Leicester
City Council

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

DATE: **THURSDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2020**
TIME: **4:00 pm**
PLACE: **Virtual meeting via Zoom**

Members of the Committee

Councillor Cassidy (Chair)
Councillor Joel (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Dawood, Halford, Joshi, Kitterick, Porter, Thalukdar (substitute), Waddington and Westley

One unallocated Labour group place

Youth Council Representatives

To be advised

Members of the Committee are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed overleaf.

Elaine Baker

For Monitoring Officer

Information for members of the public

Attending meetings and access to information

You have the right to attend, view, or listen to (as appropriate) formal meetings such as full Council, committee meetings & Scrutiny Commissions and see copies of agendas and minutes. On occasion however, meetings may, for reasons set out in law, need to consider some items in private.

Dates of meetings and copies of public agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website at www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk, from the Council's Customer Service Centre or by contacting us using the details below.

Making meetings accessible to all

Braille/audio tape/translation - If you require this please contact the Democratic Support Officer (production times will depend upon equipment/facility availability).

Further information

If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact:
Elaine Baker, Democratic Support Officer on 0116 454 6355.
Alternatively, email elaine.baker@leicester.gov.uk or call in at City Hall.

For Press Enquiries - please phone the **Communications Unit on 0116 454 4151**

PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

LIVE STREAM OF MEETING

A live stream of the meeting can be followed on this link:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCddTWo00_gs0cp-301XDbXA

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to
be discussed.

3. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**   **Appendix A**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview Select Committee held on 24
September 2020 are attached and Members are asked to confirm them as a
correct record.

5. **PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST
MEETING**

To note progress on actions agreed at the previous meeting and not reported
elsewhere on the agenda (if any).

6. **QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND
STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Monitoring Officer to report on the receipt of any questions,
representations and statements of case submitted in accordance with the
Council's procedures.

7. **PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer to report on any petitions received.

8. **TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT**   **Appendix B**

The Monitoring Officer submits a report that updates Members on the
monitoring of outstanding petitions. The Committee is asked to note the current
outstanding petitions and agree to remove those petitions marked 'Petitions
Process Complete' from the report.

9. **COVID-19 PANDEMIC - UPDATE**

A verbal update will be given at the meeting on the current situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic. The Committee is recommended to receive the update and comment as wished.

10. **DRAFT LEICESTER LOCAL PLAN (2020 - 2036)**   **Appendix C**
PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation submits a presentation on the Draft Leicester Local Plan (2020 – 2036) Public Consultation. The Committee is recommended to receive the presentation and comment as appropriate.

The plans and supporting documents can be accessed online at consultations.leicester.gov.uk

11. **WOMEN TALKING, CITY LISTENING: SUMMARY**   **Appendix D**
REPORT

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance submits a report outlining the research undertaken by the City Listening Project team over the previous 12 months and summarising the key findings both directly and indirectly related to the Council's business. The Committee is recommended to notes the contents of the report, in particular the findings of the research project and the recommendations, both local and national, and endorse the recommendations in principle, subject to any comment and/or revisions.

12. **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING APRIL-**   **Appendix E**
SEPTEMBER 2020/21

The Director of Finance submits a report forecasting expected performance against the budget for the year. The Committee is recommended to consider the overall position presented within the report and make any observations it sees fit.

13. **CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING APRIL-SEPTEMBER**   **Appendix F**
2020/21

The Director of Finance submits a report showing the position of the capital programme for 2020/21 as at the end of September 2020 (Period 6). The Committee is recommended to consider the overall position presented within this report and make any observations it sees fit.

14. **INCOME COLLECTION APRIL 2020 - SEPTEMBER**   **Appendix G**
2020

The Director of Finance submits a report detailing progress made in collecting debts raised by the Council during the first six months of 2020-21, together with debts outstanding and brought forward from the previous year. It also sets out

details of debts written off under delegated authority that it has not been possible to collect after reasonable effort and expense. The Committee is recommended to consider the overall position presented within this report and make any observations it sees fit.

15. **MID-YEAR REVIEW OF TREASURY MANAGEMENT**   **Appendix H**
     ACTIVITIES 2020/21

     The Director of Finance submits a report reviewing how the Council conducted its borrowing and investments during the first six months of 2020/21. The Committee is recommended to note the report and make comments to the Director of Finance and the Executive as wished.

16. **SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS' WORK PROGRAMMES**   **Appendix I**

   To receive and endorse the following report of a review carried out by a Scrutiny Commission:

     The Viability and Appropriateness of a Community Lottery (Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission)

17. **QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR**

     The City Mayor will answer questions raised by members of the Overview Select Committee on issues not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

18. **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**
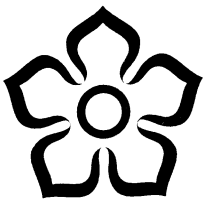
Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2020 at 4:00 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Cassidy (Chair)
Councillor Joel (Vice Chair)

Councillor Dawood	Councillor Porter
Councillor Halford	Councillor Thalukdar (substitute)
Councillor Joshi	Councillor Waddington
Councillor Kitterick	Councillor Westley

Also present:

Councillor Clarke – Deputy City Mayor Environment and Transportation
Councillor March – Vice-Chair, Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission
Sir Peter Soulsby – City Mayor

* * *   * *   * * *

103. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, reminding them that this was a virtual meeting, as permitted under Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020, to enable meetings to take place whilst observing social distancing measures.

At the invitation of the Chair, Members and officers present at the meeting introduced themselves.

The Committee noted that Councillor Thalukdar was present as a substitute member.

The Chair also advised that he would be taking items in a different order to that listed in the agenda.

104. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Halford declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting, in that she and family members were Council tenants.

Councillor Joshi declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting, in that his wife worked for the Council.

Councillor Porter declared for openness that he previously had made public his concerns that green spaces in the city were being destroyed, (agenda item 9, "Draft Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan", referred).

Councillor Thalukdar declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting, in that a family member was a Council tenant.

Councillor Westley declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting, in that family members were Council tenants.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, these interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Councillors' judgement of the public interest. They were not, therefore, required to withdraw from the meeting.

105. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked management, staff and volunteers for their hard work in addressing the Covid-19 crisis. He also acknowledged the difficulty residents in the city had faced in a prolonged lockdown. He asked them to ensure they stayed safe, thanking them for their perseverance.

106. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:
> That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview Select Committee held on 28 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

107. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

Further to minute 95, "Black Lives Matter", it was suggested that Councillor Hunter, (Assistant City Mayor with responsibility for the Black Lives Matter project), be invited to the meeting of this Committee to be held on 3 December 2020 to update the Committee on her work.

Members note that all other actions identified in the minutes were ongoing or completed.

AGREED:
> That the Scrutiny Policy Officer be asked to invite Councillor Hunter, (Assistant City Mayor with responsibility for the Black Lives Matter project), to the meeting of this Committee to be held on 3 December 2020 to update the Committee on her work.

108. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations, or statements of case had been received.

109. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer advised that there were no petitions to report.

110. TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report updating Members on the monitoring of outstanding petitions.

AGREED:
> That the Monitoring Report be noted.

111. SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS' WORK

Councillor March, Vice-Chair of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission, presented a report of the review "Adult Social Care Workforce Planning: Looking to the Future", that she had led.

Councillor March stated her appreciation of the value of the adult social care workforce and explained that the report had shown that by 2035 there would be a need to employ 1.5 times more staff than currently. The main recommendations of the review were that the Council should continue to pay workers at least the Living Wage, with contractors encouraged to do the same, and that the implementation of an ethical care charter should be expedited.

The Committee welcomed the report and congratulated those involved on the work that had been done.

Challenges faced by the sector were recognised and it was questioned how these would be addressed. For example, as many care workers were not British, what would be the impact of leaving the European Union? Retention and shortages of staff also were issues, but were employers willing to invest in training and development for staff?

Councillor March advised that nationally approximately 12% of the adult social care workforce were non-British nationals, but in Leicester this figure was nearer 4%. With regard to training and development, anecdotal evidence suggested that there was a hierarchy due to a lack of parity of esteem between health and social care, with the former being more highly valued than the latter. It therefore was hoped that establishing proper pathways for development would help those employed in adult social care feel more valued.

Members suggested that the current crisis arising from the Covid-19 pandemic provided a chance to develop more quality opportunities, such as apprenticeships, as recommended in the report. It also was important that

managers were appropriately qualified, which would help raise the profile of the sector and increase confidence in all those working in it.

In response to an enquiry from Councillors about how this authority could promote quality of service provision, Councillor March explained that a substantial quality assessment framework was in place, which ensured that the best possible quality service was received.

Councillor March noted that another concern was that a large number of people working in the sector were over 50 years old, so were beginning to approach retirement age. A lot of young people did not remain working in the sector very long and often did not return once they left it. It was felt that this was at least in part due to the imbalance of esteem between the health and social care sectors. This was a national issue, but it was hoped that the recommendations in the report would help address the situation locally.

The Committee stressed the need to recognise the importance of care workers during the current Covid-19 pandemic. One way of doing this would be to ensure that they received a full living wage, which highlighted the difference between the fees paid by those receiving the services and the lower wages received by those providing the care. Opportunities should be taken to restore some balance, such as through creating a carers co-operative, where everyone would receive a share of the profits.

Councillor March reminded Members that a previously stated intention was to consider the creation of a co-operative of this nature, to create greater engagement of workers with companies providing the care. The report of the review also considered other options, such as employee buy-outs of care provision companies, but pursual of these it was not in the remit of this review, or the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission's terms of reference.

The City Mayor welcomed the report, expressing his gratitude for the work done. It was overdue that attention was given to the care sector and he looked forward to an early discussion with Councillor March on how the report's recommendations could be taken forward.

AGREED:
1) That the Strategic Director Social Care and Education be asked to pass on to the city's care workers the thanks of this Committee for the high quality services and support provided, especially during the current crisis arising from the Covid-19 pandemic;

2) That this Committee endorses the recommendations contained in the report of the review "Adult Social Care Workforce Planning: Looking to the Future"; and

3) That the Strategic Director Social Care and Education be asked to present a report to this Committee at an appropriate time on how the recommendations of the report referred to in 2) above will be taken forward and the proposed timetable for this.

112. DRAFT CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Director of Estates and Building Services submitted a report presenting a draft three-year strategy for addressing the Climate Emergency declared in February 2019, along with the first draft of a three-year action plan.

Councillor Clarke, Deputy City Mayor – Environment and Transportation, introduced the report, thanking all involved for developing the strategy to this point. These included:

- An Expert Commission, formed during the consultation period, which would continue to provide support in the development of the strategy going forward;
- The Climate Assembly, comprising 53 members of the public;
- A Young People's Climate Assembly had been formed;
- Self-led groups also had participated, including several schools and public and private bodies and organisations;
- The Council's Economic Development, Transport & Tourism Scrutiny Commission; and
- Council officers.

The Change Manager (Climate Emergency) explained that extensive consultation had been undertaken on the strategy and action plan through a Climate Emergency Conversation. This had provided a strong mandate from people in the city to take forward the proposals.

It was noted that there was an ambition for the city to be carbon-neutral by 2030, ahead of the government target of 2050. This would be addressed through six themes, as set out in the report, which were based on the key sources of greenhouse gas emissions generated by the city and Council, and areas for adaptation to climate change. The strategy acknowledged that the Council did not have the powers and responsibilities to address all of these things on its own, but needed to work in partnership with others.

The Committee welcomed the boldness of the report and the clear proposals that would enable the city to set an example to others. The involvement of the community and other groups in the preparation of the strategy and action plan also was warmly welcomed.

Members then made the following comments:

o Would the water environment workshops for schools be delivered with a single type of school, or age group? How would other schools be encouraged and enabled to benefit from these workshops?

> *Response from the Change Manager (Climate Emergency):*
> This information could be provided as the programme developed.

Response from Councillor Clarke:
The Council had the most successful eco schools programme in the country, working with over 100 schools of a wide range of types to promote a green school ethos. The Council also had employed a dedicated officer for this work.

o The suggestion of holding an international Healthy Cities Summit was welcomed, but it was questioned how people could be encouraged locally to engage in making Leicester a healthy city. The city had a very diverse population, with a wide range of health challenges.

Response from Councillor Clarke:
Preparations for a Healthy Cities Summit had been well advanced before the restrictions imposed in response to the current Covid-19 pandemic were introduced. As a result of these restrictions, the Summit had had to be postponed.

o The proposal to create "touchdown spaces", as part of the move by the Council towards agile working, needed to be reflected in the Council's recruitment processes. How would possibly not having regular team contact affect people's health and wellbeing, particularly their mental health? It was important not to miss warning signs about these.

Response from the Change Manager (Climate Emergency):
Officers would be identifying locations for "touchdown spaces" and then making staff aware of their existence.

The Council was very aware of the mental health aspects of working remotely and would be encouraging activities such as regular meetings, including more socially based meetings, to help offset these.

o Further information was requested on the risk of future legal challenge to actions by the Council that were perceived to be incompatible with reaching the ambition to be carbon neural by 2030.

Response from the Change Manager (Climate Emergency):
Advice from the Council's Legal officers was that under current law the Council, or other public body, could be challenged if such an ambition was set but a credible plan was not in place and/or actions were taken that would prevent the ambition being realised.

o One difficulty with asking people to change their travel choices was that industries no longer were concentrated in a particular geographical area and public transport was not always available for the routes people needed to travel. Therefore, if members of a family worked in different areas, it could be difficult for them get to work by any means other than cars.

Response from the Change Manager (Climate Emergency):
It was recognised that people could be encouraged, but they made their own lifestyle choices based on a range of factors, which included

perceptions of different modes of transport. Information on what was preferable and/or possible needed to be positive, in order to attract people to particular modes of transport.

- o How would income from a workplace parking levy be used to influence the strategy?

  Response from Councillor Clarke:
  A range of stakeholders had been consulted about the possibility of introducing a workplace parking levy in order to develop a feasibility assessment, before a detailed plan was developed for wider consultation. Potential income levels therefore were not known yet.

- o It was not appropriate to impose a workplace parking levy in the city when Councillors were offered, and used, free parking in the city centre. This also encouraged car use at a time when the Council should be leading by example.

- o What plans were there to encourage reductions in car use in the future, taking in to account it often was cheaper to travel by car than public transport?

  Response from Councillor Clarke:
  It was recognised that there were issues around the cost of public transport, but the opportunity had been taken during the Covid-19 pandemic to accelerate and enhance work being undertaken with transport operators, for example in areas such as joint ticketing. If a workplace parking levy was introduced, income from this could be available for investment in promoting other forms of transport.

- o The pop-up cycle lanes in the city were welcome, having made cycling easier and safer. What lessons had been learned from these?

  Response from Councillor Clarke:
  The flexibility of pop-up cycle lanes had enabled work to be done with the public to refine their siting and operation. It now was hoped to make some of those lanes permanent, but where they had not worked so well it enabled thought to be given to where different transport modes should be given more priority.

- o The Council's fleet of vehicles ran regularly through the city and so should be converted to being powered electrically.

- o It would be welcome if opportunities for green jobs could be pursued.

  Response from Councillor Clarke:
  Those preparing the strategy and action plan had been very mindful of green jobs. Work needed to be done with a range of partners to be able to develop green jobs and central government funding was needed to facilitate their development.

o   New build housing that had been built to address climate change was welcomed. However, one of the worst types of housing in terms of pollution was older style council housing. This was being considered by the Housing Scrutiny Commission, and a programme of boiler replacement in the Council's housing stock was underway, but more information was needed on other measures that could be taken to improve emissions, particularly in pre-war properties.

o   At the same time as this strategy and action plan were being prepared, the Council was proposing through its Draft Local Plan to concrete over green spaces and cut down trees, some of which had Tree Preservation Orders on them.

Response from Councillor Clarke:
Unfortunately, the Council was restricted by national policy in relation to the Local Plan. The forthcoming White Paper "Planning for the Future" was likely to result in a further loss of control by planning authorities over development and ability to address climate change.

o   Council buildings often had the lights left on when empty.

o   Although it was being said that the consultation on the strategy and action plan was very wide-ranging, only just under 400 responses were received to the online consultation.

o   There was concern that the Council was not in a position to lead by example on climate change, due to its poor record to date on addressing these issues.

Response from Councillor Clarke:
The Council's record on beating its previous targets to address climate change showed that it was equipped to deliver the actions identified to meet the stringent targets and ambitions set.

AGREED:
1) That the drafts of the Leicester Climate Emergency Strategy 2020 – 2023 and Leicester City Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020 – 2023 be endorsed;

2) That the Director of Estates and Building Services be asked to take account of the comments recorded above in developing Leicester City Council's Climate Emergency Strategy 2020 – 2023 and Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020 – 2023;

3) That the work done by all involved in the preparation of the documents listed in 1) above be noted and welcomed, particularly in relation to the extensive consultation undertaken and the resulting mandate for an ambitious response to the Climate Emergency;

4) That the Director of Estates and Building Services be asked to submit a report on the further development of the Leicester Climate Emergency Strategy 2020 – 2023 and Leicester City Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020 – 2023 at an appropriate time;

5) That the report referred to under 2) above include information on how it is planned to progress the development of green jobs;

6) That the intention to actively encourage and support organisations in the city to join with the Council in taking action, including developing their own action plans be noted and endorsed; and

7) That the commitment made in the Leicester Climate Emergency Strategy 2020 – 2023 to monitoring and publicly reporting on progress be welcomed and endorsed.

113. COVID-19 PANDEMIC - UPDATE

Directors gave verbal updates and the Committee made comments on the current situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, as set out below.

a) Update from the Director of Public Health

The Director of Public Health advised the Committee that in total there had been 6,557 confirmed cases of Covid-19 between the start of the pandemic and 7 September 2020.

116,168 tests had been processed through the Public Health England recording route, with an average of 670 tests being done per day. There had been issues nationally with testing capacity, but a lot of work had been done maintain local test facilities and the benefit of this had shown in the results being obtained.

Since the start of the pandemic, 839 Leicester residents had been admitted to hospital in relation to Covid-19. There had been 11 hospital admissions per week in August 2020 and over the last seven days there had been 10.

There had been 278 deaths in the city where the person had tested positive for Covid-19 within 28 days of death.

At the end of August 2020 there had been 25.4 cases per 100,000 people. There was a very sharp increase in numbers at the start of September 2020, but over the most recent seven days this had reduced to 100 cases per 100,000 people. Nationally, there currently were 34.4 cases per 100,000 people. In August, the city had had the 23rd highest number of cases in the country and although it currently had the 26th highest number of cases, the numbers were causing a lot of concern.

Door to door testing of city residents had been successful in keeping the number of cases down and would continue. However, it was felt that the safety messages needed to be widened in communities, which would also help address the widespread increase in anxiety.

A very successful contact tracing system had been established in the Council. However, cases being received from the national team were slightly older (over 24 hours), so were having to be pursued hard.

b) Update from the Strategic Director Social Care and Education

The Strategic Director Social Care and Education reminded the Committee that the Council had a role in monitoring the Adult social Care market, as almost all provision was made externally.

There were 103 care homes in the city and they were all contacted by telephone once or twice a week, to ensure that they had the resources they needed, (for example, staffing capacity, personal protection equipment (PPE), or training). During the pandemic, there had not been any point at which care providers had been genuinely at immediate risk of running out of PPE.

Providers registered through the Care Quality Commission could access PPE through the national portal. Other providers could access PPE through the local authority, so the Council was making sure that those providers knew about this provision and could access it.

Officers also ensured that care homes had adequate staff, using bank staff when needed, though ensuring that these only worked in a single care home, in order to reduce the risk of transmission between facilities. On occasion, office staff also had been loaned to care homes.

