# Leeds City Council Areas of Research Interest

July 2023

The Leeds City Council Areas of Research Interest (ARI) set out the Council’s evidence needs in the priority themes of: Culture, Digital, Food, Inclusive Growth, and Place.

Within these themes, the following Areas of Research Interest have been identified:

* **Culture**: Measuring cultural impact meaningfully; Culture and the City; People, place and interculturalism; Culture and local democracy making; and Leeds2023 Legacy.
* **Digital**: Digital divide; Health inequality; Valuing skills; and Alternative structures.
* **Food:** Food consumption data; Changing food choices and behaviours; Farming environment; Carbon footprint of food; and Food waste.
* **Inclusive Growth:** Supply shocks and cost-of-living crisis; Financial exclusion / inclusion; Economic health of the City; Corporate Parenting, Green Economy; and AI &the Economy.
* **Place:** Parks as a social asset; Unused spaces and regeneration; Sustainable energy; Community engagement; Play; High street regeneration through co-production; Housing quality; and Service delivery in community settings.

The Areas of Research Interest are given in full in the following sections.

The first set of Leeds City Council Areas of Research Interest were published in September 2022. Here the Culture, Digital, Food and Inclusive Growth ARI have been reviewed and updated, with the Place ARI added.

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

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.

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 of Leeds welcome 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 to discuss, 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 (quantitative and qualitative) 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 (neighbourhood-level 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? * How can we sustainably and consistently evidence the contribution of culture to city ambitions – with a focus on inclusive growth, health and wellbeing, net zero? |
| 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? * Has Covid-19 affected the way citizens engage in the cultural offer in the city? |
| 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 children and young people’s understanding and engagement of culture in the wider city? * How can communities feel more ownership of both their places and the cultural activity that happens within them? * What are the spatial differences in cultural engagement across Leeds and its communities, and what is driving these? * How effectively does LCC currently communicate and promote our culture offer to children, young people and their families? Drawing on direct engagement with children and young people, how can this be improved? |
| 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? |
| Leeds2023 Legacy | Ensure learning from Leeds2023 is incorporated into development, aspirations and ambitions for the city’s future, across all areas. | * 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, employment, 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. * What impact is the digital divide having on children and young people in low-income communities in Leeds? Particularly interested in the impact on learning from lack of access to reliable Wi-Fi, IT equipment (phones and laptops), homework and revision at home. |
| 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? * What are the localised and individual impacts of digital exclusion or data poverty on health and wellbeing in our increasingly digital city? Or what effect does someone becoming digitally connected have on their health and wellbeing in Leeds? |
| 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? |

## Food

The Leeds Food Strategy was published earlier in 2023 and can be found here: <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/plans-and-strategies/leeds-food-strategy>

In line with the 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.

### 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 * How might we develop a framework to better understand and monitor Leeds citizen’s food choices and behaviour, including through commercial consumer data (e.g. Tesco club card)? |
| Changing food choices and behaviours | Better understanding on how food choices and behaviours can be influenced, what is working in Leeds to support healthier eating and how we can expand it. | * What can we learn from existing community-led initiatives in Leeds which focus on cooking skills and food growing? * How can we encourage better sharing and learning from best practice between community groups in this space? * Can we quantify the investment needed in an individual’s knowledge about healthy eating choices and cooking skills to lead to meaningful change in their behaviour to eat more healthily? * Can the more prominent placing / promotion of healthy and nutritious food still affect buying choices in low-income communities, where poor quality food may be cheaper? * Research on the availability and importance of culturally diverse food options in Leeds secondary schools, co-producing research with young people in Leeds. |
| 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. | * 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. * What are the barriers to development, adoption or buy-in of more innovative practice in urban environments, such as vertical farming, in Leeds? * What would encourage more people in Leeds to get involved in “grow your own” initiatives, and what would small scale practical pilots seeking to reach people for the first time on this agenda look like? * What would make it easier for local farmers to sell produce locally? * How can land use planning policies in Leeds enable the better use of land for agriculture? * Mapping and understanding current pathways to market for locally produced food and developing evidence-based proposals to expand or create new opportunities to achieve more. |
| 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? * Building on existing research (and previous LCC ARI), exploration of further opportunities for the local authority to work with businesses and the third sector to reintroduce food into the value chain and avoid waste. * Tackling the food waste and environmental impacts of goods being rejected by stores and retaking their supply chain journey back to suppliers – implications for transport, packaging waste, food waste. |

