital inclusion agenda with surveillance capitalism? * How could new data be used to consolidate the power of big technological and financial companies? |

## Food

Leeds City Council is currently working on a draft Food Strategy for the Leeds City region with the aim of improving food security, resilience, and health of citizens, whilst reducing environmental impact. It is expected that the draft strategy will be out for consultation in the autumn of 2022 and finalised by February 2023.

In line with the proposed Strategy, Leeds City Council has a number of Areas of Research Interest (ARI) that they would welcome collaboration with the University of Leeds and other relevant stakeholders to address. It is not anticipated that these ARI will be completed before the Food Strategy is finalised, but research that contributes to implementation of the Strategy is of interest.

### Table 3. Leeds City Council Areas of Research Interest (ARI) for food

| **Area of research interest** | **Overview of research area** | **Key activities, including emerging study questions** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Food consumption data | Data on food consumption and consumption behaviours at local level, ideally on an annual basis. | * Developing and agreeing the most effective method and approach to data collection for food consumed via council owned venues * Consumer data from commercial outlets to better understand food choices and behaviours, e.g. Tesco club card data |
| Food system and asset mapping | Improved understanding of assets through an exercise to map the food system more effectively and create a more robust baseline position.  Evidence could be used to inform Food Strategy with a longer-term ambition to develop a State of the City report. | * How is the food system in Leeds currently being shaped? * What support provision is available around food e.g. cooking skills? * Where are the food banks located across the city, and who do they serve? * Where do people shop for food? * Where are the areas of food inequality? |
| Changing food choices and behaviours | Better understanding on how food choices and behaviours can be influenced e.g. through nudge theory | * How can the intelligence collected above help to direct behaviour changes, e.g. healthier or more environmentally aware food choices? * What interventions are being used in other areas and what works? * How do we better target interventions to tackle health inequalities? |
| Farming environment | Better understanding of the farming system of the city region – both commercial and informal food production – and how this could become more sustainable. | * How does the farming system currently work? * What could we do differently to make the system more sustainable, promote regenerative farming, increase biodiversity, improve access to green jobs and skills? * How we use evidence to influence people/business community to 1. Promote local food growing 2. benefit farmers financially 3. tackle key challenges facing the city, such as food poverty, health inequalities |
| Carbon footprint of food | Research to improve intelligence on the carbon footprint of food consumption in the city across all sectors (not just the public sector). | * What is the current carbon footprint of food consumed in the city region? * How do people make decisions around the environmental impact of the food they eat? |
| Food waste | Better understanding on the total food waste in the city region, including commercial waste | * What is the total food waste in the city, including commercial waste? * How can total food waste be monitored? |
| Food economics | Understanding on how much the food economy – both formal and informal – contributes to the city region | * How much is the food economy worth to the Leeds city region? Including contributions from formal and informal sectors. * How might this sector be supported to develop? |

## Inclusive Growth

The City Council is currently reviewing its Inclusive Growth strategy, with a refresh planned for June/July 2023. Over the last couple of years significant activity has been undertaken, including the development of an Economic Recovery Plan in response to Covid, the launch of an Innovation Prospectus for the City and work led by Arup on the future of the city and district centres.

A study on the green economy will be commissioned soon. This work will help identify opportunities to link businesses in the City Region to industrial clusters, including hydrogen and carbon capture. The Council will be launching its Future Talent Plan in September 2022, which has been developed in partnership with education providers to identify future employment and skills priorities, whilst work is still progressing with the anchors network, including on how best to connect to disadvantaged communities.

### Table 4. Leeds City Council Areas of Research Interest (ARI) for inclusive growth

| **Area of research interest** | **Overview of research area** | **Key activities, including emerging study questions** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Supply shocks and cost-of-living crisis | Cost of living crisis and its impact on already deep-rooted inequalities and poverty. | * Data on its impact on lower-income families and neighbourhoods * How can the City deal with the very significant challenges in the cost of living over the coming years? |
| Financial exclusion / inclusion | How can financial inclusion be improved in Leeds, especially for those currently most excluded. | * Do all impoverished households have the ability to access benefits/payments due to them? * How to tackle the challenge of predominately low paid/low skill jobs being created (e.g. how can the economy be unlocked to produce better jobs)? |
| Economic health of the City | Need to take a deeper dive into productivity for the Leeds city-region economy, providing an *‘alternative view on productivity’* beyond traditional data, whilst also exploring future growth prospects. | * Understanding the city economy beyond traditional ‘blunt’ national statistics, in particularly the City’s productivity performance. The Council would be keen for an exploration into productivity in Leeds and an understanding of “what is holding the city back”, whilst also identifying what the city’s growth prospects are. * Exploring future scenarios, including at the intersect between health, climate and inclusive growth. * Green finance: improved understanding of the financial support landscape, aligned to opportunities associated with the UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) and Bank of England being located in the City. * Business support: as part of the Inclusive Growth Strategy review, the Council is keen to understand what more could be done to improve business support offered. * Better understanding of the night-time economy. |