A lot of care was taken over infection control. It had been proposed that nationally, under the Adult Social Care Winter Plan, the infection control grant would be extended to the end of the year. Information on the city's allocation was awaited from the government.

Fees had been increased, in order to cover the very significant cost of the work being done in relation to the pandemic. As the care providers were external to the Council, the Council did not have the resources to cover the costs involved. It had been made clear that this was a temporary increase.

Regular testing of care home staff and residents was undertaken, with staff being tested weekly and residents being tested every four weeks. The Council had been instrumental in establishing this policy nationally.

There had been a sudden very large increase in the number of cases of Covid-19 in care homes during the first week of September 2020, but officers had been able to react within a day to make sure that the homes had the support they needed. During the second week of September the numbers had reduced

and this week were nearly back to where they had been before the spike.

Delays in getting results of tests from the national testing system were causing problems, both in terms of getting tests done and in terms of consequential delays in acting on positive results. If staff tested positive but had been asymptomatic, they could have been working in a care home during that time. There could be a further issue if there was a large spike in numbers of cases in care homes at the same time as a full outbreak in the community, as this could reduce the available staff capacity below safe levels, but work was being done with care providers to prepare for such a situation.

Despite the precautions being taken and work being done, it appeared that some people currently preferred to stay at home, rather than go in to a care setting. Given the perception of risk associated with care, and the restrictions on visiting people in care homes, this was understandable. Efforts were being made to ensure that family carers had access to any required support.

Children's social care had moved to an online service, or doing "window calls", where the participants could see each other but the phone call was Covid-secure. This had been quite beneficial, as having officers in a room together could be quite intimidating for some families and people could be more comfortable being in their own home.

A campaign had been held to maintain safeguarding referrals. Initially there had been a drop in the numbers being made, but they were now back to their usual level. All referrals were investigated.

There was a continuing reduction in the number of Looked After Children. This was in contrast to some other local authorities, which had seen a sharp increase.

There had been a very low number of infections among young people in schools, with only 1% having tested positive for Covid-19. Only 17 young people aged under 18 had been hospitalised due to Covid-19 and there had been no deaths from it in that age group.

The city had 112 schools and to date there had been 107 cases related to schools. These involved 65 children, 42 staff and over 60 schools, although most schools only had one or two cases. It appeared that infections acquired in the community were being identified before there was transmission within schools.

School attendance was falling. At the start of the term it had been 91%, but had now reduced to approximately 79%. This fall was greater than the national average, but could be due to the local restrictions that the government had put in place in response to the number of cases in the city. Only one school was not open due to the number of infections.

It was recognised that schools not opening could have a significant impact on the wider economy, so officers were making sure that the only pupils or staff

who were sent home were those who needed to be, either because they had symptoms or had been in close contact with someone who had tested positive.

There had been a very significant fall in attendance in the nursery sector. These often were very small businesses, so this reduction in numbers could cause problems for the providers, as very limited government support was available. There also was concern that this would result in very limited pre-school care being available after the pandemic.

c) **Update from the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services**

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services reminded the Committee that the Regulatory team was working in partnership with other agencies, such as the Police.

This work included the following:

- A number of interventions had been made, which included 4 prohibition notices being issued to businesses that should not have been operating between 23 March and 19 June;

- Over 170 concerns had been received about social distancing in work premises, nine of which had been referred to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE);

- Information packs for businesses had been produced that set out key messages, such as reminders to wash hands and socially distance. The Elections team had been helpful in delivering these packs and the Communications team had been very helpful in ensuring that information reached the business community;

- Covid-19 checks had been made at high risk sites. Most of these were intelligence-led investigations, with enforcement only being undertaken where required. A total of nearly 1,300 covid-secure inspection visits had been made. The HSE regulated some premises, but Council officers had made 54 visits to high-risk premises that the HSE was unable to access;

- The work of the regulatory team continued to focus on high-risk premises, with 938 reactive inquiries having been actioned;

- A lot of support had been received from the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, which had carried out some covid-secure inspections, (for example, at hotels);

- The Council had been one of the first local authorities to use new legislation that allowed protection orders to be issued to help manage the pandemic. 11 directions had been issued to 11 premises on London Road in relation to large, unmanaged queues and a Public Space Protection Order had been issued. Intensive work also had been undertaken to

12

ensure that restaurant bookings were being managed correctly;

- The team also had been working closely with Public Health officers, using data to ensure that any responses made were proportionate and in the right location;

- Assistance also was being given to enable closed businesses to reopen;

- Legislation continued to change. For example, a 10.00 pm curfew was coming in to force on 24 September, people were still not able to meet in groups of more than six and from 28 September it was a legal requirement for premises to be covid-secure; and

- This work would continue going forward, for example, in relation to key events or celebrations where intelligence could be used to assist in issues such as maintaining social distancing.

d) Update from Director of Finance

The Director of Finance noted that vulnerable people covered by shielding arrangements would be released from shielding requirements on 5 October 2020. Currently, only Leicester and Blackburn still had advisory shielding in place, but the environment was now more covid-secure than it was when shielding was first introduced in March 2020. Everyone in the city who previously had been shielding had been advised of the change and the last food delivery would be on Friday 2 October.

e) Update from Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance explained that a challenge facing officers currently was "message fatigue" and the complexity of messages being delivered. Some stronger messages therefore would be circulated about the increasing number of cases of Covid-19 in the city.

A lot of work was being done with community stakeholders, including proactive visits to venues such as places of worship to ensure they were covid-secure.

Councillors were thanked for helping to get the messages out to local communities.

f) Response from the City Mayor

The City Mayor stated how impressed he was with how officers and others had responded to the situation.

A review, led by Dame Mary Nye, had been commissioned by the government on the response to the "lockdown" in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. This report had been very complimentary about the work done by this Council and

the way in which knowledge had been shared, which had informed responses in other parts of the country.

The Director of Public Health endorsed this, noting that no other areas appeared to have the developed the range of interventions used in Leicester. This had been hard work and was tiring for officers, but the positive feedback received was very welcome and encouraging.

g) **General**

The Committee thanked all involved in the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic for their work.

The following points were then made in discussion:

o Are covid marshals working in shopping centres on the outer estates?

> *Response from the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services:*
> Different staff had been working as marshals during the pandemic. The CCTV infrastructure also had been useful to supplement the work they had done in monitoring areas. Before the government had introduced its marshal programme, the Council had employed people to help with these activities, taking an intelligence-led approach.
>
> Marshals were on the outer estates. Currently they were concentrated in the north-east area of the city, but could be deployed in key shopping areas across the city as needed.

o The production of information in community languages had been very important in the success of getting this information to people.

o What were the reasons for the high number of cases of, and deaths from, Covid-19 in the city?

> *Response from the Director of Public Health:*
> The number of deaths in the city were on a level with other areas. A tracker had been produced that showed the local picture, but care needed to be taken to ensure that comparisons of these figures with those nationally used the same analytical methods.

o Studies in China had shown that wearing face masks had a significant effect in reducing the number of cases of Covid-19. The Council therefore was asked to provide funding to enable people to buy masks of a sufficient standard to give them as much protection as possible from the virus.

> *Response from the Director of Public Health:*
> There was a requirement for a higher level of protection if doing closer, invasive work, such as that by dentists or beauticians, but most people did not need the higher level of protection.

14

Face coverings stopped droplet transmission and, where reusable, should be washed before reuse. Keeping a distance from other people still was a priority, so most of the time a face covering, rather than a mask, was sufficient.

o   There had been a number of cases where people were turned away from the walk-in test centre in Belgrave. Why was this?

Response from the Director of Public Health:
A lot of work had been done with the national testing team to keep testing capacity as high as possible. Consequently, there were more testing stations around the city than were found in most areas, but this still could not meet the full demand. The government was very clear that only symptomatic testing should be undertaken now.

o   One important achievement was that every request for a food parcel had been met.

o   The Council in a good position to manage a second wave of Covid-19 because of the work done during the first wave.

o   What would be the impact of population movement to the city as the university year started?

Response from the Director of Public Health:
The large increase in Covid-19 cases following the return of students to some other universities nationally was a concern. However, the local universities had engaged very well with Public Health officers, developing plans in case of outbreaks and continuing to work alongside the Council.

o   Media representation of Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic had caused some people to respond negatively to these communities.

Response from the Director of Public Health:
Work to challenge these misconceptions was ongoing, but it was recognised that it would take time to counter media representations and ensure parity of treatment.

AGREED:
That all involved in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic be thanked for their work and achievements.

Councillor Kitterick left the meeting during discussion on this item

114. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING APRIL-JULY 2020/21

The Director of Finance submitted the first report in the monitoring cycle for the 2020/21 Revenue Budget, which also forecast expected performance against the budget for the year.

The Director reminded Members that the forecast cost of the Covid-19 pandemic to the Council was £40million. However, a lot of unknown factors remained, such as how long the current restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic would continue and whether people's behaviours would change after the pandemic, (for example, whether they would return to leisure centres). The impact on Council Tax collection, business rates and the longer term effect on the local economy also were unknown.

To date, £24million unringfenced government funding had been received by the Council towards meeting the cost of the pandemic, but it would be applying for further funding through the government's income loss scheme. The criteria for funding from this were complex, but it was thought that the Council could be eligible to receive approximately £10million.

The Director of Finance advised that the budget gap could be met this year through the Council's managed reserves strategy, but the financial position after this year was unknown, as the government was having to fund a significant national challenge. It had been reported that a number of local authorities considered themselves to be close to no longer being economically viable, due to the impact on them of the Covid-19 pandemic. The City Mayor confirmed that Leicester City Council was not amongst these, due to the effectiveness of its economic strategy over recent years.

In response to a question, it was noted that additional unbudgeted resources had been deployed in the Special Education Service in 2020/21 for Education Health and Care plan assessments and reviews. This would enable the current backlog to be reduced, following which some additional resource would remain in that budget to ensure the situation did not arise again.

The Committee thanked officers for the important work being done managing the Council's finances, noting that the government did not appear to fully understand the financial pressures currently faced by local councils.

AGREED:
> That the overall position of the Revenue Budget 2020/21 presented in the report be noted.

Councillor Joel left the meeting during discussion on this item

115. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING APRIL-JULY 2020/21

The Director of Finance submitted a report showing the position of the Capital Programme for 2020/21 as at the end of July 2020 (Period 4), explaining that there was some slippage in the programme due to the Coid-19 pandemic and

resulting national "lockdown".

The Director of Capital Projects confirmed that some sites had had to shut down during the pandemic, due to social distancing requirements. As a result, it had been necessary to reschedule when various trades could be present on site, so some schemes had slipped. In some cases, if they were not business critical, schemes had been moved back in the programme.

The Committee received the following responses to questions raised:

- For which scheme was the Cank Street feasibility study proposed?

  Response from the City Mayor:
  A very successful link had been created between Town Hall Square and the area in which market Food Hall previously had stood (near Green Dragon Square). The feasibility study was to consider extending that link through Green Dragon Square to Cank Street.

- In addressing the city's declared Climate Emergency, using natural gas was not an appropriate way forward. Were the old boilers in Council houses being replaced with gas ones?

  Response from the City Mayor:
  The city had a very extensive district heating network, from which Council housing benefited.

- The forecast completion date of Haymarket Hotel project appeared to have slipped.

  Response from the City Mayor:
  Funding for this project was a commercial investment and was considered to be a responsible use of revenue to obtain a good return in the future.

  Response from the Director of Capital Projects:
  The hotel was due to be completed in November 2020. The site had been visited and progress reviewed approximately two weeks ago. The development was on target, so currently there was no reason to think that this completion date would be missed.

- How were the Jewry Wall Museum improvements progressing?

  Response from the City Mayor:
  Contractors were due to start on site in October 2020, as a lot of fitting out work needed to be done to the former Vaughn College to make it suitable for its new use as part of the museum.

- Further information was requested on the funding held for the Waterside Primary School.

Response from the Director of Capital Projects:
Some funding was held by the Council for the purpose of undertaking a feasibility study on the project on behalf of the Department for Education.

- Further information was requested on the Leicester North-West Transport Scheme.

  Response from the Director of Finance:
  Further information was not available at the meeting, but could be circulated afterwards to members of the Committee.

AGREED:
1) That the overall position of the 2020/21 Capital Programme be noted;

2) That the Director of Housing be asked to make a presentation to the Committee at an appropriate time on the effectiveness of the district heating network, including the network's contribution to addressing the city's declared Climate Emergency and opportunities that could be available to extend the scheme; and

3) That the Director of Finance be asked to send an update on progress with the Leicester North-West Transport Scheme to members of the Committee.

Councillor Dawood left the meeting during discussion on this item

116. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

a) Grants for Exit from Lockdown Expenses

Councillor Waddington asked the City Mayor the following question:

"On 24th August the City Mayor invited Leicester VCS and Faith groups to apply for grants to enable them to exit lockdown and make their services sustainable in a Covid-safe manner. Can the City Mayor please provide an update on the allocation of this grant funding? Have any of our adventure playgrounds been successful in applying for grants from this fund to enable them to reopen safely?"

Response from the City Mayor:
Voluntary Action Leicester had received over 170 applications for funding for this purpose from a wide range of groups, including several playgrounds.

These applications would be assessed by Voluntary Action LeicesterShire over the next few days, but no decisions on funding had been taken yet.

b) <u>Ward Data on Covid-19 Cases</u>

Councillor Westley asked the City Mayor when Councillors could, if possible, receive a breakdown of Covid cases in each ward.

Response from the City Mayor:
An update including a breakdown of cases on a ward basis would be circulated to Councillors on 25 September. However, although it was interesting to know the number of cases on a ward by ward basis, it was more useful to have information on the number of cases by Lower Super Output Areas. These were smaller than wards, so provided finer detail.

c) <u>Former Great Central Station Premises</u>

Councillor Porter referred to the redevelopment of the former Great Central Station and the option that the Council had to take office accommodation there if it could not be let. In view of the government's directive to work from home if possible, Councillor Porter asked the City Mayor what was likely to happen to this development.

Response from the City Mayor:
The developer remained very confident that a tenant would be found for this building. Rent in Leicester was slightly lower than in comparable cities and the city provided good access to London, which made a good offer for prospective tenants. This would not change as a result of current working restrictions.

117. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.29 pm
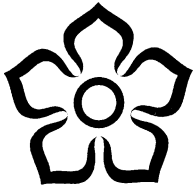
Leicester City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All Wards - Corporate Issue

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:
Overview Select Committee   **3 December 2020**

_____

Tracking of Petitions - Monitoring Report
_____

Report of the Monitoring Officer

1.   Purpose of Report

To provide Members with an update on the current status of responses to petitions against the Council's target of providing a formal response within 3 months of being referred to the Divisional Director.

2.   Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the current status of outstanding petitions and to agree to remove those petitions marked 'Petition Process Complete' from the report.

3.   Report

The Committee is responsible for monitoring the progress and outcomes of petitions received within the Council. An Exception Report, showing those petitions currently outstanding or for consideration at the current Overview Select Committee meeting is attached at Appendix 1.

The Exception Report contains comments on the current progress on each of the petitions. The following colour scheme approved by the Committee is used to highlight progress and the report has now been re-arranged to list the petitions in their colour groups for ease of reference:

-   **Red** – denotes those petitions for which a pro-forma has not been completed within three months of being referred to the Divisional Director.

-   **Petition Process Complete** - denotes petitions for which a response pro-forma has sent to the relevant Scrutiny Commission Chair for comment, subsequently

endorsed by the Lead Executive Member and the Lead Petitioner and Ward Members informed of the response to the petition.

- **Green** – denotes petitions for which officers have proposed a recommendation in response to a petition, and a response pro-forma has been sent to the relevant Scrutiny Commission Chair for comment, before being endorsed by the Lead Executive Member.

- **Amber** – denotes petitions which are progressing within the prescribed timescales, or have provided clear reasoning for why the three-month deadline for completing the response pro-forma has elapsed.

In addition, all Divisional Directors have been asked to ensure that details of **all** petitions received direct into the Council (not just those formally accepted via a Council Meeting or similar) are passed to the Monitoring Officer for logging and inclusion on this monitoring schedule.

4.   Financial, Legal and Other Implications

There are no legal, financial or other implications arising from this report.

5.   Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

The Council's current overall internal process for responding to petitions.

6.   Consultations

Staff in all teams who are progressing outstanding petitions.

7.   Report Author

Angie Smith
Democratic Services Officer
tel. 0116 454 6354

Date Petition referred to Divisional Director	Received From	Subject	Type - Cncr (C) Public (P)	No. of Sig	Ward	Date Receipt Reported to Council (C) / Committee (Cttee)	Lead Divisional Director	Current Position	Scrutiny Chair Involvement	Date of Final Response Letter Sent to Lead Petitioner	Current Status	Ref. No.
11/03/2020	Brenda Worrall (on behalf of Leicester CND)	Petition asking the council to make Leicester a Nuclear Ban Community	(p)	96	City-wide	19/03/2020 (C)	Miranda Cannon / Kamal Adatia	Following a question on the topic raised by the petition, at full Council on 19 March 2020, the City Mayor confirmed that he intended to bring a motion to the Council seeking to resolve a clear position in relation to the global threat of nuclear weaponry and the particular developments referred to in the petition. Due to the current abeyance of Council meetings, it is not currently possible to indicate when that will be.	Proforma returned by the Scrutiny Chair		GREEN	20/03/01
22/07/2020	St Matthews Tenants and Residents Association	Petition asking the council to take action against ASB in Calgary Road / Vancouver Road / Willow Street Courtyard	(p)	23	Wycliffe		Chris Burgin	PCSO Karen Reed dealt with ASB in the area following a petition in February 2020 and has been allocated to deal with the current petition and is keeping in regular contact with residents. A sentinel incident report has been created. Details of the case have also been passed to Crasbu following a major incident involving Police on Willow Street. On 28/8/20 the lead petitioner was contacted by Housing and reported she is continuing to keep diary sheets and will contact the police if and when any issues occur. On 3/9/20 she was given another incident number for a further incident. One youth was recognised and details of his address passed to the Police. Ward Councillors are being kept informed of progress.			GREEN	20/07/01
05/08/2020	Sarah Bell / Alan Speck	Petition asking for the removal of a tree outside 21 Knighton Church Road, Leicester	(p)	12	Knighton		John Leach	No further action. During the recent storm (Storm Francis) the tree in question fell due to the excessive conditions. All materials have been removed from site. The petition request has been overtaken by natural events.			PETITION CLOSED	20/07/02
17/09/2020	Charlie Carr	Petition requesing the Council publicly acknowledge the undeniable evidence of modern day slavery in the city	(p)	90	City-wide		John Leach	Petition Forwarded to Director			AMBER	20/09/01
17/09/2020	Dinesh Ranchod	Petition to request traffic calming and introduce CPZ for controlled parking on Doncaster Road	(p)	76	Belgrave		Andrew L Smith	A holding letter has been sent to the Lead Petitioner informing him that the matter is being investigated by the Traffic Management team, and the views of ward councillors are being sought. The request for a controlled parking zone will feed into wider consultation on a potential Residents' Parking Scheme for the area.			AMBER	20/09/02
15/10/2020	Zina Zelter, Climate L+L	Petition to the Executive with recommendations for the draft Leicester Local Plan	(p)	514	City-wide		Andrew L Smith	A draft response which has responded to the points raised to the petition has been approved by the City Mayor, Cllrs Clair and Clarke. The final response will be sent to the Lead Petitioner accompanied with a copy of the Council's response to Government on the Planning for the Future White Paper Consultation.			GREEN	20/10/01

RED - Pro-forma not completed within 3 months of being referred to Divisional Director
PETITION PROCESS COMPLETE - Scrutiny Chair commented on Pro-forma, Lead Executive Member signed off response and final letter sent to Lead Petitioner.
GREEN - Lead Executive Member consulted on proposed response and Pro-forma sent to Scrutiny Chair
AMBER - Petition response progressing within 3 months of being referred to Divisional Director

Appendix 1

Draft Leicester Local Plan (2020 – 2036)

Public Consultation

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Thursday 3rd Dec 2020

Content

1. Summary of representations received on Local Plan to date

2. Feedback from Scrutiny Commissions

3. Key Issues for progressing the Local Plan

4. Timetable and Discussion

1. Summary of representations received

Email responses; Consultation Hub responses
"Citizen Space"; Questionnaires & Petition .