## 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.

### 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. | * Can we evidence the differential impacts of the cost-of-living crisis in Leeds, for example between those living in priority neighbourhoods and the rest of the city? |
| Financial exclusion / inclusion | How can financial inclusion be improved in Leeds, especially for those currently most excluded. | * To what extent could a localised universal basic service approach (e.g. on public transport or internet access) support those on the lowest incomes, and improve their health and wellbeing in Leeds? * Understanding the future welfare needs of the city in order to reduce poverty and inequality, support health and wellbeing, and achieve inclusive growth. |
| 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, the Council is keen to understand what more could be done to improve business support offered. |
| Corporate Parenting – improving outcomes for care leavers | As part of the council Corporate Parenting responsibilities, we want to ensure care experienced young people / young adults (care leavers) in the city are supported to have a diverse range of employment opportunities that meet their needs and aspirations. | * Understanding the barriers to entering the work force / finding fulfilling employment faced by care leavers. * Understanding the challenges faced by employers to sustainably recruiting care leavers who go on to have success in the workplace. Identifying good practice and potential strategies from within Leeds and from other local authority areas. |
| Green Economy | All businesses need to respond to the challenges of net zero. Not just businesses in ‘green sectors’ or green jobs | * What are the sectors, businesses and business models that will work in a net zero environment? * What are the opportunities for Leeds and West Yorkshire Businesses arising from the transition to net zero? * What are the steps that businesses; government and public sector need to take to enable this to happen. * How can Leeds lead the way in Green Finance to help drive opportunities for Net Zero * Can we identify opportunities to link businesses in the City Region to industrial clusters, including hydrogen and carbon capture? |
| AI and the Economy | How can we best understand the potential impact that AI could have on the economy of Leeds | * What are the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Leeds Businesses arising from the rise in AI? * How can we ensure we have a Just Transition for people at risk of losing jobs owing to the impact of AI? |