Numbers to be updated verbally at the meeting :-

℞ (by 30/10/2020) - in total **1049** received

- About Plan = **84** (policy wording & content)

- Other reps = **373** (including "quick comments"

- About Sites = **445 on 84 various sites**

- From just 1 comment up to numerous

Leicester
City Council

2a Feedback from Scrutiny Commissions

Commission	Summary of main points - minutes of meeting
Economic Development Tourism &Transport Scrutiny 12th October 2020	- Need better public transport particularly in areas of population growth; infrastructure which encourages more environmentally friendly transportation; - Enhance green public spaces particularly in areas of dense housing; - Should we designate scarce NHS land at the General Hospital site for new housing in view of the growing need for health services and beds, resulting from population increase and ageing? - Prioritise development of brown field sites including derelict and disused factory buildings for employment/business opportunities; - Enable development measures designated to create more local jobs, green jobs and business start-ups; - Ensure accessibility is a thread running through all parts of the Local Plan; - Protect family houses in areas where Houses in Multiple Occupation conversions adversely impact neighbourhood communities and heritage assets; - Control the numbers of betting shops, massage parlours and food take- away establishments in neighbourhoods with vulnerable populations and/or levels of saturation; - Forward the suggestion of establishing start-up and business development premises to relevant officers for consideration

2b Feedback from Scrutiny Commissions

Commission	Summary of main points - Summary from minutes
Joint meeting Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny 26th October 2020	1. Leicester General Hospital Site – lack facilities /use of the site for key worker provision/ number of houses possible on that site/ confirmation from NHS that sites not needed for health again by 2035/ part of current (NHS)consultation. 2. The Loss of public green space v the need for housing & sufficient green space for remaining & new population, loss of wildlife corridors, climate emergency. 3. Some types of development cannot be specified, eg tenure of the development. 4. Trajectory of sites – exhausting land; build further houses on brownfield land first before building on greenfield; use Council owned sites for good mix with open space. (Duty to Cooperate dialogue with neighbouring districts, SGP / longer term goals). 5. How is LP consulting the on the provision of Care Homes and the future demand; (Engagement with housing colleagues, ASC (10 year Plan) / council controlled sites). 6. Cap the new development of restaurants and takeaways where residents are finding it difficult because of people coming and causing parking issues – still controlled 7. New Use Class Order change, so shops, cafes, restaurants, offices, gyms, creches, nurseries, indoor recreation have less control, from Planning system. 8. Community facilities like PoWs etc along with the housing development being proposed. Groups that have requirement need to engage in the LP process. 9. Government introduced space standards in some development.

2c Feedback from Scrutiny Commissions

Commission	Summary of Points Summary From Minutes
Housing Scrutiny 4th November 2020	• Need social as well as affordable and market housing • Maximise density; use brownfield land first; discourage car use • Student Accommodation built to the same standards, for reuse • Recognise the importance of health and the impacts of COVID • LCC ownership, can provide more energy efficient homes • Recognise the importance of local green space; environmental standards and the threat of climate change • Concerns about the Government's proposed changes to the Planning system • Importance of local Councillor engagement

30

2d Feedback from Scrutiny Commissions

Commission	[to be added in on day] – meetings after report deadline
Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny 26th November	Thursday 26th November
Children Young People & Schools Scrutiny 30th November	Monday 30th November
Heritage, culture leisure & sport - Tuesday 1st Dec 2020	Tuesday 1st Dec 2020 -

3a Key Issues for Progressing the Plan

- Why not wait for new White Paper system?
  - Delay of Govt consultation on new centralised policy and processes
  - Removal of Duty to Co-operate and mandatory target imposition would make dealing with unmet need much more difficult
  - Take advantage of transition period - provide certainty and give us time to respond to the very different future new system
  - Local Plan and evidence base work will become out of date

- Will the latest Government housing calculation algorithm reduce our target significantly?
  - Considered highly likely to change
  - If it doesn't, current consultation will give us a much better picture of community views on sites
  - better placed to inform next version of the plan

Leicester
City Council

3b Key Issues for Progressing the Plan

- How will next consultation (Reg 19 version) of the Local Plan differ from the one out to consultation now (Reg 18)?
  - Revised allocations to respond to consultation responses and new housing target when confirmed
  - More detail on site allocation layouts and mitigating infrastructure
  - Revised Climate/energy policy- (dependant upon Govt announcements on centralising policy) and how much they will centralise this   (ie not allow us to adopt local policy)
  - Revised retail and employment policies to respond to combined new use "Commercial uses" Class E
  - Further developed city centre/brownfield land capacity work
  - Strengthened design/density guidance
  - Respond to Environment Bill (Biodiversity) and other Government changes

Leicester City Council

3c Key Issues for Progressing the Plan

- **This is only one of a number of our consultation stages:**
  - LCC very much in 'listening' mode
  - Another consultation next year (Reg 19)
  - Followed by 'Examination in Public'

- **Without an up to date Local Plan:**
  - would have less control over new development (no 5 year land supply)
  - Delayed updated policy (eg National Space Standards and climate policy)
  - Uncertainty to adjacent districts over possible unmet need requirements

Leicester
City Council

4. Timetable and Discussion

- Issues and Options - Public Consultation complete

- Emerging Options, Sites and Development Management Policies – Public Consultation completed

- Full Council 19th February 2020 approved

- Current Public Consultation (Reg 18) to commence 14th September 2020 for 12 weeks (ends 7th December 2020)

- Submission Local Plan Consultation (Reg 19) – Autumn 2021

- Adoption Summer/Autumn 2022

Leicester
City Council

Overview Select Committee

Women Talking, City Listening: Summary Report

Date: 3rd December 2020

Lead director: Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance

Useful information
- Ward(s) affected: All

- Report authors: Hetha Copland, Area Development Manager

- Author contact details: 0116 454 1837 / hetha.copland@leicester.gov.uk

- Report version number: 1

1	**Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this report is;

1.2 To outline the research undertaken by the City Listening Project team over the previous 12 months and summarise the key findings both directly and indirectly related to the Council's business.

2	**Recommendations**

2.1 The report contains both national and local recommendations. The local recommendations outlined in this report are draft recommendations, subject to any comments or refinements. The Corporate Management Team, (CMT), and Executive have agreed the recommendations subject to review by Departmental Management Teams and leads for the service areas identified and subject to Scrutiny comments. This work is on-going and therefore the recommendations are likely to continue to be refined and built upon over the coming months.

2.2 The local recommendations, once finalised, will be integrated into the Equality Action Plan, which will be reported to Overview Select Committee, (OSC) and agreed by CMT and the Executive, as per the usual reporting and governance arrangements for the Equality Action Plan. The national recommendations have been provisionally made to the Government Equalities Office (GEO); however, a final report is due following this report to OSC. At the time of writing this report, we are awaiting feedback from the GEO. A copy of the list of the full set of recommendations arising from the research is attached as Appendix A.

2.3 The full research report is attached as Appendix B. The full report provides greater detail and also includes accounts of the lived experiences and views of some of the women who participated in the project.

2.4 **It is recommended that;**

2.5 OSC notes the contents of the report, in particular the findings of the research project and the recommendations (both local and national).

2.6 OSC endorses the recommendations in principle, subject to any comment and/or revisions.

3	**Background Information**

3.1 As one of the seven national Centenary Cities, Leicester City Council has been widely recognised for its work in celebrating the achievements of local suffragettes.

3.2 Following on from the Centenary Cities project, The Council were one of three cities successful in securing funding from the GEO to research women's position in Leicester, today.

3.3 This research project sought to identify barriers to equality in modern Leicester and elevate the voices of women, using their insight to develop the recommendations made.

3.4 Using a range of research methods (focus groups, 121 semi-structured interviews, online consultation, Dialogue and email submissions) 330 women were involved in the project.

3.5 This summary report captures the ten key issues identified by this research:

Careers and Motherhood
Community Support
Workplace – Policies vs Practice
Recognition of and Support for Carers
Sports and Access
Safety
Personalisation of Services and Communication to Service Users
Finance
Health
Covid-19

3.6 This summary refers to the full draft research report, which is attached as Appendix B. For ease of cross-referencing, the pages of each theme in the full research report are listed against the theme summaries in this report.

4	**Introduction: Equalities and Recognition** (Page 9)

4.1 The Equality Act 2010 acknowledges nine protected characteristics; however discrimination cases currently must be brought separately for each protected characteristic. This means that intersectionality, for example racialised sexism, is currently not recognised to the fullest extent in law. Many of the women involved in the project had experiences of inequality and discrimination which were intersectional in nature. Section 14 of the Equality Act 2010, which deals with 'dual discrimination' was never brought into force. The following recommendations would aid in greater recognition of and in addressing the barriers and inequalities women face where multiple inequalities intersect with one another.

5   Careers and Motherhood (Pages 10-27)

5.1   The most prevalent theme, highlighted by a vast majority of women, was the strain felt between pursuing career goals and managing childcare responsibilities. Almost all mothers spoken to were the primary caregiver of their child or children. 61.71% of women asked, said that family commitments hold them back.

5.2   Many women experience living through the triple shift: employed or seeking employment, expected to do most of the housework and the childcare. Many women expressed that these unpaid forms of labour are demanding, unrewarding and considered of lesser important. Many participants said that these roles are often learnt in childhood, reinforced through family structures and are difficult to shift.

5.3   A common frustration was **the desire to do paid work, but the feeling of being unable to**. Many mothers involved in the project felt that, while the early years funding programme for childcare of 3- and 4-year olds (15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year for all families, 30 hours a week for families where lone parents/both parents earn at least £139 per week) is a help, many do not feel this sufficient. This scheme doesn't account for families of multiple children under 5, families with a child under 3 with parents who wish to return to work, or the continuous need for childcare before/after school. The **steep cost of childcare** means that for many women in Leicester, their wages would entirely go to paying or supplementing childcare fees to ensure care provision during working hours, with some families even left at a deficit if the primary caregiver returned to work.

5.4   Many women identified **work as an important part of their identity**, and for mothers, working offers an opportunity to be in a different environment, interacting with other adults, and a break from immediate childcare responsibilities.

5.5   **Flexible working arrangements** and understanding managers who create a workplace culture that is inclusive of mothers were two significant ways women said that they were enabled to recommence work.

5.6   Being granted more opportunities to **network** was cited as another way to assist mothers working or seeking employment, by creating a culture shift from realising that previously unacknowledged skills can be utilised professionally.

5.7   For many, the skilled career paths they wish to follow **do not always accommodate part-time workers.**

5.8   Upon **returning to work** sometime after they have had a child/ren, many **women felt at a disadvantage to their colleagues**, due to the time that was spent away from work and how they are viewed returning to work as mothers. Networks of support are of importance.

5.9   Women also spoke of an over reliance on other female family members to support with childcare responsibilities, which is also likely to have an impact on opportunities available to those family members.

5.10   Many women involved in the project spoke about not pursuing, or delaying, their career goals and not being able to fully contribute to the economy and also about the strain on their mental health, due to the stress and the chronic undervaluing of their unpaid labour (caregiving and housework).

5.11   There must be a greater **inclusion and acceptance of mothers in the workplace**. The following recommendations are based on the solutions offered by the women involved in the project;

5.12   **Recommendation 1: Flexible Working Arrangements (including flexibility in recruitment to facilitate job shares) to be implemented by employers in corporate policy and job advertisements.**

5.13   **Recommendation 2: Leicester City Council to integrate an action into its Equality Action Plan to support and publicise more opportunities for women employees, including networking events and promotion of the Council's employee groups.**

5.14   **Recommendation 3: Leicester City Council to further consider and integrate an appropriate action into its Equality Action Plan: ways in which to promote professional and employment opportunities and to provide more opportunities for women in the City to network (for example, an externally focused event, possibly in partnership with Economic Regeneration).**

5.15   **Recommendation 4: Leicester City Council's Voluntary Community Sector liaisons and Communications team to communicate news of both Council-affiliated and external networking events to women-majority community groups (for example, library and children's centre 'Toddler Time' attendees), to offer mothers who are not in employment greater professional opportunities.**

5.16   **Recommendation 5: Leicester City Council's Human Resources team to consider implementing employee policy for those returning from maternity leave to better support both the employee and their manager's facilitation or their re-entry into work.**

5.17   **Recommendation 6: That the government flexible working taskforce continue to campaign for employers to adopt flexible working practises in the public sector and the private sector.**

5.18   **Recommendation 7: That the Job Centre Plus continue to build on its work thus far to promote flexible working practises, by challenging appropriately and requiring adequate justification where an employer has communicated that an opportunity is not suitable for flexible working.**

5.19   **Recommendation 8: That governmental policymakers review the '30 hours free childcare scheme', taking into account and addressing the issues raised by participants, to give women a greater opportunity to re-enter work without suffering financially.**

5.20   **Recommendation 9: That governmental policymakers consider exploring the merits and risks to implementing an allowance or financial benefit (subject to certain conditions), where women are relying on family members informally to take on childcare responsibilities to enable them to work, to ensure that family members (particularly female family members) are supplemented and are not experiencing detriment financially.**

6   Community Support (Pages 27-31)

6.1   Having a purpose to meet and an activity to do presents an opportunity for women to form **support networks** and open up where they may have otherwise felt uncomfortable to directly seek emotional support. In these groups, women forged friendships and supported one another – as well as providing crucial signposting information and advice.

6.2   In a context of chronically strained NHS mental health services and increasing poverty (Rose and McAuley 2019; Power, Doherty, Pybus, Pickett 2020), community groups play an ever more important role in supporting individuals. These groups serve many **functions,** such as providing a sense of belonging and collectivism, therapeutic interaction, escapism and even career support.

6.3   However, the project heard from many women who had created initiatives in their communities, who voiced the perceived **threats to the future of these services**, namely, a lack of funding. This was also felt by the Council-commissioned community services, with concern that the tendering process is always becoming narrower, and this could threaten the longevity of an established service that provides essential advice and support.

6.4   Group organisers spoke about the **difficulty with accessing funding** for community groups, such as Ward Funding, and suggested that more information events for applicants and simplified application systems would be beneficial. The Council's Ward Engagement Officers do hold information sessions for those applying for funding, however it was apparent that participants involved in community group leadership weren't always aware of this.

6.5   Additionally, if participants are describing the funding bid process as complicated and difficult to undertake, there is possibly an issue with the **accessibility** of systems used for funding applications. As the Council champions accessibility, it is recommended that any in-house bid application processes be reviewed, in light of this feedback.

6.6   Other barriers to accessing groups were linked to finance, transport or location. In the Council, we have a directory of care and support called 'MyChoice', which was mentioned only by the participants who were Council staff members, suggesting that this valuable informational hub requires greater advertisement.

6.7   Some participants also suggested a mapping system would be helpful. In light of these comments, **MyChoice could streamline with Leicester Open Data to offer a mapping system**, locating where particular community groups meet. Leicester Open Data platform has already been piloted for this purpose by mapping support as part of the Covid-19 response. The Open Data platform also has the benefit of being collaborative, meaning that Voluntary and Charitable Sector, (VCS), organisations and individuals can add any groups or support that the Council are unaware of, thus promoting a more comprehensive picture. By utilising visual mapping, the Council will be able to **identify and then target underserved areas and overlay with other maps (such as public transport routes)**, ensuring that any barriers, such as lack of transport, can be identified and addressed.

6.8   **Recommendation 10: Leicester City Council to review all funding application systems, to check accessibility and make the relevant changes where any issues with accessibility are determined.**

6.9   **Recommendation 11: Leicester City Council teams dealing with bid funding applications (within both Neighbourhoods and Procurement) to consider how contact information for advice and support is published, to ensure maximum uptake of such offers of support.**

6.10   **Recommendation 12: Adult Social Care and others who may have an interest in mapping the support offer to consider whether it may be beneficial to align to Leicester Open Data, in order that information isn't replicated and can be found in one place.**

6.11   **Recommendation 13: Leicester City Council to develop a Comms plan which fulfils two functions; 1. to make VCS organisations and community groups aware of the Open Data Platform and to encourage as many as possible to add information to the relevant map and 2. to make citizens of Leicester aware of the Open Data Platform and how to use it.**

6.12   **Recommendation 14: Once the Open Data Platform is more developed, consider overlaying VCS support map with public transport routes map to establish whether there are any issues which need to be addressed. This will need to be in partnership with public transport operators.**

7   Workplace – Policies vs. Practice (Pages 32-49)

7.1   Participants frequently spoke about the following issues relating to work: unhealthy working environments where the workplace culture stifled women from being retained or progressing in their organisation, guilt for exercising supportive policies such as flexible working or parental leave and such policies not being properly implemented by managers, discriminatory behaviour, sexual harassment and poor, potentially illegal, employer practice.

7.2   This highlighted that some organisations are complicit, to a certain extent, in sustaining inequality.

7.3   Many participants expressed that efforts to advance equality have seen society significantly progress – leading some to falsely believe we have now achieved full equality. In the context of the workplace, many women believed this has led to protective law and policy often becoming a tick-box exercise, which 'proves' equal treatment and opportunity upon audit. Participants reflected that under-exercised policies which are not meaningfully applied, coupled with forms of discrimination evolving to become more subtle, can also make it hard for employees to recognise, call out and resolve such issues.

7.4   Individual ownership is important, but an organisation-wide culture shift, starting with the right 'tone from the top' is essential to making the working environment equally safe, fair and respectful for all.

7.5   A significant proportion of women said that **Flexible working arrangements** (FWAs) and the ability to reduce contracted hours are important in aiding employees who have had a change in circumstance or additional needs to continue to succeed in their employment. However, where women utilised such FWA policies, they expressed that this way of working is not normalised and has a stigma attached to it.

7.6   In the context of Covid-19, flexible working is already becoming somewhat of a 'new normal'. Now is the ideal opportunity to make FWAs a staple part of working culture, post-Covid. It is appreciated that standardisation of flexible working may have some financial implications for employers i.e. IT equipment costs which smaller businesses or those in the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) may not be able to shoulder independently, which should be accounted for.

7.7   Regarding part-time work, women who had reduced their hours expressed frustration in that their hours (and consequently, pay) were reduced, but their workload wasn't. Women also perceived their requirement for part time work, as limiting the number of opportunities to progress. Women make up a disproportionately large share of part-time employees (Office National Statistics: House of Commons 2020). Therefore, women are disproportionately impacted by such barriers.

7.8   **Unconscious biases** are learned stereotypes that are automatic, unintentional, deeply ingrained, and able to influence behaviour. Whilst direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of a protected characteristic, as defined under the Equality Act 2010, is prohibited, unconscious biases that are acted upon are often more elusive or subtle in nature, which makes it very difficult to evidence unfair treatment and inequality.

7.9   Such perception and treatment can impact on how suitable an employee is perceived to be for a progression opportunity. Black and Minority Ethnic,(BAME), and working-class women spoke to their experiences of being treated differently in the workplace, as well as a workplace culture that left them feeling excluded or othered. Some BAME women expressed how they felt more barriers in relation to their ethnicity or race than their gender and spoke about

feeling a need to be more diligent than their white counterparts, in order to be respected in their role.

7.10 In some specific fields, women said that their career goals were incompatible with family goals. A common report of women in employment was that many managers deem it acceptable to ask about their female staff's fertility, and that this can have an impact on the desirability of an employee for opportunities in work.

7.11 Women returning to work following maternity leave were sometimes met with dissuasion. It was made clear that women who are mothers (or even just perceived of as likely to become a mother) do need more support progress in their careers in the same way that other employees are able to. Family responsibility has to be acknowledged in both recruitment and workplaces without stigma or as a perceived weakness, and rather, **an accepted part of life experienced by a significant proportion of the working population**.

7.12 Participants also expressed that fertility is a topic for discussion when in the perceived interests of the employer, however health concerns or conditions such as periods and the menopause, are taboo topics in the workplace. It was largely felt that there should be a **greater awareness of these health issues in the workplace**. Where participants had policies or open dialogues in the workplace addressing these issues, they voiced being able to address their health needs and establish adjustments to enable them to do their job more effectively.

7.13 Women spoke of **assault or harassment in their line of work** by managers, staff and service users - these stories most commonly arising from women in lower paid, particularly service, roles.

7.14 Resolves to eradicate barriers relating to the workplace must be focused on shifting the workplace culture, with senior staff members held accountable for modelling this.

7.15 One of the main resolutions suggested was access to **safer spaces**. Safe spaces refer to a 'place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm' (Oxford Dictionary definition). Acknowledging the immense challenge of tackling inequality and to avoid making commitments that cannot be met which can undermine trust, operating on a 'safer space' policy would be more appropriate currently.

7.16 Safer spaces can be created by having zero-tolerance equalities policies, diversity and inclusion training for staff of all levels, encouraging staff to create or partake in employee groups and supporting staff members equally to engage, adopting a dignity framework to practically manage conversations and encouraging all employees to learn about how they can support a culture of equality and inclusion.

7.17 In recruitment, participants drew attention to **lack of diversity on interview panels** and how a lack of relatability already places interviewees from protected

and under-represented groups at a disadvantage. The value of 'banter' or 'off the cuff chats' utilised by candidates of greater privilege to relate to their interviewer was criticised heavily by participants, who advocated for more structured interviews as a means to fairer recruitment.

7.18 The researchers heard numerous accounts of unfair recruitment practices which are often undetectable. A hidden preference in recruitment for those who aren't a **'pregnancy risk'** was commonly felt by women of 'prime child-bearing' age, and discriminatory practice and reasonable adjustments not being implemented in recruitment, despite having been agreed prior, were mentioned.

7.19 Recruitment bias can be reduced by implementing measures such as standardised curriculum vitae, (CV), -blinding, mandated diverse recruitment panels, ensuring inclusive terminology in advertisements, seizing non-traditional recruitment opportunities such as having a stall or scheduling an agenda slot with a minority advocacy network's event, and choosing to conduct structured interviews that enable decisions to be made strictly on evidence of suitability for the role.

7.20 Regarding diverse recruitment panels, it is essential that all panel members are in positions of direct or indirect professional relevance to the recruiting post, and that all members have the same briefing and/or training to prepare for the task. This is to ensure panel participation is meaningful and all panel members are able to contribute with value.

7.21 **Recommendation 15: That Leicester City Council's Equality Action Plan 2021 incorporate work internally to support line managers to understand organisational support mechanisms which are particularly relevant to the issues that participants have raised (such as the flexible working policy, time off for dependents policy) how those policies and support mechanisms support equality and how to make decisions which promote a supportive environment and also more flexible working, where it is practicable. This is likely to be achieved most effectively through some form of training or workshop style events.**

7.22 **Recommendation 16: Leicester City Council to consider what training and/ or guidance managers are currently having on Occupational Health and consider reviewing this to promote an understanding of Occupational Health as a supportive tool, not a disciplinary measure.**

7.23 **Recommendation 17: That further work is undertaken with other services within the Council, for example economic regeneration, tourism and culture, to establish whether there are any actions that could be included in the Equality Action Plan 2021 which would encourage other employers in the City to promote supportive policies and work environment, for example flexible working and increased part-time working and job share opportunities, where practicable.**

7.24 **Recommendation 18: Organisations should review their policies collaboratively with their employees, by seeking feedback on how policy is**

currently used and understood. This could be facilitated by an anonymous internal survey, the information gathered aiding meaningful policy refinement. It is not within Leicester City council's remit to implement this in other organisations, but the Council should pay further consideration to how they might be able to influence and share best practice with employers across the City.

7.25   **Recommendation 19: Awareness raising and information sharing locally and nationally to ensure that women understand their rights in relation to employment, and to increase women's confidence and ability to challenge effectively, where they have experienced both overt and/or covert discrimination, harassment or victimisation. This also links with a recommendation under 'Safety' to ensure that women are confident and equipped to raise concerns and complaints in relation to service provision (p. 75)**

7.26   **Recommendation 20: That policymakers consider providing some form of funding to small and medium sized enterprises, (SMEs), and VCS organisations to enable them to purchase equipment, for the specific purpose of encouraging and enabling them to implement flexible/ home working.**

7.27   **Recommendation 21: The government flexible working taskforce/ policymakers to consider how they might influence employers to more openly consider employee part-time proposals and support part-time employees to do an effective job within contracted hours.**

7.28   **Recommendation 22: The government flexible working taskforce/ policymakers to consider how they can promote and encourage employees to offer job shares, to better support part-time employees to progress in their careers into more senior or skilled roles – benefitting both employer and employee.**

7.29   **Recommendation 23: Leicester City Council to consider implementing a zero-tolerance approach within the review of the Dignity at Work Policy.**

7.30   **Recommendation 24: Policymakers to consider ways in which to either encourage or mandate transparent recruitment processes that are publicly available for scrutiny and are designed using positive action where lawful, to reduce recruitment bias.**

7.31   **Recommendation 25: Leicester City Council to ensure that guidance on how to use the positive action provisions under the Equality Act and guidance on recruitment panel make-up is included in updated recruitment guidance for managers.**

8   Recognition of and Support for Carers (Pages 49-66)

8.1   The role of a carer (for an older or disabled family member) is frequently delegated to female family members. Women expressed that these

responsibilities meant they have had to put both career and education goals on hold, sometimes indefinitely. Many did not identify with the term 'carer', instead they saw it as a 'family duty'. This may mean that people are not accessing the carers support they are entitled to.

8.2   Many of societies structures do not recognise carers or their responsibilities and this can create multiple barriers to work and education – for example, trying to get GP appointments or time off for these appointments and accessing health and well-being support. This further isolates an already marginalised group. A lack of adequate support can be a significant contributor to mental health conditions. Greater awareness is required of how carers can be discriminated against by virtue of their association with an older or disabled family member. In addition, some participants spoke of their experiences of having been a young carer and feeling let down that this was not identified by their school and so they did not receive support.

8.3   **Recommendation 26 Leicester City Council to work with schools in the City to help to introduce guidance, training or professional development, as deemed appropriate, for teachers - to aid them in identifying young carers and referring to the relevant support. To publicise tools to aid schools in identifying young carers, for example the young carers identification tool for education staff on the schools intranet.**

8.4   **Recommendation 27: Policymakers to consider the issue more widely to see whether there are any additional national measures which could be put into place to better equip teachers in identifying young carers.**

8.5   **Recommendation 28: Leicester City Council to consider the merit of personal, social, health and economic, (PSHE)/Citizenship in the City's schools including a lesson on being a carer and having meaningful conversations about caring. Although this is not directly within the Council's remit, it is worth considering how the Council might effectively engage with schools to achieve this.**

8.6   **Recommendation 29: Leicester City Council's Adult Social Care/ Communications teams to share information with schools in the city on what support is available for young carers.**

8.7   **Ineffective support:** Many carers gain knowledge from speaking with others in carer support groups. This community information-sharing function was felt as an absence in formal service communication. Many carers felt they wouldn't have enough knowledge of services available, if such community groups didn't exist.

8.8   **Recommendation 30: Leicester City Council's Adult Social Care Department to work with health partners to review the way in which information is shared with carers; to make information packs more easily accessible, so that service users know exactly what support is available and whether they are entitled to such services. To utilise the Council's communication mechanisms, including social media, to raise awareness**

of information and support for carers.

8.9   **Caring and respite:** Women spoke about financial constraints and financial support not adequately covering their needs. Unpaid carers indicated that it was frustrating to be paid less than professional workers to do a greater share of caring. They also expressed mistrust for external paid support based on negative past experiences. Participants voiced paid respite did not cover the essential needs and had long waiting times. The difficulty of the care recipient adjusting to respite care and unpaid carers mistrust mean that sometimes respite care does not provide an adequate break for the unpaid carer, as intended. There is additional pressure to use the respite care available, even if the carer doesn't feel comfortable – otherwise such support, that was hard to fight for, is lost.

8.10   **Recommendation 31: Undertake further work locally with the relevant service area to understand and respond to the issues raised by participants in relation to respite.**

8.11   **Caring and aspirations:** Caring responsibilities put a pause on primary carers life aspirations. Opportunities were hindered due to the incompatibility of goals and caring responsibilities. Where individuals tried to pursue their aspirations and maintain caring responsibilities, they were met with significant strain. They felt there was little to no choice but to prioritise their dependants care and well-being. These setbacks cause low self-esteem, leaving carers to underestimate their skillset, when in fact community group members would help others realise the transferable skillset gained from caring.

8.12   They voiced feeling frustration at having to be reliant on the state for insufficient income. Carers also voiced feelings of loneliness; living a less typical life. Organisations should be more adaptive and take a more carer-friendly approach, offering flexibility in the workplace, education and other settings, this will benefit individuals holistically. Many carers express how they want to work for financial independence, being in a better financial position, being part of a community, fulfilling their goals and being positive role models for others. If more carers get into employment that is adapted, more will learn that they too can commence work or education and have fewer barriers in achieving their goals.

8.13   **Disparity between primary carers and paid care staff:** All carers and advocates highlighted the unfairness of their financial support against the job they do, further accentuated by wages received by external care staff. There is sometimes an inability to commence work as the prescribed hours to be eligible for Carers Allowance are not commonly available in the working world. Frustration was voiced with the lack of government's perceived lack of understanding that their caring duties are a restricting and real barrier to work. All carers we spoke to have a desire to work for various reasons but are unable to. There is no acknowledgement that goes into carers benefits and allowances that consider costs innate to living in a house with a care recipient (e.g. bills). At best the chronic undervaluing of unpaid carers results in damaged sense of self-worth and fosters frustration and tension with paid care support. At worst this causes some of the most isolated and vulnerable members of society to live in

some degree of poverty.

8.14 **Recommendation 32: Government to include policy ideas to address the nuanced issues raised in this report in relation to unpaid caring responsibilities, particularly in terms of the financial difficulties that they face, in the Green Paper on Social Care, and publish for public consultation.**

8.15 **Undervalued as a carer:** Many females felt overlooked both in their endeavours to advocate for correct support for care recipients and in attention paid to supporting carers to care and stay well whilst doing so. They expressed various struggles surrounding being acknowledged and listened to.

8.16 **Caring and health:** Many carers prioritise the health and well-being of those they care for over their own. However, if carers don't look after themselves, they are unable to provide the best care to those that they care for. The neglect of their own health and well-being impacts physical and mental health.

8.17 **Recommendation 33: Leicester City Council to ensure that the relevant corporate policies acknowledge carers and the discrimination they can face arising from their association with someone with a disability/ies (discrimination by association).**

8.18 Participants felt specific acknowledgement of carers by private businesses via occasional free treats (proposed by participants as free cinema tickets every few months) would go a long way in recognising carers and the work they do, as well as the limited incomes many have.

8.19 **Recommendation 34: Leicester City Council to consider offering carers discounts, deals or occasional free treats at City Council run sites (museum and heritage sites, for example) and events, to acknowledge the hard work of those who care and the minimal disposable income available. To encourage other businesses in the City (who are in a position to do so), to also consider offering discounts or deals for carers.**

9 **Sports and access** (Pages 66-69)

9.1 The main barrier felt in accessing sports is the gendering of certain sports as 'male'. This can be reinforced by segregation of physical education, (P.E), activities in school. This is further supported by a lack of clubs targeting girls and women in the community, causing women to accept participating in 'female' sports as this is their only opportunity to engage. Participants noted that, even in 2020 some schools don't offer the same P.E lessons for girls and boys, reinforcing gender scripts.

9.2 Some participants expressed a desire for 'women only' spaces when referring to sport, health and exercise. This was sometimes due to a cultural or religious reason and in other instances due to safety concerns.

9.3 **Recommendation 35: The Department of Education to give guidance to**

schools and colleges relating to the P.E. Curriculum and equal access to sports in practice, to ensure education providers are aware that while they can separate by sex for P.E. lawfully, they are obliged to provide the same opportunities for both girls and boys to engage in sports.

9.4 **Recommendation 36: Existing Council-operated sport and gym facilities to consider expanding their selection of 'women only' classes where there is evidence of need and to offer these at a range of days and times, accommodating for the many responsibilities women take on (as highlighted throughout this report). In addition, to advertise services more widely to enable women to participate.**

10 Safety (Pages 70-78)

10.1 This was a common concern to the women. This section explored how real safety concerns impact on how women live, how unsafe situations can be mitigated and where crimes have occurred, women's experience of engaging with the police and sport services.

10.2 **Safety methods, fear barriers and solutions:** Common safety methods include getting lifts with family or calling friends on the way home. Such methods rely on trusted support networks that are the norm for many women. However, if a woman doesn't have someone to rely on to boost confidence and aid in their safety, the fear of danger may impact the way women are able to live their lives. Not having safety mitigations in place caused women to avoid doing what they want to and not making the most of opportunities available to them. Regarding solutions to make cities safer, the project supports Plan UK's call for women and girls to be made a priority in the future redesigns of cities and involved in the processes. Women voiced several problems relating to neighbourhood safety with clear solutions, in particular better and more street lighting. Whilst Leicester is striving to be as green as possible given the declared climate emergency, safety remains a priority. Residents must feel some confidence to travel by foot at night.

10.3 **Recommendation 37: Local Authorities to consider keeping intermittent streetlights on to ensure no one area is pitch-black. This local strategy should be individually tailored to neighbourhoods, with priority given to areas of higher criminal activity.**

10.4 Safety in travelling to and from parked cars and not enough safe parking spaces were also raised. Participant expressed feeling patronised being given rape alarms and that this did not wholly make them feel safer. Safety and the night-time economy were addresses as a point of concern. Being in such space's women experience harassment and should they not meet advancements they are met with intimidation and aggression. The theme of victim blaming, a fundamental element of rape culture was also rife in discussions of safety.

10.5 **Recommendation 38: Leicester City Council to consider the merit of PSHE/Citizenship in the City's schools including a lesson on a rape culture and identifying harmful views and behaviour around love, sex and sexual**

assault, (such as shaming women who are sexually active or based on how many sexual partners they have, rape jokes, victim blaming, judging what women wear, 'cat calling'). Whilst this is not within the Council's direct remit, it is worth considering how the Council might effectively engage with schools to achieve this.

10.6   **Recommendation 39: Feed the issues raised in this section to the Smart Cities Team and Community Safety to consider whether we can use technology as a means to collaborate with citizens, to identify problems in their neighbourhoods and help facilitate a safer Leicester.**

10.7   **Recommendation 40: The Council's Community Safety and Protection team to support local community awareness initiatives relating to standing against rape culture and violence towards women (i.e. in externally circulated communications such as Your Leicester).**

10.8   **Recommendation 41: National policymakers consider ways in which women who have experienced domestic violence are enabled to safely stay in their own homes should they wish to, and instead perpetrators are required to leave the household.**

10.9   **Experience with authorities:** Women's experiences of working with the authorities following victimisation were polarised. Some praised the service, and others raised concerns. Some described experiencing a lack of help from other civilians during an incident. One particularly poignant account from a participant described how she felt racially discriminated against and that her life, rather than her abuser's life, was being unnecessarily disrupted. Some women questioned 'who polices public authorities?', demonstrating that some are not aware of independent scrutiny bodies or means of escalating complaints. Ensuring more public awareness of these mechanisms could strengthen perceptions of public authorities. Additionally, advocacy for women, particularly more 'vulnerable' women such as those with disabilities, would help women to receive the correct service provision.

10.10   **Recommendation 42: Leicester City Council to do some awareness raising work on how citizens can raise complaints and escalate concerns about any public body/authority if they feel that their complaint has not been sufficiently dealt with. Work may also need to be undertaken nationally to ensure that women are equipped to challenge effectively. This links with a recommendation in the section 'Workplace – Policies vs. Practise' (p.35) which recommends that awareness raising work is undertaken to ensure that women are aware of their rights in employment and are equipped to challenge where these are breached and where they have experienced discrimination, harassment and victimisation. It may be that these two recommendations can be combined, if appropriate.**

10.11   **Domestic Violence and Resources:** Many victims of domestic abuse are unaware that they are experiencing abusive treatment. It takes good support from indirect services to flag this up and help the individual become conscious of their situation. Being unaware of the extent or feeling unable to leave a situation

when it is in a familial setting was described as some women as, in part, due to cultural expectations and not bringing the extended family into disrepute. Some experiences of abuse can be insidious and therefore hard to identify. Women also reported not going forward to report or pursue divorces and separation proceedings due to the costs. Further detriment was felt by some of the women involved in the project as women are often the one to leave the household, whilst abusive partners remain at home. Feelings of being trapped are heightened during the pandemic, especially the initial strict lockdown period. Participants expressed that there must be more community education and discussion about domestic violence and community assistance to help victims acknowledge abuse is not acceptable and safety is more important than stigma.

10.12 **Recommendation 43: Leicester City Council and the Government Equalities Office to continue to support campaigns to increase awareness and recognition around the different types of abuse, where and how to get support, both locally and nationally.**

10.13 **Recommendation 44: Leicester City Council to ensure our relevant commissioned services (in Community Safety, Housing and Social Care) continue to make available practical help and support to survivors of domestic violence, taking into account the lived experiences of those seeking support and taking steps to ease the process of resettling and in some cases, becoming independent for the first time.**

11   Personalisation of Services and Communication to Service Users (Pages 78-92)

11.1 Many women raised the importance of receiving a person-centred service. Many women felt that seeing numerous different professionals contributed to a lack of consistency or personalised support, for example seeing a different GP or support worker at an employment agency were commonly raised. This fostered feelings of just being a number going through the system. This led to feeling a loss of trust in service providers, therefore being less forthcoming in experiences of such services, leading to poorer quality interactions that sustain ineffective service provision. This also led to women feeling anger towards others in similar situations to themselves, who felt the support they received was not as effective as the support that someone else had received, causing internal class friction.

11.2 **Housing and financial support:** A considerable amount of the population in Leicester experience economic deprivation. Living through economic hardship caused a reactionary anger, leaving many working-class people resentful towards other working-class people who had experience similar hardships. Particularly in conversations about housing and welfare. Regarding housing, people felt frustrations around accessible housing and support. Another common frustration was that of working-class families where the parent/s work full-time struggling to make ends meet and don't receive financial support, when comparing their situation to other people receiving more support.

11.3 Some of the women with council tenancies expressed feeling in an equally precarious situation, in that they felt unable to progress in their career, for fear

they will be forced out their home to a more dangerous situation should they commence work.

11.4 Private renters placing blanket bans on recipients of DSS was recently ruled as unlawful under the Equality Act 2010, as a form of indirect discrimination (Richardson 2020). This recognition is a positive step for fairer access to private tenancies, however work to debunk the prevailing expectation of private renters not taking on those who are in receipt of benefits may be required.