## Place

### Table 5. Leeds City Council Areas of Research Interest (ARI) for place

| **Area of research interest** | **Overview of research area** | **Key activities, including emerging study questions** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Parks as a social asset | Considering how a city like Leeds can maximise the value of its public parks and make the case for further investment into parks as a social asset. | * Can enhancing community ownership of local parks play a meaningful role in reducing anti-social behaviour in the locality? * Building on experiences of the city’s ‘Friends of’ groups, what practical interventions can the local authority make to encourage local communities to play a more active role in supporting and safeguarding local parks (e.g. acting as community custodians)? * To what extend is local sentiment about safety in parks directly linked to levels of crime and anti-social behaviour? Where the link is weaker, what factors most affect citizens wanting to access and use their local park or green space? * Exploring intergenerational approaches to tackling anti-social behaviour in parks and developing shared ownership of solutions with children and young people. |
| Unused spaces and regeneration | What impacts do unused or under-utilised spaces have for our communities, and what are the challenges and opportunities for making them into attractive, inclusive and safe spaces? | * Identify a typology of unused spaces based on ownership, location, context, condition etc. * How can a menu of interventions and end uses be developed for these spaces, which types lend themselves best to the range of outcomes communities might want? * What are the agents of change and delivery and what roles do they need to play (public bodies, third sector, community groups)? What are the essential resources, capabilities and capacities required? * What does good practice look like and how have tactical interventions in unused or under-utilised spaces been sustained to ensure long term community benefit? Which types of spaces offer the best opportunities for success? * How does the improvement of such space act to stimulate an area and generate more opportunities for change and improved land market? How might funding be captured from land value uplift? |
| Sustainable energy | Integrating sustainable energy within Leeds, ensuring that businesses and citizens have access to low energy premises / homes powered by locally produced low carbon energy. | * Building on existing research, further exploration of the potential of geothermal energy in Leeds. * Quantifying the scale of the task to retrofit Leeds’ housing stock to suitable levels. * How to tackle the challenge of the c20,000 poor quality, energy inefficient back-to-back houses in Leeds. |
| Community engagement | Developing Leeds as a place where local communities are actively listened to and included in finding innovative solutions to local challenges.  For Leeds to be a city where we shift power to sit with citizens and communities. | * Drawing on the range of existing research, development and initiatives in this space in Leeds – can we develop a Leeds model for community power and engagement? How can we make this meaningful for people of all ages and backgrounds, including children and young people? * Capitalise on the work currently underway on Neighbourhood Priority Plans * Consultation on the Leeds Local Plan 2040 is underway and will progress over next 18 months at least – key issues about levels and types of growth alongside new housing development will be discussed. Engagement with particular areas of the city has proved difficult. How can the Council get the best out of its consultations within current resources? Are the right consultation methods being deployed? |
| Play | We want Leeds to be a city that upholds children’s right to play, where play is valued for its broad-based positive impacts, and where we support and enable play through our city ambitions. | * How do we embed the right to play (which is linked to feeling comfortable in place) in the Council’s thinking so that all departments can see things from a 90cm high perspective? * How do we use child and carer centred initiatives to provide a focus for wider projects and ambitions in priority areas? E.g. link with transport, parks, new housing, local centres, the role of schools in the community etc. |
| High street regeneration through co-production | What long-term sustainable impacts and initiatives can be co-produced in response to the challenges faced by Leeds’ high street, with a particular focus on Armley Town Street?  How can high street visioning, plan-making and delivery be co-produced between local government and local stakeholders to increase the resilience, prosperity and health of our communities?  Exploration of the challenges and opportunities in co-producing regeneration of municipal areas. | * How can community-led governance be effectively integrated into the decision-making processes for re-imagining, regenerating and repurposing high streets, ensuring that the voices and needs of local residents are actively considered and incorporated? * What are the key factors that contribute to community resilience in the context of regenerating high streets, and how can these factors be nurtured and enhanced through co-production between community and government stakeholders? * What are the best practices and successful case studies of co-production between community and government stakeholders (local, regional and national) in re-imagining, regenerating and repurposing high streets, and how can these lessons be applied to the specific context of the target high street in question? * What are the potential barriers and challenges to effective co-production in the repurposing of high street space, particularly in terms of power dynamics, conflicting interests, and limited resources, and how can these obstacles be overcome or mitigated? * How does the co-production of repurposing high street spaces contribute to the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of the community, and what metrics or indicators can be used to evaluate and measure the long-term impacts of these collaborative efforts? * Investigate what novel or additional funding or resources could be leveraged through co-produced or community-led regeneration in Armley, Leeds. * How can regenerative practice and systems thinking help to reframe and rethink governance structures between communities and local government? To what end can these systems self-sustain? What skills development and capacity building are needed to enable community anchors in sustainable systems thinking? (Community stewardship, circular economy). |
| Housing quality | Evaluation of existing interventions, opportunities and challenges for improving the city’s housing stock – with a particular focus on low income communities which tend to have the poorest quality stock in the city. | * Evaluation of the city’s existing Selective Licensing approach to private rented sector housing as a means of improving housing quality and therefore health and wellbeing. |
| Service delivery in community settings | To better understand the impact that delivering services in community settings has on awareness, engagement, and outcomes.  *ARI to be further developed but included here with initial focus on NHS Health Check* | * Does the offer of an NHS Health Check in a community setting impact uptake of the service – generally and specifically in those group not currently accessing the programme? * Would community engagement with Third Sector organisations increase awareness and attendance at NHS Health Checks? |