11.5 **Jobseekers:** Many women voiced negative experiences with employment agencies that came down to a lack of tailored support. They would often make references of current experiences to historical ones, detailing the infrequency of meetings and one-to-one support, the formal nature of their support which can be intimidating and off-putting and makes women feel as though it is a 'tick box system'.

11.6 There was mention of being placed in unsuitable jobs and this acting as a deterrent to return for support. Work should be suitable for skill and practically for the individual's lifestyle and somewhat relevant to an individual's interests and goals. If not, it becomes a temporary stop-gap solution, not a long-term fulfilling investment for the individual and their employer. Everyone deserves to be satisfied in their work. Personalisation is important to ensure a good fit for individual to work and ensure the experience of job seeking is respectful and not daunting.

11.7 Personalised services would be beneficial to both those using employment agencies and employees. Employees in that they see a customer through their job-seeking journey, facilitating greater investment and personal reward to see their assigned cases succeed.

11.8 **Caring and correct support:** Women with caring responsibilities frequently voiced that within health and social care, the support received was of an inconsistent standard and highlighted the frequency of falling through the gaps. Women spoke of red flags being overlooked (regarding timely diagnosis or adequate support, as listed in care plans), their advocacy being dismissed by health and care professionals unless they possessed the knowledge and interpersonal skills, and clear cross-agency miscommunication, all of which lead to poor care experiences. Where individuals don't know the regular protocol or information, it raises the question on the quality of care and support they are receiving and whether this is appropriate. With regards to mental health, poor interagency communication was also highlighted.

11.9 Similarly, in the context of school – parents with children with additional needs voiced frustration with 'lip service' meetings. Concerns not being met with sufficient action. Where oversights occurred in relation to correct care it resulted in interagency scapegoating, leaving women unsure of where to turn to, to rectify a situation. Multiple women expressed trouble getting diagnosis for their children with SEN and/ or autism. Concerns aren't taken seriously until an external agent expresses concerns of disruptive behaviour etc. This is frustrating and demeaning for parents; the child misses out on earlier support to live with

their condition. The struggle to get the correct level of support was felt by many, and many feeling the only way to gain support is to perseveres with force.

11.10   This section sheds light on the difficulty of carers advocating, or people with caring needs, in accessing the appropriate health and social care. The female carers spoken to evidently have had disparaging experiences which with the right knowledge and interpersonal skills can be fought against, but not all will have the same assets to hand to push for fair treatment.

11.11   **Recommendation 45: Ask the clinical commissioning groups, (CCG) to suggest that general practitioners, (GPs), document conversations on concerns voiced over dependant's behaviours and commit to listening and exploring these with the advocate.**

11.12   **Recommendation 46: Reviewing the sharing systems of key information in health and social care patient files.**

11.13   **Recommendation 47: Social care workers and health workers to provide service users date deadlines to provide updates/information where possible.**

11.14   **Child to adult support transitions:** Participants in situations that made them more dependent on services spoke about a drop-in support when transitioning from adolescent to adult. This can leave many in a situation of instability as new adults.

11.15   **Recommendation 48: Social care services to continue to review the way in which dependant services users go through from child's to adults' services and respond to feedback to ensure a gradual and manageable transition for the service user.**

11.16   **Education:** We heard of what good service provision looks like, one participant spoke of how her reasonable adjustments were met, she suggested it helped her to perform her best as did support from her mentor in college. This illustrates how good service provision can be, when tailored and consistent. However, many young participants students going to university rather than those taking other routes into further education or employment. Students deserve to feel informed and listened to when proposing post-college, and colleges have a duty to be the primary source of information to support their students in making informed decisions that are right for them – providing comprehensive support for all options.

11.17   **Recommendation 49: Feedback to colleges the need for post-college lessons to both pay fair attention to all career paths (not putting the onus on University) and for such sessions to take a more collaborative structure, in which students are made to feel comfortable asking questions, and confident their query will be met with a response.**

11.18   Many women over the age of traditional students today (over 25) expressed a desire to return to education. However, they needed to consider childcare and

financial or employment related constraints. Many women spoke of positive experiences where employers supported employees with further learning. Women also suggested that having a childcare facility attached to educational settings was also beneficial.

11.19 **Recommendation 50: Universities and other adult learning institutions to identify and establish whether there is a need for childcare facilities and act accordingly to accommodate for this. This may be in the form of creating links with nearby nurseries to offer parents subsidised rates or priority places for children.**

11.20 **Recommendation 51: Employers in Leicester and across the country to be encouraged to support their employee more widely in gaining additional qualifications.**

11.21 **Health:** Many women voiced feeling let down by their primary care services, whether due to inaccessibility, sudden drops in care, lack of information or the effects of procedures relating to female health. These are explored further under mental and physical health. This sub-section focuses on the quality of service received. Concerns were raised about post-natal care where they could not access the services needed to aid physical post-natal recovery, alongside the dramatic drop in care six-weeks post-partum. As mentioned earlier, a different professional on every service encounter also led to experiences that were not person-centred and resulted in inconsistent information and guidance.

11.22 Women highlighted the differing rules accepted for patients and GPs with regards to appointment cancellations. Women also expressed the need or preference to choose which gender GP to visit. However, some participants stated that getting a GP appointment was difficult, so accepted talking to a male doctor about female health issues. Challenges were raised around being able to discuss comorbidities and overlapping health conditions, due to the 'one issue per appointment' rule.

11.23 Also, worth noting under this section is that menopause is spoken about very little in society, due to the nature of the condition and stigma, it is personal. Sensitivity and consistent information sharing are key to making the menopause a manageable experience.

11.24 **Recommendation 52: The GEO to consider feeding back to the Department for Health the expressed need to assign 'lead GPs' to patients and prioritise this GP as the care provider, for patients to receive consistent care. Similarly, in a longstanding condition, the GP first approached with the concern/s should be the one to oversee this care, to ensure continuous support, non-conflating information or guidance offered, and lesser oversights via inter-GP communication.**

11.25 **Digital exclusion:** This was one of the main concerns surrounding access to services, in terms of those who are digitally excluded not having the same access to services as others. Whilst digitalisation has many benefits, digital inclusion is a privilege not afforded to all. Whilst the percentage of adults with

disabilities using the internet has been steadily declining, in 2018 23.3% of adults with disabilities were not internet users, compared with 6.0% of adults without a disability (ONS 2018). Digital exclusion also affected women who have English as a second language or have poor literacy skills.

11.26 Participants voiced that there are misconceptions that going digital is easier universally, but this is not the case. Essential services that promote online use significantly over other forms of contact result in women who are digitally excluded finding it harder to access these services.

11.27 **Recommendation 53: Leicester City Council to continue to ensure where decisions are made to channel shift our services, that an equality impact assessment, (EIA), is completed - demonstrating consideration of our public section equality duty, (PSED).**

11.28 **Recommendation 54: Leicester City Council to ensure that service users are given notice of our services digitising and to make online access an option to using services, not the only method of using the service.**

11.29 **Recommendation 55: In recognition that digital inclusion plays an important role in enabling women to not only access services but also to engage fully in public life (including work and education), particularly given some of the additional barriers posed by Covid-19, the Smart Cities, Equalities, Adult Skills and Learning and Neighbourhoods, in addition to other relevant services, will work together to scope a proposal for a project to deal with issues that have been highlighted as part of this project and more widely in response to Covid-19 – such as lack of access to devices, including appropriate devices for work and study and lack of access to adequate internet connection.**

11.30 **Acknowledging diverse needs in service provision:** Several participants from multiple marginalised demographics addressed the failure of services designed to support them, in meeting their needs. This is a practical translation of intersectional barriers not currently being fully recognised in the Equalities Act 2010. This subsection explored the accessibility and quality of services for those who are apart of multiple marginalised communities, focusing on these intersectional barriers when accessing support.

11.31 **Recommendation 56: That the Government should evaluate and review existing legislation and policy to ensure it takes an approach which fully considers the interaction between sex and other protected characteristics, or 'intersectionality' in addressing inequalities disproportionately experienced by women, many of which are covered in the later sections of this report.**

11.32 **Recommendation 57: That the Government should make it possible to bring a single discrimination claim based on an individual's full identity (which is likely to include multiple intersecting protected characteristics), by reviewing and then implementing Section 14 of the Equality Act 2010. Whilst Section 14 covers 'dual discrimination' there may be merit in**

considering intersectionality of more than two protected characteristics in conjunction with one another, as part of the review.

12   Finance (Pages 92-98)

12.1   Leicester is a city experiencing significant and chronic economic deprivation (The English Indices of Deprivation, ONS 2019); widespread poverty likely to be further exacerbated by the impact of Coronavirus (The World Bank 2020). The economy has historically hit women hardest in a variety of ways. In this section the main concerns women voiced will be explored: impacts of change to benefits including introduction of Universal Credit, dependency on male partners in heterosexual monogamous relationships, a lack of understanding of gender pay gaps and pension, Period Poverty and mental and physical health implications of being disproportionately affected by poverty and economic hardship.

12.2   **Period Poverty:** In March 2020 it was announced that the luxury taxing of menstrual products was to be abolished as of January 2021. The news is wholeheartedly supported by the project; prior to this, participants voiced frustration at the unfair tax classification of such products. Despite this good news there will remain many people who have periods who are unable to afford the appropriate menstrual products for their needs, known as 'period poverty'. Nationally, 27% of women and girls in the UK cannot afford menstrual products. In Leicester this rises to 35% of the female population. Trans men are at higher risk of poverty and homelessness (Action for Trans Health) and experience the additional barrier of either 'outing' themselves and risking their safety or avoiding asking for help altogether when experiencing period poverty.

12.3   Menstrual care product donations are often neglected when it comes to homeless shelter collections. This neglect may in part be due to the stigma surrounding periods, but menstrual care is an essential need.

12.4   **Recommendation 58: Leicester City Council to address period poverty in the Equality Action Plan - as part of that work opening a dialogue with Leicester's Homeless Charities on access to menstrual care products for people experiencing period poverty.**

12.5   **Recommendation 59: When calling for physical donations, Homeless Charities in Leicester to include mention of menstrual care products on their donation list. When calling for fiscal donations, Homeless Charities in Leicester could mention this money, in part, will buy menstrual products – to boost awareness around this essential need often overlooked.**

12.6   **Recommendation 60: Leicester City Council to commit to providing free menstrual products in all Council buildings that are accessed by the public.**

12.7   **Recommendation 61: That the Government consider the proposal that those eligible for free prescriptions be able to request free menstrual care products from primary healthcare services such as GPs and GUM Clinics.**

12.8 **Recommendation 62: Leicester City Council's Public Health, Sustainability (within Estates & Buildings Services) and Education services to consider the procurement of menstrual cups to be provided in school to each young person with periods, appealing to the Department for Education and their commitment to fully-fund access to free menstrual products in schools and colleges for funding.**

12.9 **The effects of economic hardship:** Stress caused by financial hardship and navigating ever-changing welfare systems in addition to many other stressors can manifest with mental and physical health conditions. People are left feeling trapped when there is a lack of clear direction or advice available. The mental toll of living in longstanding poverty and consistently being knocked back in efforts to escape this leads to mental health conditions including suicidal thoughts. As demonstrated, the impact on the health and wellbeing of women in economic hardship is significant and must be addressed. This will be explored further in the subsequent subsection: Health.

12.10 **Changes to support including universal credit:** Navigating government financial support can be complex but reviews of support add an element of instability which for women who are eligible causes an additional source of anxiety. This can leave women in stressful and financially precarious and unstable situations. The main issues highlighted were the five-week waiting period for a decision and the impact this can have on eligibility for other benefits; this leaving women to take some chance, and potentially having to repay payments – not to mention the complexity of navigating the system when eligible for multiple benefits. The offer of being paid some welfare in advance while waiting for a UC verdict was seen as an impractical solution to the long wait time due to those who are financially disadvantaged feeling a need to avoid incurring debt. This instability and ever-changing eligibility of benefits being a barrier to women making efforts to get qualifications to work. The potential of financial support being lessened to those who are already financially disadvantaged, exacerbating poverty in Leicester. Those in lone or no-income households, with no other safety nets worst hit by the Universal Credit process.

12.11 Clear and definitive advice needs to be given to those seeking it from associated services. This can only be realised with further revision of services such as Universal Credit to shorten wait-times and more comprehensively assimilate welfare benefits to avoid risks of women shouldering government debt. By penalising benefits based on attempts to prepare for work, there is a discouragement of attempts to become financially independent, contradicting the efforts of employment services.

12.12 **Recommendation 63: Benefits, both current and those being phased out, to be assimilated by the Government, to ensure no eligible recipient is left waiting for payments and that no debts occur from overpayment – with any debts incurred to be gradually redacted from the overarching eligible payments.**

12.13 **Recommendation 64: The Government to review the Universal Credit assessment process to cut down wait-times for a verdict.**

59

12.14 **Recommendation 65: The Government to ensure that those who are jobseekers do not receive a benefit penalisation for attempts to make them better adapted or skilled to work.**

12.15 **Financial dependence and awareness:** Many women in heterosexual monogamous relationships remain reliant on their husbands financially, whether for expenditure or future planning. Pensions were unanimously an aspect of finances that participants were unaware of how to manage and access. With 43% of consultation respondents saying they 'didn't know very much' or they 'knew nothing' about their pension. In light of the Women Against State Pension Inequality,(WASPI), campaign, it is increasingly important that particularly women have control and knowledge of their pension.

12.16 The project found that there was a general unawareness surrounding the race and gender pay gaps. Some participants were aware of it, but similarly to issues of discrimination and organisations separating themselves from this issue, women were unaware of the complicities of their employers' pay gap. In not being aware of such gaps or where opportunities to discuss pay is blocked, it dodges accountability for organisations and stifles worker attempts and recuperation.

12.17 **Recommendation 66: Organisations to offer information to their employees on pension as a mandated part of their starter pack.**

12.18 As of 2017, employers with 250 employees or more, must publish their gender pay gap data every year.

12.19 **Recommendation 67: Organisations should consider periodically publishing data on their pay gaps in relation to protected characteristics beyond gender and making this information publicly accessible.**

13 Health (Pages 98-109)
13.1 This section pays attention to the most prevalent health issues impacting women, including specific physical and mental conditions and experiences of care, as well as how accessible healthcare is.

13.2 **Postnatal needs:** Postnatal experiences including postnatal depression and difficulties in breastfeeding were significant areas of concern for women. Participants felt there wasn't enough postnatal care to identify and support post-partum women, who are often isolated with breastfeeding with their mental health. Women stressed how individualised support (which not all get) is essential in helping women to successfully breastfeed. Additionally, participants experienced being given conflicting advice from different professionals and dismissal of concerns was an issue raised.

13.3 An additional barrier was the societal pressure on women to be happy and enjoy life after having a baby, and the associated guilt with not fitting this expectation. This acted as a barrier in accessing potentially life-saving help. Many voiced that when they addressed their mental health concerns, medication was offered. This

felt dismissive and not the solution they wanted – advocating instead for accessible community support in which they could speak with other women about their experiences.

13.4 **Coping with miscarriage:** Miscarriage is more common than generally expected: among women who are aware they are pregnant, an estimated 1 in 8 pregnancies end in miscarriage (NHS 2018). Women volunteered stories of miscarriage and ectopic pregnancies and their experiences of recovering from traumatic experiences. The commonality being insensitive or insufficient care and support. Insufficient support has many forms, including employers not allowing any time off to recover, not having enough support following a miscarriage or pregnancy complications. Miscarriage needs to be recognised by employers in the same way other medical conditions are. Signposting is also essential to ensure the safety and well-being of women following such traumatic experiences.

13.5 **Managing Periods and Endometriosis:** There remains lots of stigma around periods with people who have periods feeling pressured to hide them and the associated symptoms. Women are made to feel as though to be a full member of society you should not appear to have periods or not being 'female'. These pressures to hide risks people not getting the right adjustments in place to fulfil their duties to the best of their ability and discourages people from addressing abnormalities and concerns about their menstrual health with a GP when necessary. The impact on daily life was also highlighted in voiced experiences of endometriosis. In the context of the workplace, where participants vocalised struggling with their period to be met with trust and flexible options from their employer, this contributed positively to the employees' sense of being respected and consequently work output.

13.6 **Menopause: assumptions and stigma:** Like periods there is prominent stigma surrounding menopause and a lack of acknowledgement of the menopause as a health condition. Sustaining this taboo means many people lack the knowledge to understand what is happening to them or where to turn to for information. There is an additional stigma in the form of ageism, that menopause only impacts older people. This alienates younger people experiencing early menopause from understanding their condition.

13.7 **Seeking healthcare: 'Pain Bias':** Women are more likely than men to be inadequately treated by healthcare providers. Pain bias refers to people of certain demographics being taken less seriously in health services that others. The data gathered supported the claim that some women are less likely to be taken seriously than other women – namely, **BAME women and younger women**. This pain bias acts as a barrier to individuals from marginalised groups having their needs met in healthcare, and as mentioned in 'Personalisation of Services', consistently poor standards make service users adverse to engaging with the service until it is "something really serious". Myths about different people experiencing pain differently need to be debunked.

13.8 **Recommendation 68: If not already, healthcare practitioners should undergo some form of unconscious bias training to ensure they are**

providing care that is fair and consistent to all patients.

13.9 **Recommendation 69: Leicester City Council's Public Health to discuss with healthcare practitioners the need for training staff on 'pain bias' and dispelling myths of different pain and symptoms experienced by people of various backgrounds.**

13.10 **Barriers to smear tests:** BAME women are less likely than white women to attend cervical cancer screenings, with 36.9% saying they would feel unsafe attending a doctor's surgery as a result of the current pandemic, compared to 27.2% of white women (Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, 2020). There was mention of how due to culture people are discouraged from having their tests, it can be quite invasive. On the other hand, others expressed frustration with assumptions made about not attending such appointments, and the betrayal of confidence in speaking to others about the issue. There are numerous reasons as to why women don't want to attend screenings however, these were not fully explored in the research.

13.11 **Living with disability/ies and autism as an adult:** Participants living with disability/es or those advocating, commonly bought up issues surrounding dignity and accessibility. Speaking of busy shopping streets across the city, they mentioned failures in accessibility such as pavements not being wide enough or public toilets not being open. A participant mentioned how the pandemic has highlighted how little the public consider particularly hidden disabilities. She mentioned how there needs to be greater awareness of sunflower lanyards. There was also mention of the lack of value given to ensure dignity.

13.12 In relation to employment, participants expressed fear they have or would be discriminated against due to their disability. It was apparent that there is lack of awareness of people with disabilities rights for example in job interviews. Participants with disabilities were also unsure about applying for free bus travel and whether their carers could get free travel to assist them.

13.13 **Recommendation 70: Community-based officers should touch base with community group leaders to ensure they are aware of relevant support their participants may be entitled to. This could support constituents who don't have direct contact with the Local Authority to be more aware of support mechanisms in place and access the full range of support available to them.**

13.14 Many participants spoke of getting a late autism diagnosis and highlighted long waiting times for adult Asperger's support. Autism is understood in terms of common traits exhibited by males but tends to present differently in females. Participants stressed female traits are under-researched and thus frequently overlooked in standard diagnostic tools. Additionally, women learn to mask traits to conform with their gender role and societal expectation. These late diagnoses leave women with little to no support which can disrupt their lives in significant ways.

13.15 Participants with children who have disabilities spoke about incorrect support

being offered by schools, schools not being equipped for the child's needs These act as a barrier to children's education and impacting women's – being the primary caregivers, ability to work. As a carer frustration were felt on tighter restrictions imposed on repeat medications making getting the medication at the right time more of a concern.

13.16 **Mental Health:** Participants frequently expressed distress experienced by long waiting times for mental health treatment both before and after diagnoses, with many stating that it took years to get some support. Alongside, a need to be persistent with health professionals, otherwise concerns were ignored. Participants also spoke of how mental health was not treated with the urgency and priority that it should be, compared with physical health. Individuals are increasingly told they should speak to a professional if they have mental health concerns, yet when they do so, there is no support available. This leaves many already 'vulnerable' people to feel let down. Misinformation and stigma led to the validity of some participants' conditions being disbelieved. Participants spoke of mental health impacting their ability to work, access the doctors, and a contributing factor to feelings of isolation and loneliness. An absence of understanding and support contributed to this. These highlight the essential need for mental health and community support services.

13.17 For some participants with anxiety, trying to get an appointment with a doctors' surgery wasn't feasible, due to calling and providing reasoning for appointments, due to their condition they were unable to do so. This highlights the need for multiple forms of contact, or doctors' surgeries not requiring a reason where a service user doesn't feel comfortable disclosing.

13.18 Mental health and appropriate support are particularly essential in today's climate of living through a global pandemic. People should feel they are able to go to their GP and know they will be adequately cared for, with the same urgency in response as a physical ailment. This cannot be achieved by a one-off cash injection; NHS mental health serviced need to have long-standing, consistent, increase in financial investment.

13.19 **Recommendation 71: Government to create long-term solutions to currently 'underfunded' (Mental Health Policy Group 2020) mental health support within the Comprehensive Spending Review.**

13.20 **Recommendation 72: Leicester City Council's Public Health to request local GP surgeries to offer multiple forms of contact and not require a reason to give an appointment, where a service user doesn't feel comfortable disclosing.**

14   Covid-19 (Pages 109-110)

14.1 As part of our consultation we asked women about the impact of Covid-19. Of the 175 responses, there were 128 responses. There were no additional themes identified. Responses highlighted the existing inequalities that women face in

society; as the unpaid carer, at home and in society the little value placed on this. Many reported increased demands on their household workload. In addition to regular childcare, home-schooling was an additional 'unpaid' role they were expected to carry out. Participants mentioned often fathers didn't take on this role as their workplaces did not make allowances for children being at home. Men were still expected to be as productive as they were in the office. However, this was an issue for women too. To make up for this, women expressed that they worked more hours at home or in some cases were forced to leave their jobs.

14.2   Women also reported how school vouchers were helpful, however they still had trouble in managing increased living costs (bills, groceries). Some women reported being trapped in abusive households with abuse increasing during the pandemic. Other comments surrounding Covid-19 were largely in relation to increased feelings of isolation, fear and anxiety. The mental health impacts of this may be long-lasting, providing further support for need for long-term investment in NHS Mental health services.

15   Appendix List

Appendix A – List of Recommendations
Appendix B – Women Talking, City Listening Full Research Report

Financial implications

No specific financial implications arise from this report. The research should be taken into consideration when making future policy and strategy decisions, and any costs should be included as required. Similarly, any specific initiatives that might arise should be costed and funding identified at the time. - Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance, tel. 0116 454 4081

Legal implications

The Women Talking, City Listening is a research project funded by the Government Equalities Office with the aim to learn about the barriers faced by women and how women can be better supported in the City. The research has been split thematically into the specific areas it consulted on. This report summaries the findings of the consultation and research which has been annexed to the report. Officers have derived a number of recommendations specific to each theme / area it had identified following the research.

The summary report in section 2 has explained that the main recommendation is that the Local Authority should use the research in future policies and strategies.

Whilst the research is not legally binding, the Local Authority can use the findings of the

research to assist in developing future policies. Further legal advice should be sought at the time as and when these policies develop.

It is worth noting that some of the recommendations within the report would be applicable to the Council, some which the Council may have influence over (e.g. VCS groups etc) and some which fall outside its remit (e.g. the changing of legislation)

Suraiya Ziaullah, Solicitor, 0116 454 1487

Climate change and carbon reduction implications

There are no significant climate change implications directly relating to the presentation of this report. However, many of the issues raised and recommendations made will have significant links to the council's sustainability work, for example where they cover access to public transport, digital inclusion and homeworking, street lighting and various other areas. These implications should be considered individually when assessing implementation of the recommendations made.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, 0116 454 2284

Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which means that, in carrying out their functions decision makers have to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The report makes a number of recommendations which support the aims of the PSED and other duties placed on public authorities under the Equality Act 2010, including responsibilities under the equality Act as an employer. Whilst the report specifically focuses on the experiences of women, a number of intersectionalities are identified and the project involved women from a range of different backgrounds with different characteristics and identities. It is worth noting that some of the recommendations within the report would be applicable to the Council, some which the Council may have influence over (e.g. VCS groups, employers in the City etc) and some which fall outside its remit (eg. the changing of legislation). Different organisations may have different levels of responsibility under the Equality Act.

The Local Authority can use the findings of the research to assist in developing future policies and projects and can be utilised to improve service delivery from an equalities perspective. Further equalities advice should be sought on any proposals for changes to or new policy, practice, projects or provision developed arising from this research. In

many cases, new proposals or changes to existing policy and provision are likely to require equality impact assessment to ensure that any disproportionate negative impacts for any protected characteristic groups are identified and mitigated, opportunities to progress equality of opportunity are maximised and to ensure that due regard to the PSED is paid before and at the time a decision is taken.

Hannah Watkins, Equalities Manager, o0116 454 5811

Women Talking, City Listening:
List of Recommendations

Below is a full list of the recommendations proposed by the Women Talking, City Listening research project. The report was split into ten key themes. For ease of cross-reference, the pages of each theme in the full research report are listed against each theme heading. The recommendations are numbered, corresponding to the summary report.

The recommendations listed below are initial recommendations endorsed by the Women Talking, City Listening Steering Group and have been proposed to CMT. The recommendations will be built upon and refined in senior leadership meetings.

Careers and Motherhood (Pages 10-27)

- **Recommendation 1:** Flexible Working Arrangements (including flexibility in recruitment to facilitate job shares) to be implemented by employers in corporate policy and job advertisements.

- **Recommendation 2:** Leicester City Council to integrate an action into its Equality Action Plan to support and publicise more opportunities for women employees, including networking events and promotion of the Council's employee groups.

  Recommendation 3: Leicester City Council to further consider and integrate an appropriate action into its Equality Action Plan: ways in which to promote professional and employment opportunities and to provide more opportunities for women in the City to network (for example, an externally focused event, possibly in partnership with Economic Regeneration).

- **Recommendation 4:** Leicester City Council's Voluntary Community Sector liaisons and Communications team to communicate news of both Council-affiliated and external networking events to women-majority community groups (for example, library and children's centre 'Toddler Time' attendees), to offer mothers who are not in employment greater professional opportunities.

- **Recommendation 5:** Leicester City Council's Human Resources team to consider implementing employee policy for those returning from maternity leave to better support both the employee and their manager's facilitation of their re-entry into work.

- **Recommendation 6:** That the government flexible working taskforce continue to campaign for employers to adopt flexible working practises in the public sector and the private sector.

- **Recommendation 7:** That the Job Centre Plus continue to build on its work thus far to promote flexible working practises, by challenging appropriately and

requiring adequate justification where an employer has communicated that an opportunity is not suitable for flexible working.

- **Recommendation 8:** That governmental policymakers review the '30 hours free childcare scheme', taking into account and addressing the issues raised by participants, to give women a greater opportunity to re-enter work without suffering financially.

- **Recommendation 9**: That governmental policymakers consider exploring the merits and risks to implementing an allowance or financial benefit (subject to certain conditions), where women are relying on family members informally to take on childcare responsibilities to enable them to work, to ensure that family members (particularly female family members) are supplemented and are not experiencing detriment financially.

Community Support (Pages 28-32)

- **Recommendation 10:** Leicester City Council to review all funding application systems, to check accessibility and make the relevant changes where any issues with accessibility are determined.

- **Recommendation 11:** Leicester City Council's teams dealing with bid applications (within both Neighbourhoods and Procurement) to consider how contact information for advice and support is published, to ensure maximum uptake of such offers of support.

- **Recommendation 12:** Adult Social Care and others who may have an interest in mapping the support offer to consider whether it may be beneficial to align to Leicester Open Data, in order that information isn't replicated and can be found in one place.

- **Recommendation 13:** Leicester City Council to develop a Comms plan which fulfils two functions; 1. to make VCS organisations and community groups aware of the Open Data Platform and to encourage as many as possible to add information to the relevant map and 2. to make citizens of Leicester aware of the Open Data Platform and how to use it.

- **Recommendation 14:** Once the Open Data Platform is more developed, consider overlaying VCS support map with public transport routes map to establish whether there are any issues which need to be addressed. This will need to be in partnership with public transport operators.

Workplace – Policies vs. Practice (Pages 32-50)

- **Recommendation 15:** That Leicester City Council's Equality Action Plan 2021 incorporate work internally to support line managers to understand organisational support mechanisms which are particularly relevant to the issues that participants have raised (such as the flexible working policy, time off for dependents policy) how those policies and support mechanisms support equality and how to make decisions which promote a supportive environment and also more flexible

working, where it is practicable. This is likely to be achieved most effectively through some form of training or workshop style events.

- **Recommendation 16:** Leicester City Council to consider what training and/ or guidance managers are currently having on Occupational Health and consider reviewing this to promote an understanding of Occupational Health as a supportive tool, not a disciplinary measure.

- **Recommendation 17:** That further work is undertaken with other services within the Council, for example economic regeneration, tourism and culture, to establish whether there are any actions that could be included in the Equality Action Plan 2021 which would encourage other employers in the City to promote supportive policies and work environment, for example flexible working and increased part-time working and job share opportunities, where practicable.

- **Recommendation 18:** Organisations should review their policies collaboratively with their employees, by seeking feedback on how policy is currently used and understood. This could be facilitated by an anonymous internal survey, the information gathered aiding meaningful policy refinement. It is not within Leicester City council's remit to implement this in other organisations, but the Council should pay further consideration to how they might be able to influence and share best practice with employers across the City.

- **Recommendation 19:** Awareness raising and information sharing locally and nationally to ensure that women understand their rights in relation to employment, and to increase women's confidence and ability to challenge effectively, where they have experienced both overt and/or covert discrimination, harassment or victimisation. This also links with a recommendation under 'Safety' to ensure that women are confident and equipped to raise concerns and complaints in relation to service provision (p.75)

- **Recommendation 20:** That policymakers consider providing some form of funding to SMEs and VCS organisations to enable them to purchase equipment, for the specific purpose of encouraging and enabling them to implement flexible/ home working.

- **Recommendation 21:** The government flexible working taskforce/ policymakers to consider how they might influence employers to more openly consider employee part-time proposals and support part-time employees to do an effective job within contracted hours.

- **Recommendation 22:** The government flexible working taskforce/ policymakers to consider how they can promote and encourage employees to offer job shares, to better support part-time employees to progress in their careers into more senior or skilled roles – benefitting both employer and employee.

- **Recommendation 23:** Leicester City Council to consider implementing a zero-tolerance approach within the review of the Dignity at Work Policy.

- **Recommendation 24:** Policymakers to consider ways in which to either encourage or mandate transparent recruitment processes that are publicly

available for scrutiny and are designed using positive action where lawful, to reduce recruitment bias.

- **Recommendation 25:** Leicester City Council to ensure that guidance on how to use the positive action provisions under the Equality Act and guidance on recruitment panel make-up is included in updated recruitment guidance for managers.

Recognition of and Support for Carers (Pages 50-67)

- **Recommendation 26:** Leicester City Council to work with schools in the City to help to introduce guidance, training or professional development, as deemed appropriate, for teachers - to aid them in identifying young carers and referring to the relevant support. To publicise tools to aid schools in identifying young carers, for example the young carers identification tool for education staff **on the schools intranet.**

- **Recommendation 27:** Policymakers to consider the issue more widely to see whether there are any additional national measures which could be put into place to better equip teachers in identifying young carers.

- **Recommendation 28:** Leicester City Council to consider the merit of PSHE/Citizenship in the City's schools including a lesson on being a carer and having meaningful conversations about caring. Although this is not directly within the Council's remit, it is worth considering how the Council might effectively engage with schools to achieve this.

- **Recommendation 29:** Leicester City Council's Adult Social Care/Communications teams to share information with schools in the city on what support is available for young carers.

- **Recommendation 30:** Leicester City Council's Adult Social Care Department to work with health partners to review the way in which information is shared with carers; to make information packs more easily accessible, so that service users know exactly what support is available and whether they are entitled to such services. To utilise the Council's communication mechanisms, including social media, to raise awareness of information and support for carers.

- **Recommendation 31:** Undertake further work locally with the relevant service area to understand and respond to the issues raised by participants in relation to respite.

- **Recommendation 32:** Government to include policy ideas to address the nuanced issues raised in this report in relation to unpaid caring responsibilities, particularly in terms of the financial difficulties that they face, in the Green Paper on Social Care, and publish for public consultation.

- **Recommendation 33:** Leicester City Council to ensure that the relevant corporate policies acknowledge carers and the discrimination they can face

70

arising from their association with someone with a disability/ies (discrimination by association).

- **Recommendation 34:** Leicester City Council to consider offering carers discounts, deals or occasional free treats at City Council run sites (museum and heritage sites, for example) and events, to acknowledge the hard work of those who care and the minimal disposable income available. To encourage other businesses in the City (who are in a position to do so), to also consider offering discounts or deals for carers.

Sports and access (Pages 67-70)

- **Recommendation 35:** The Department of Education to give guidance to schools and colleges relating to the P.E. Curriculum and equal access to sports in practice, to ensure education providers are aware that while they can separate by sex for P.E. lawfully, they are obliged to provide the same opportunities for both girls and boys to engage in sports.

- **Recommendation 36:** Existing Council-operated sport and gym facilities to consider expanding their selection of 'women only' classes where there is evidence of need and to offer these at a range of days and times, accommodating for the many responsibilities women take on (as highlighted throughout this report). In addition, to advertise services more widely to enable women to participate.

Safety (Pages 71-79)

- **Recommendation 37:** Local Authorities to consider keeping intermittent streetlights on to ensure no one area is pitch-black. This local strategy should be individually tailored to neighbourhoods, with priority given to areas of higher criminal activity.

- **Recommendation 38:** Leicester City Council to consider the merit of PSHE/Citizenship in the City's schools including a lesson on a rape culture and identifying harmful views and behaviour around love, sex and sexual assault, (such as shaming women who are sexually active or based on how many sexual partners they have, rape jokes, victim blaming, judging what women wear, 'cat calling'). Whilst this is not within the Council's direct remit, it is worth considering how the Council might effectively engage with schools to achieve this.

- **Recommendation 39:** Feed the issues raised in this section to the Smart Cities Team and Community Safety to consider whether we can use technology as a means to collaborate with citizens, to identify problems in their neighbourhoods and help facilitate a safer Leicester.

- **Recommendation 40:** The Council's Community Safety and Protection team to support local community awareness initiatives relating to standing against rape culture and violence towards women (i.e. in externally circulated communications such as Your Leicester).

- **Recommendation 41:** National policymakers consider ways in which women who have experienced domestic violence are enabled to safely stay in their own homes should they wish to, and instead perpetrators are required to leave the household.

- **Recommendation 42:** Leicester City Council to do some awareness raising work on how citizens can raise complaints and escalate concerns about any public body/authority if they feel that their complaint has not been sufficiently dealt with. Work may also need to be undertaken nationally to ensure that women are equipped to challenge effectively. This links with a recommendation in the section 'Workplace – Policies vs. Practise' (p.35) which recommends that awareness raising work is undertaken to ensure that women are aware of their rights in employment and are equipped to challenge where these are breached and where they have experienced discrimination, harassment and victimisation. It may be that these two recommendations can be combined, if appropriate.

- **Recommendation 43**: Leicester City Council and the Government Equalities Office to continue to support campaigns to increase awareness and recognition around the different types of abuse, where and how to get support, both locally and nationally.

- **Recommendation 44:** Leicester City Council to ensure our relevant commissioned services (in Community Safety, Housing and Social Care) continue to make available practical help and support to survivors of domestic violence, taking into account the lived experiences of those seeking support and taking steps to ease the process of resettling and in some cases, becoming independent for the first time.

Personalisation of Services and Communication to Service Users (Pages 79-93)

- **Recommendation 45:** Ask the CCG to suggest that GPs document conversations on concerns voiced over dependant's behaviours and commit to listening and exploring these with the advocate.

- **Recommendation 46:** Reviewing the sharing systems of key information in health and social care patient files.

- **Recommendation 47:** Social care workers and health workers to provide service users date deadlines to provide updates/information where possible.

- **Recommendation 48:** Social care services to continue to review the way in which dependant services users go through from child's to adults' services and respond to feedback to ensure a gradual and manageable transition for the service user.

- **Recommendation 49:** Feedback to colleges the need for post-college lessons to both pay fair attention to all career paths (not putting the onus on University) and for such sessions to take a more collaborative structure, in which students are

made to feel comfortable asking questions, and confident their query will be met with a response.

- **Recommendation 50:** Universities and other adult learning institutions to identify and establish whether there is a need for childcare facilities and act accordingly to accommodate for this. This may be in the form of creating links with nearby nurseries to offer parents subsidised rates or priority places for children.

- **Recommendation 51:** Employers in Leicester and across the country to be encouraged to support **their employees more widely in gaining additional qualifications.**

- **Recommendation 52:** The GEO to consider feeding back to the Department for Health the expressed need to assign 'lead GPs' to patients and prioritise this GP as the care provider, for patients to receive consistent care. Similarly, in a longstanding condition, the GP first approached with the concern/s should be the one to oversee this care, to ensure continuous support, non-conflating information or guidance offered, and lesser oversights via inter-GP communication.

- **Recommendation 53:** Leicester City Council to continue to ensure where decisions are made to channel shift our services, that an EIA is completed - demonstrating consideration of our PSED.

- **Recommendation 54:** Leicester City Council to ensure that service users are given notice of our services digitising and to make online access an option to using services, not the only method of using the service.

- **Recommendation 55:** In recognition that digital inclusion plays an important role in enabling women to not only access services but also to engage fully in public life (including work and education), particularly given some of the additional barriers posed by Covid-19, the Smart Cities, Equalities, Adult Skills and Learning and Neighbourhoods, in addition to other relevant services, will work together to scope a proposal for a project to deal with issues that have been highlighted as part of this project and more widely in response to Covid-19 – such as lack of access to devices, including appropriate devices for work and study and lack of access to adequate internet connection.

- **Recommendation 56:** That the Government should evaluate and review existing legislation and policy to ensure it takes an approach which fully considers the interaction between sex and other protected characteristics, or 'intersectionality' in addressing inequalities disproportionately experienced by women, many of which are covered in the later sections of this report.

- **Recommendation 57:** That the Government should make it possible to bring a single discrimination claim based on an individual's full identity (which is likely to include multiple intersecting protected characteristics), by reviewing and then implementing Section 14 of the Equality Act 2010. Whilst Section 14 covers 'dual discrimination' there may be merit in considering intersectionality of more than

two protected characteristics in conjunction with one another, as part of the review.

Finance (Pages 93-99)

- **Recommendation 58**: Leicester City Council to address period poverty in the Equality Action Plan - as part of that work opening a dialogue with Leicester's Homeless Charities on access to menstrual care products for people experiencing period poverty.

- **Recommendation 59:** When calling for physical donations, Homeless Charities in Leicester to include mention of menstrual care products on their donation list. When calling for fiscal donations, Homeless Charities in Leicester could mention this money, in part, will buy menstrual products – to boost awareness around this essential need often overlooked.

- **Recommendation 60:** Leicester City Council to commit to providing free menstrual products in all Council buildings that are accessed by the public.

- **Recommendation 61:** That the Government consider the proposal that those eligible for free prescriptions be able to request free menstrual care products from primary healthcare services such as GPs and GUM Clinics.

- **Recommendation 62:** Leicester City Council's Public Health, Sustainability (within Estates & Buildings Services) and Education services to consider the procurement of menstrual cups to be provided in school to each young person with periods, appealing to the Department for Education and their commitment to fully-fund access to free menstrual products in schools and colleges for funding.

- **Recommendation 63:** Benefits, both current and those being phased out, to be assimilated by the Government, to ensure no eligible recipient is left waiting for payments and that no debts occur from overpayment – with any debts incurred to be gradually redacted from the overarching eligible payments.

- **Recommendation 64:** The Government to review of the Universal Credit assessment process to cut down wait-times for a verdict.

- **Recommendation 65:** The Government to ensure that those who are jobseekers do not receive a benefit penalisation for attempts to make them better adapted or skilled to work.

- **Recommendation 66:** Organisations to offer information to their employees on pension as a mandated part of their starter pack.

- **Recommendation 67:** Organisations should consider periodically publishing data on their pay gaps in relation to protected characteristics beyond gender and making this information publicly accessible.

Health (Pages 99-110)

- **Recommendation 68:** If not already, healthcare practitioners should undergo some form of unconscious bias training to ensure they are providing care that is fair and consistent to all patients.

- **Recommendation 69:** Leicester City Council's Public Health to discuss with healthcare practitioners the need for training staff on 'pain bias' and dispelling myths of different pain and symptoms experienced by people of various backgrounds.

- **Recommendation 70:** Community-based officers should touch base with community group leaders to ensure they are aware of relevant support their participants may be entitled to. This could support constituents who don't have direct contact with the Local Authority to be more aware of support mechanisms in place and access the full range of support available to them.

- **Recommendation 71:** Government to create long-term solutions to currently 'underfunded' (Mental Health Policy Group 2020) mental health support within the Comprehensive Spending Review.

- **Recommendation 72:** Leicester City Council's Public Health to request local GP surgeries to offer multiple forms of contact and not require a reason to give an appointment, where a service user doesn't feel comfortable disclosing.

Women Talking, City Listening

Research Project 2019-2020

Equalities Team and Neighbourhoods Services

Useful information

■ Ward(s) affected: All

■ Report authors: Hetha Copland, Area Development Manager

■ Author contact details: 0116 454 1837 / hetha.copland@leicester.gov.uk

■ Report version number plus Code No from Report Tracking Database:

---

1. Introduction and Background

"I think the largest barrier is this discrepancy between what society expects us to do, to achieve, and what we can manage to do. This whole expectation that our grandmothers and mothers fought for us being able to do everything. And now there's this expectation that, we actually do *everything*, that we do have a family and a career and that we continuously strive for more… It's that kind of pressure to achieve everything – that 'achieving everything' being unattainable because we don't have the systems in place to support this; achieving *everything"*

As one of the seven national Centenary Cities, Leicester City Council has been widely recognised for its work in celebrating the lives and achievements of local suffragettes such as Alice Hawkins. Following on from the Centenary Cities project, The Council were one of three cities successful in securing funding for a progressive research project, examining women's position in Leicester, today.

The project observed women's voiced goals, experienced barriers, and how they preserve themselves through their individual experiences of structural inequality. It was clear women frequently manage this in a self-contained manner, supported within established community circles.

The Researchers were taken aback by how candid the women who engaged with this project were about their life experiences and willingness to share, demonstrating a clear want to engage in and contribute to societal reform, to benefit all of Leicester's residents.

Notably, in most group contexts, women provided practical advice or emotional support to one another. This willingness to help with the tools already at hand demonstrated the innovative community entrepreneurship women build up in the face of adversity, and a common will to lift one another up to succeed.

The route to equality for all is largely considered unclear; difficult, made only more so by conflicting opinions as to how we achieve this. This project sought to highlight women's voices and carry their voices through to the proposed recommendations.

This report contains ten overarching themes (Careers and Motherhood; Community Support; Workplace – Policies vs Practice; Recognition of and Support for Carers; Sports and Access; Safety; Personalisation of Services and Communication to Service Users; Finance; Health; Covid-19), and within these, multiple sub-themes. By the nature of this report, exploring women's experiences within society, there is some overlap of key issues. These themes represent the most significant areas of discussion, comprehensively capturing the voices of the women of Leicester.

Conducting this project during the Coronavirus pandemic had an unprecedented effect on how the project developed. However, this disruption to society presents a significant opportunity to enact positive, long-lasting change.

We are preparing for a 'new normal' of society. This report hopes to feed into our 'new normal' in Leicester, as we champion a brighter future for all, a future that our women have advocated for.

2. Project Description and Aims

1.1   To hear from, and have meaningful conversations with, women from a variety of backgrounds, living or working in Leicester.

1.2   Through direct engagement, reflect on progress towards equality made so far and identify the barriers to achievement women experience in contemporary Leicester.

1.3   To identify viable solutions to ease and, where possible, dissolve the barriers women experience.

3. Methodology

Summary

1.1   This project consisted of triangulated (multiple) research methods and various engagement opportunities.

1.2   This project incorporated two online consultations, and various casual engagement activities, to identify common barriers experienced by a large quantity of women.

1.3   This was complemented by qualitative focus groups and one-to-one semi-structured interviews, which enabled case studies to emerge from personal insight into the common barriers experienced.

1.4   To actively seek representativeness (speaking to women from a range of backgrounds; ideally our participant demographics representing that of Leicester's population), equalities monitoring information was collected throughout the data gathering period, which fed into a protected characteristics tracker and postcode mapping system.

1.5   An overarching interview schedule (list of questions) was devised, which was then modified (in the degree of detail), to make appropriate for each method of data collection. The base interview schedule can be seen at Appendix A.

1.6   A triangulated methodology was designed to produce a successful investigation that was both highly insightful and far-reaching.

1.7   A feminist epistemological methodological approach was taken, meaning the

researchers used their subjectivities as an asset, sought to make conversations held in the face-to-face methods meaningful and empathetic (Oakley 1981), and placed a high priority on showing respect and counteracting the power imbalance common within a research context.

1.8 This project was led by women *for* women. It was ensured that all key frontline staff (the researchers and external facilitators) were also female identifying.

1.9 This genuine occupational requirement gave participants a more comfortable setting to discuss difficult experiences directly linked to their identity, and also ensured that participants and those conducting the research were better enabled to relate to one another. By seeing the researchers as similar to themselves, it was expected there would be less of an 'interviewer bias' and a more equal power dynamic within research settings.

Qualitative Methods: Focus Groups and Interviews

1.10 Focus groups took two forms: working with pre-existing community groups and groups comprising of individuals who expressed an interest in participating.

1.11 Groups were asked questions around the same broad themes, however the interview schedule utilised was determined by each group context. By choosing a schedule most suited to each group, this project worked to foster *greater validity*.

1.12 Asking around the same broad areas in focus groups and interviews ensured that each research session produced broadly *comparable data* and *reliable findings.*

1.13 Working with existing community groups gave insight into the function such groups play in many women's lives and granted the project access to harder-to-reach groups who may be distanced from the Council or less trusting of such an authority.

1.14 Where research took place in community groups the researchers joined, the researchers were viewed in varying degrees as an 'external force' infiltrating the group, meaning it was harder to establish a rapport with the participants.

1.15 However, one of the strengths of this research context was that the researchers were able to sit-in and observe conversations they may not have been able to access otherwise: between women who already have a trusting relationship with one another.

1.16 In the groups created for this research purpose, participants were not expected to have any pre-existing relationship with one another, eradicating the risk of researchers being seen as an 'external force' to the group.

1.17 Additionally, the primary purpose of such meetings being to participate in this research meant participants were more likely to be focused on engaging with the researchers' questions. This allowed more time for the researchers to delve deeper, as the discussion was not disrupted by other activities.

1.18　Focus groups were incorporated due to their unique strength of allowing the researchers to capture data of how women interact with one another, in addition to asking questions in a face-to-face format. The researchers were interested in how women compare, contrast, and relate their experiences to one another, and how this changes dependant on if the women already have a relationship. The group setting also enabled the researchers to gather in-depth information while speaking to a greater number of women than a one-to-one interview setting could allow.

1.19　The main limitation of this method is that it is inevitably difficult to control. It was expected that there would be more divergence from the interview schedule and that the researchers would have to strike a balance between encouraging fair turn-taking without overly effecting the group dynamic.

1.20　To overcome this, shorter versions of the interview schedule were used to allow time for discussion to digress. The researchers would also direct questions to participants who had contributed the least when conscious of an unequal dynamic. Additionally, at the start of the focus group, participants were informed that once the focus group had finished, the researchers would stay behind to speak with participants who realised they felt uncomfortable speaking in a group dynamic but wanted to have their voice heard. This resulted in several spontaneous semi-structured interviews.

1.21　In addition to focus groups, one-to-one, semi-structured interviews were chosen to further the highly personal element of this research. The researchers used the full interview schedule and gained the most in-depth information in this context.

1.22　Semi-structured interviews rely on an interview schedule but allow the researcher to follow-up on points of interest with probing questions. This less rigid format lends itself to feeling more like a conversation, and less like a formal interview with a more obvious power dynamic: appropriate for the researchers' priorities of conducting high-validity research, working *in partnership with* participants, and their intention to create a comfortable and respectful experience for the participants.

1.23　Additionally, interviews provided an opportunity for individuals who may feel uncomfortable opening up in group settings to contribute meaningfully.

1.24　While interviews are one of the most time-consuming methods, meaning the quantity of participants engaged via this method would be fewer, it was felt this method was essential to understanding how broader barriers commonly experienced could affect an individual's life; enhancing the reliable findings on wider issues with case studies of lived experience.

1.25　To best represent the diversity of participants, the project worked with external facilitators to connect with 'harder-to-reach' groups. The facilitators engaged were leaders of community groups and other community 'leaders', as well as our Community Engagement Officers. While the researchers joined many of these groups to conduct focus groups, where it was more appropriate,

facilitators were approached to conduct semi-structured one-to-one interviews on the Council's behalf.

1.26   To enable this, the researchers created a briefing pack containing the necessary guidance and information for an external party to conduct semi-structured interviews, in line with both the project and the Council's principles. This can be seen in Appendix B.

1.27   This key role for external facilitators was encouraged to ensure those from the most closed-off groups were able to contribute. Following Covid-19, this translated to telephone interviews the facilitators held with contacts who were expecting and wanting to participate.

Online Consultation

1.28   To ensure as many women as possible were able to engage, a two-part online consultation was also used.

1.29   Initially the project launched a consultation on Dialogue. The questions used on Dialogue can be seen in Appendix C. In the latter half of the research gathering period, accounting for Covid-19 prematurely concluding the face-to-face research, the Council's standard route of consultation via Citizen Space was also used, the questions used can be seen in Appendix D

1.30   Dialogue is an informal, less-structured online consultation platform that allows individuals to share their ideas and interact with other's ideas, similar to responding to 'comments' on social media.

1.31   Both platforms were pre-set with the broad themes and questions taken from our interview schedule.

1.32   By utilising online consultations, women who didn't feel able or comfortable to partake in face-to-face discussions were given an opportunity to contribute.

1.33   The online consultations were designed to allow participants to describe in their own words their experience; participants also did not have to answer every question. Rather, participants contributed their thoughts on the issues that personally resonated. Each 'theme' the participant wanted to contribute to included both closed and open-ended questions.

1.34   The closed-ended questions were included to make participants think about their answers to the following open-ended questions, which were accompanied by free-text answer boxes.

1.35   While a limitation of this qualitative type of consultation is that analysis of free-text is considerably more time-consuming, the priority was to ensure women could fully express themselves in any way they engaged with this project.

1.36   As this method is less of a commitment for the participant (in terms of both their time and not having to interact with the researchers in person), incorporating this approach meant a much greater number of participants were

able to get involved. By reaching farther through this more light-touch method, it was expected that common overarching barriers would come to light and, due to the number of women partaking, that these findings would be reliable and broadly generalizable.

Removing Barriers to Participating and Identifying Underrepresentation

1.37   As described above, a range of engagement options were available, however it was acknowledged that extra provision would be required for some women to be able to participate.

1.38   It was decided that participation wouldn't be financially incentivised, due to potential ethical concerns associated with this. However, fair compensation for travel and childcare costs was budgeted for.

1.39   The researchers consulted the women they would be working with to facilitate focus groups and interviews at locations and times that were convenient to them.

1.40   The researchers also improvised approaches to assisting women to participate where the need arose, for example by entertaining children accompanying participants.

1.41   Where it was anticipated there would be a language barrier, a female Officer from the Council's Community Language Team was recruited to join focus groups and interviews.

1.42   Equalities monitoring information and a postcode mapping system were used to continuously track our participant representation during the research period. Targeted advertising was used in the latter stage of the research period, where there was an identified underrepresentation of particular demographics involved, to encourage broad representation of the diversity of the city.

Participants

1.43   A total of 330 participants shared their views as part of the project.

1.44   All participants identified as female and were over the age of 18, and either lived or worked in Leicester. A map to highlight responses from across the city can be seen in Appendix E and responses from the city and county in Appendix F.

1.45   A full breakdown of the participants by demographic, location, and means by which they engaged in the project, can be seen at Appendix G.

1.46   All participation in the project was voluntary. Volunteer response sampling was used as part of the project, and engagement opportunities were widely promoted by internal and external stakeholders through a range of media and word-of-mouth.

1.47   Project officers worked with organisations across the city to host focus groups

and promote online platforms. Libraries and community centers were utilised for focus groups as this was also where many community groups reside.

1.48 To remove barriers to participation, where applicable, participants were offered to have their childcare and travel costs reimbursed. The project also offered community group leaders reimbursement of their community room bookings. Where appropriate, female-identifying interpreters accompanied face to face research.

Analysis Approach

1.49 Thematic analysis was used to analyse the collective data from all methods used.

1.50 This approach involved the researchers becoming incredibly familiar with the data by reviewing it multiple times (through re-reading transcriptions, consultation responses and research notes, as well as listening to focus groups and interview recordings).

1.51 This allowed the researchers to create 'codes' of commonalities that were relevant to the project aims. These 'codes' help to categorise the data into initial themes and identify how prevalent each common finding is.

1.52 These initial themes were then revised and refined by returning to the data set, to ensure the identified themes accurately captured the 'story' told by the participants collectively

1.53 A *grounded* approach to analysis was taken, meaning that the themes were set by the participants, and the researchers were reflexive in their analyses, to better capture the voices of the women participating and relay this in both the research findings and the resulting recommendations made.

1.54 The main body of this report combines the analytic narrative (the identified and analysed themes) with direct quotes from the qualitative data sets, to report on generalisable themes identified and illustrate the individual, personal experiences within these overarching common themes.

1.55 It was essential to the researchers that women's voices were carried throughout this project: this work is a collaborative effort between the researchers and the participants.

4. Main Body (thematic analysis and case studies)

Introduction: Equalities and Recognition

The following findings are an amalgamation of the data gathered from focus groups, interviews, engagement events and online consultations, which took place between October 2019 and July 2020.

These findings are separated into key themes for ease of reading. However, it is essential that these issues are not viewed in isolation; for many women, there is significant overlap of these important aspects to life, and similar issues arise within many of the themes.

The Equality Act 2010 acknowledges nine protected characteristics, however as Section 14 never came into force, discrimination cases currently have to be brought separately for each protected characteristic. This means that intersectional barriers, for example racialised sexism, are currently not recognised as such in law.

This needs to be recognised in law to ensure comprehensive protection and respectful acknowledgement of identity for everyone.

Recommendation: That the government should evaluate and review existing legislation and policy to ensure it takes an approach which fully considers the interaction between sex and other protected characteristics, or 'intersectionality' in addressing equalities disproportionately experienced by women, many of which are covered in the later sections of this report.

Recommendation: That the government should make it possible to bring a single discrimination claim based on an individual's full identity (which is likely to include multiple intersecting protected characteristics), by reviewing and then implementing Section 14 of the Equality Act 2010. Whilst Section 14 covers 'dual discrimination' there may be merit in considering intersectionalities of more than two protected characteristics in conjunction with one another, as part of the review.

1. Careers and Motherhood

"That's the other reason that your undervalued: you're undervalued if you have too many children and you're undervalued if you don't."

The most prevalent theme, highlighted by a vast majority of women, was the strain felt between pursuing career goals and managing childcare responsibilities. Almost all mothers spoken to are the primary caregiver of their child or children. Many women with children spoke of experiences demonstrating the 'triple shift' (Duncombe and Marsden 1995), where they were employed (or seeking employment), but still expected to do the majority of childcare and the housekeeping.

Of those that responded in our online consultation, 61.71% said that family commitments hold them back at least sometimes.

When asked 'If 'Yes' or 'Sometimes', how so?', responses highlighted many areas. The three most prominent areas were childcare, putting the needs of others first; whether this be children, husband and/ or elderly parents and having the role of a carer. Within these answers references were made towards being a single parent and managing near all responsibilities; lack of suitable work to fit childcare; the cost of childcare and other financial restrictions.

Living Through the Triple Shift

Participants expressed their responsibilities - as the primary caregiver, primary house-runner, and in employment - are overwhelming.

Simultaneously managing these multiple roles also fostered significant guilt in women who felt they were not fully fulfilling any role or meeting expectations set of them:

```
"I started from five, five o'clock in the morning to like ten
at night and it just didn't stop. And I just felt I wasn't
doing enough."
```

```
"I do feel that there's pressure just to be like working and
then like be great in the house, especially in [my] Indian
community"
```

In addition to frustration in automatically being assigned the responsibilities of house-management and primary caregiver; with these forms of unpaid labour being tough, demanding and unrewarding (Oakley 1974) or 'lesser' importance:

```
"Her sister in law, the dad will have the daughter for the
whole weekend. She will come back in the exact same clothes,
exact same underwear. Her hair will be all knotted. And he'll
just say 'well, I don't have to do that. So, I didn't do it.
It's your job to do that'. But then that child is learning
that men will not look after her. And that as a woman she must
do that. And that's when we've got to think: is that the
message? When men are saying, well, that's not my job… what is
he doing in that time? And is that work more important than
what we've 'gotta do'? What we're saying here is that whatever
he's doing is more important, better, productive, whatever
he's doing. That's first priority."
```

```
"Even though I feel that we're both very modern and
progressive I think housework-wise it still always tends to
fall to me as the woman, you know. And even if it's not
physically demanding, it's the mental load of things. So, I
have to remember what there is to do and sort of instruct him
and then remind him… I feel like I still run most of the
household even when I'm working."
```

These roles are learnt from childhood, with many participants reflecting on the different position they held in the family compared with their brothers:

"So, from the age of 17, 18, I've studied; worked; looked after the house - my sister and my brothers never had to worry about that. that's just been expected of me as a woman, yeah. Which is fine. I mean, I like to do it, but my brothers, even now, for example, it will not come to him. He will do a decision and think later on, 'okay, how will that affect my family?' Whereas with me, before I take the decision, I'd say, 'gosh, what am I going to do in terms of family?'"

Young participants spoke of avoiding these roles:

P1 "I bet you're pulled in to help around as well, though aren't you?"

P2: "Yeah, that's why try to stay out the house as much as I can"

And being expected at a young age to be a carer:

"As a young woman, because I'm not married, I don't have any children. People assume you have no responsibilities. So, when you say 'no, actually, I look after my sister, look after my parents' or, 'I try and do this and that or try and volunteer after work'. They don't see that as important enough, that kind of thing"

Once the roles have been assigned in the adult family unit, of managing the house and being the primary caregiver, the woman's ability to exercise autonomy is reduced (Oakley 1974) and shifting this status quo becomes difficult:

"Well, if I worked full-time and the kids were in childcare? Who would do that other stuff? Okay, well, I would still have to do that because know you've then taken up that role. It's very hard to shift it back when you've been doing it."

"*We* know men get paid more so they're the breadwinner, aren't they?… Typically, the men are the breadwinners. And I don't think we've quite lost that… Yeah. it's such a shock because more often than not, the woman is at home looking after children, the house, maintaining, because the opportunities are not widely available for women."

"But I think one part that would certainly help is the childcare side of things, because like they say, whatever, I think if not physically, the mental load of it all falls on women. And if there's anything you can do to reduce that, then you can free women up to do more outside of the home"

"Or, you know, if you've got limited holiday anyway. It can be really difficult to balance working and being the kind of main caregiver as well."

And leave women placing themselves as their last priority:

> "You have to think about what the people think. Yeah. What your family think. And then weirdly, lastly, yourself"

Childcare Costs

Of the mothers that were unemployed but doing the childcare, a common frustration was the desire to do paid work, but the feeling of being unable to.

While the early years funding programme for 3- and 4-year olds (15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year for all families, 30 hours a week for families where lone parents/both parents earn at least £139 per week) is a help, many do not feel this sufficient.

It doesn't account for families of multiple children under 5, families with a child under 3 with parents who wish to return to work, or the continuous need for childcare before/after school.

The steep cost of childcare means that for many women, their wages would entirely go to paying or supplementing childcare fees to ensure care provision during working hours, **with some families even left at a deficit if the primary caregiver returned to work**.

On leaving their jobs to care for their children, many women cited the meagre difference between their earnings and their childcare fees, some referring directly to the automatic assumption of them, as mother, being the primary caregiver:

> "The money I was paying childminder for the three children at the weekend rate was more than I was earning"

> "Certainly, when they were younger to put them in nursery, for instance, it's just impossible. It's £50, £60 a day each. So, you put three children in nursery and whatever I earn is just going on nursery fees and it's just… Why would you want to pay somebody else to look after your children?"

> "I had to stop the job, the original job I was doing before because of childcare. I was doing a part-time job. By the end of days, my job was just paying my childcare."

> *I:* "Do you work at the moment?"
> *P:* "No. Because of childcare I can't work, nurseries are too expensive."

> I: "Would you want to go back to work right now if you could?"
> P: "I would love to, yeah."

> "The only thing I thought was tricky was when I wanted to change my career path. That's when I wanted to go to college to do my level three in childcare… Now, I found that a little bit difficult because. Childcare. Biggest thing. Where you're

banging your head against a brick wall. And as the woman, you're the one that is expected to stay at home because socially it's more acceptable, isn't it? It's very rare you hear of men being stay at home dads; 'our mom goes out to work'"

With looming childcare fees intercepting plans of education or work:

"Honestly, I don't have much to say because we are struggling with the same thing, childcare, childcare, childcare… so at least if the childcare is affordable. Then you know, you can concentrate on the school years and working because, you know, you have bills to pay."

In addition to free childcare coming in too late; for many professions, being out of the field for three years lessens their relevance:

"I've heard it from so many like moms that, you know, they want to go back to work and childcare is just too much. So, I think that's the main thing for me like, just to have the support with childcare. I feel like the systems that they've got up still don't really help enough. You have these tax-free systems of childcare; it feels like still you're paying out quite a lot of money. So, if you're having a minimum, a low income, paying that much to childcare still is too much. But it's just for 3- or 4-year olds (30 free hours) … I feel like that's too late for a lot of people that want to start working."

Women also spoke to the false promise of free childcare: therein, the additional cost incurred in meeting the hours given by the provider:

P1: "There's a trap though because I've got them in nursery, they will take that funding, but they will make sure you pay for the other side of that funding, so like if you went to minus where you had 15 hours, you couldn't just do your fifteen hours, you have to pay an extra day or you need to put an extra morning and afternoon in. Somehow you have to pay."
P2: "Yeah. and what jobs are you getting that you could just do three hours a day four days, or three days with five hours. you just can't do that."

With many mothers referring to a 'financial trap', in that mothers who were eligible for certain benefits would be better off both financially and emotionally not working than recommencing their employment and career following maternity leave:

"Basically, went on maternity leave. and because of childcare costs, I decided I couldn't go back."

I: "Would you be worse off if you put him into childcare if you went in [to work]?"
P: "Yeah, that's the thing. Even looking into work right now,

I feel like I'd be worse off working then on benefits basically. So, me and my partner, we claim like Universal Credit. Yeah. So, working it out I'd be worse off working. it's really annoying cos I wanna get back to work"

"Again, we were saying childcare, parents can't seem to make a balance of working and things like that, because they feel financially the strain on a day-to-day basis. So, when it comes to childcare, I mean for 50 to 60 quid. Yeah, per day. And if you have up to a couple of children, I mean, financially, you're strained anyway. How are you going to manage that? There's no motivation to it. It's almost like financially, a vicious circle. You're in the trap, aren't you? So, there's no way out."

It is essential to acknowledge the conditions of widespread economic deprivation in Leicester, in particular income deprivation (The English Indices of Deprivation, ONS 2019), that has contributed to this situation wherein achievable salaries for many women are close to, or even below, childcare fees.

Childcare and Guilt

Furthermore, some women also voiced feeling guilt leaving their children with another caregiver, or the overwhelming automatic delegation of house and childcare responsibilities, as hindrances to pursuing work:

"I just feel like I wouldn't be able to manage a proper full-time job because of all the commitments of family. Yeah, and I think I'd like to give my family that time."

"I know the way I treat my kids, no one else can do it"

"I didn't feel comfortable enough to leave my children with the babysitters or childminders"

"Unless I could find anywhere that I felt [comfortable with] - until they could start in an OFSTED place, I wasn't happy to place my children anywhere"

"I got pregnant, had my first child, couldn't find anywhere affordable to put my daughter, so until I could balance that, I had maternity leave, but I had to balance that. And I found that so hard and stressful because nursery fees: massive. The second thing I'm a little bit funny about: sending my kids to nursery, unless I actually know what nursery's all about"

"I've never agreed in having a stranger look after my little boy. So, unless my mum or my dad or my brother are willing to look after my son for the night or the weekend or whatever. We just stay at home together and do our own thing. I've never agreed with leaving him with a stranger. You're paying somebody to come to my house to look after him? No, thank you.

My house is my house, not yours. Simple as, nobody else is
going to come and, you know, be involved in that."

"And while I was there [at work], I used to feel so bad. Why
do I have to do this? Somebody else's got my children"

"*But* there was just a lot of guilt of leaving my little one…
Even though I enjoyed work and it was a break for me, I just -
the guilt. I think I just really wanted to stay home for my
child, and I know it was a bit of a sacrifice."

"*T*hen I worked for a year and I thought, I just want to spend
time with my children. So, I gave it up. So that was a
struggle."

Work and its Functions

Many women identified work as an immensely important part of their identity, and for
mothers, working offers an opportunity to be in a different environment, interacting
with other adults, and a break from immediate childcare responsibilities.

Additionally, the majority of women who are mothers the project spoke to have a real
desire to contribute to the economy and take pride in professional accomplishments.

This sub-section investigates how enabling women who are mothers to continue their
career can be mutually beneficial for both employee and employer.

Pursuing a career contributes to providing children with a positive female role model:

"I want to do something positive so that my girls can learn
from it as well; don't want to be sat at home"

While working means juggling another responsibility, work acts as respite for women
who are mothers from the childrearing role and positively supports mental health
maintenance:

"*[it]* felt like a holiday, like it was a sudden liberation"

"I enjoyed being away from them like so much"

"The job thing is not really for money; I feel like it's just
for my own sanity; for my own achievements."

"I think it's important to get out and do something for
yourself because it gives you that basic - gives you the
sanity."

"I think when you go back after a child, work is just a
completely different place to be. I actually enjoy it. You're
looking at it differently because you're getting some time out
from a hectic lifestyle."

"So, I can go back to work. I need to get out, now. I need to have adult chats"

"I don't know. It might sound crazy, but when I go to work, I find more peace."

Positively serving women's self-perception to feel relevant:

"And it's quite nice to know I'm not old and weird"

As well as supporting confidence:

"Work has actually helped me to be more assertive… particularly because I'm in meetings and I'm giving advice… I'm much more confident in myself, to be able to speak up"

And not having the mental frustration of being 'shut in':

"Sometimes I get so frustrated and it all goes on her. 'Cos it's just me and her in the house"

Or having to use childcare, meaning separation anxiety is alleviated and adjusted to earlier (rather than waiting until the child/ren is/are of school age)

"It was a good steppingstone for us as parents: we're getting used to the fact that, you're going to know, your child is going to go into education and you're getting a separation anxiety [now]"

In addition to achieving financial independence, which has benefits of being active in the economy, gives women the ability to have some degree of control over their lives and, as pointed out by another participant, to "leave unhappy relationships":

"I just want to go back to work now and be independent."

Even in spite of having to manage strain under the 'triple shift':

"It's hard. I struggle to keep up with everything. Washing, cooking, ironing, shopping, cleaning, the works. Struggle with all of it, but I'd much rather be here, struggling like that than be sat in the same four walls all day, every day. Going stir crazy. Like I did for a year before I got this job."

These testaments clearly demonstrate that many women who have children also value work and communicate how much they get out of working as having positive implications for their productivity and enthusiasm in the workplace – even while managing the strain of multiple roles.

Many of the statements talked of negative treatment experienced by women while pregnant or returning from maternity leave, which will be explored further in Workplace: Policies vs Practice.

However, the dedication evidenced by many women and the contribution of mothers in the workplace highlights the case for greater support for working mothers.

Managing Work:

This project heard varying experiences of how work as a mother was and wasn't made manageable. In this sub-section we will explore what women cite as allowing them to re-join and progress in their career:

Flexible working arrangements and understanding managers creating a workplace culture that is inclusive of women were two significant ways women were enabled to recommence work:

"I'm fortunate in that I have flexibility about my work arrangements, and I don't think I'd be able to do what I do if I wasn't in my role, in terms of parenting; I parent alone"

"I do feel like, you know, I'm expected to be a mum. As if I don't have a job. I'm also, I'm very lucky with where I work, they are very flexible. There isn't that expectation that you will work as if you haven't got children. But I think a lot of people do suffer that, you're supposed to be professional and not bring your home life into work. But unfortunately, it doesn't always work like that when you've got small children that might be sick or, might have a school play that they're desperate for you to go to"

"Within the charity sector, I think there is more of a focus on flexible working and equal opportunity for work… but there is more of an understanding now that there is a need for flexibility, so I am very lucky in that respect."

Being able to be with their children, whether it be with a childcare hub attached to their workplace, being able to have their children in their workplace where appropriate, or themselves or their partner working from home, were also cited ways to manage childcare and give women greater opportunities to recommence work:

"I want to do so many things, but I want to do it from my home. I don't want to leave them somewhere else."

"I think that, being a mother, there should be so many opportunities for mothers to work from home with kids if they want to."

"What I'm thinking is that nurseries should allow a mum to work there with their kids"

"We both work, me and my husband, but I work part-time. He owns his own business, so he works from home. So, we kind of share out the childcare responsibilities."

"So maybe idealistically, I'd say that [a solution] could be a

nursery attached to it"

Women were also selective about their work, the jobs they applied for often dictated by the school day:

"Yeah, I'm looking for like admin-based work so that I can kind of work between the kids, preferably in a school. So, I get term times."

"I have three children… I work part-time, so I work sort of within the school day and then get back to pick them up after."

Being able to change employment status to locum (temporarily fulfilling the duties of another) was another mutually beneficial solution for both the mother and the employer.
The employer has someone actively wanting to be a 'back-up' and their employee remains professionally relevant by staying up to date with current knowledge and not having a long period of absence; while the mother gets to work flexibly:

"I locum so that means. I'm really flexible with my working. So, if I don't want to work, I just don't book any days. And if I want to add a few more days here and there then I can do that. So, I've got that little bit of being away from being a full-time mom as well… I started locuming [sic] as I found out I was pregnant… I've obviously stayed in because of so much change in my job and I don't want to be out too much."

Many women also cited the support they get from female family members such as mums, aunts and sisters to enable them to work. Others offered that support themselves to help a female relative to work:

"*F*rom the start since I've been pregnant, she's been so supportive. Every single one, with every single pregnancy, every single birth… Especially postnatally. I've had lots of support, and I've not been pressured into getting back into a routine or getting back to who I was before having my kids or anything, and I think that just makes such a world of a difference. It does. Because I know, if I hadn't had that support, I wouldn't be able to cope with having three kids on my own."

"I'm lucky to have the support in my home that I've got people to help me with my day-to-day… I work one and a half days a week"

"*But* lucky enough me and [my sister]: she changed her shifts at work, so I could go to work. And then when I got back, she went to work."

"One of the big reasons to give up my job also was to help my

daughter who has two of my grandchildren, to help her go back
to school and get a career"

Being granted more opportunities to network was cited as another way to assist
mothers working or seeking employment, by creating a culture shift from realising
that previously unacknowledged skills can be utilised professionally:

"And I think the networking is a massive one. I mean, there's
so many women out there who would become mothers, who have
chosen to not go back to work because they want to be there
for their children. How many skills can our city alone utilise
for the benefit of all of us, put together?"

Not Managing Work

**"I think a lot of people don't feel that they have the choice
on how they manage their careers or look after their children**…
**And at every point you should be able to say 'I want to do
this. I want to do that.' And the truth is, you don't have
that choice most of the time."**

Following on from the last subsection, here the barriers that hinder women who are
mothers from being able to recommence and sustain work will be discussed.

Similarly, to the mention of working around childcare, some women were averse to
this in that it limits their opportunities for work; for many, the skilled career paths they
wish to follow do not always accommodate part-time workers:

"I'm in a situation where I want to go to work but I know I
wouldn't be able to have the hours"
"You can't look freely; you have to think about those
responsibilities first and then fit in what you'd like to do
career-wise around that."

"You end up doing jobs you don't want to because they fit in
to the childcare need that you have"

"I've got all these skills. But I'm unable to even utilise
those skills or even offer them because now the opportunities
available out there are only full-time. I want to balance, I
want to be there for my children, and I want to be able to
provide for my family at the same time too, but at the cost of
not using my skills and my full potential, and that's not
rewarding in itself."

"It's literally just completely stepping back and starting off
new, because there aren't those opportunities anymore."

"I was 17 when I had him and trying to find a part-time job in
the daytime so that you are at home for your children in the
morning and in evening is just impossible. So, you either bite
the bullet, find a full-time job, or sit on the dole all the

time."

"I think that's one thing we struggled with when we started. Obviously, I hadn't got children when it first started, but it was nurseries, cause a lot of nurseries didn't open till 9:00AM. Whereas we started at 7:00AM then. So, it was hard, if anybody wanted to join us in this trade. They couldn't because they've got no childcare."

"So you see this thing going back to trying to find a job like a part-time job in the days when we have no qualifications or whatever, you're looking at doing your 'basic' jobs like cleaning, but cleaning is either early morning or in the evening. And it's just not feasible. I mean, my previous job was part-time, 15 hours a week, but it was working from five to eight on weekdays. And, you know, every night I had to have somebody there to look after my little boy. It just wasn't working for me. Obviously, now that he's old enough, we're leaving at the same sort of time in the morning. And then he goes back and he's old enough to let himself in and sit there for an hour before I get back from work."

"I know that in the private sector, when I was working, I wouldn't have been able to get married and have children [until my job progressed]"

In situations where employers have a policy allowing for flexible working arrangements, but the manager decides this is not suitable, this acted as an unnecessary barrier for some:

"She said [to the mother]'well, not sure if I'll be able to allow this [FWA] because I have to think about others in the team, and tomorrow somebody else might ask me' and I just thought, 'oh my God, am I really hearing this?' **And this is the reason why I haven't had any kids yet.**"

Last minute overtime regularly being asked of the employee also wasn't conducive to maintaining a mother in employment:

"When my son was about five, I had a part-time job in a doctors' surgery… they'd kept asking for overtime on the spot. I'm like, 'I've got to get back for my childminder'. It got to the point where they kept asking me every other day and I just thought, 'I can't do this, it's not fair on my child, it's not fair on the childminder', I had other problems as well with wages not paying what they said they were going to and in the end it was easier for me to resign"

Pursuing education was also stifled by childcare responsibilities and the need to financially support their family for many women:

P: "*I* Hope in future I'll be able to go back again to Uni

because I really want to go back to Uni and just have my nursing, because I wanted to, I want to be a nurse."
I: "You mentioned nursing, which is a wicked aim. What do you think needs to change or what will you need to kind of do to get there?
P: "Probably more support for the parent. If you want to go back to do something, your education. I feel like you're not getting enough support because of the childcare. It's very expensive having to depend on one person. You know, you're going to Uni, you've got two kids. It's not encouraging. So many parents, so many people who I know, went into nursing. They have to drop because you still need to have a part-time job to be able to support your family"

Some mothers tried to study around their childcare responsibilities (i.e. when their child is asleep), causing significant strain:

"When I was doing my honours, I was doing it with the Open University, so I just did it as he was like playing or sleeping… so, I can do it. but it's just a bit of a longer process."

"*[In my apprenticeship]* we work 37 hours a week. But then on top of that we've got to do our online portfolios and stuff as well. For me I've not really found much time to do it yet. But you know, I'm gonna have to start putting in a couple of hours in a night to be able to get it done. Otherwise I'm just not gonna pass it. See this is it, because I'm a single mum; to look after him as well. I'm just really struggling to find the time."

"I started my AAT course before I was pregnant, I did two exams, passed them. Getting pregnant, I left it, couldn't cope with more studying. I just started doing it… just renewed my course, since August. But I've done nothing so far. There's just too much, I get so tired. But I try and stay awake at night and do it if I can"

However, peer support enabled some to continue with their academic goals:

"*I've* got only three exams left now. I've been okay so far because I'm doing distance learning. There's one lady who I met through a forum. if I needed help, she would help me, never seen her before, spoke to her by phone or text, that's it. Education is important"

There was frustration voiced in acknowledging that as the mother they were automatically expected to be the primary caregiver, meaning they were the parent who had to work around the child's needs:

"[my husband is] supportive, but he will tell me like, 'no, that's not right, you can't do that'. I had an interview

yesterday. But he said there's no point because I've not done that role. I've done that paid role but I'm not perfect in it. Plus, childcare, we've got childcare issues. So, he said, who would look after her? Yeah, that's the big thing. Otherwise, I would"

"You know, they'd always say, call mum. That's an automatic thing people say. Even at schools… It just seems to be ingrained in people, isn't it? The mum is the first one, not 'call the dad', but I think that's a public assumption from olden days."

The mother and/or their child having some form of additional need, for example a chronic health condition also hindered the mother's ability to work due to interruptions such as hospital appointments or taking time out to address support issues with their child's school:

"I just feel that I'm raring to go for a job, but obviously, with my health problems, a combination of my health problems, and my son's health problems. It's a bit difficult to get a job when I've got to have so many… So much time off to do hospital appointments, so I'm thinking about going self-employed so it can be more flexible round those."

"And then even when he did start with his 121 teacher, she went for the training, but it wasn't the right training. So, then we had to wait again. And then it was like my mum had to go to the school to supervise him at lunch. And it's not fair that she has to do that because, let's say if she got her own job… What is she supposed to do?

Case: Balancing Work and Childcare in the Pandemic

This case touches on issues of flexible working, returning to work and the acceptance of mothers as employees. This participant spoke of being on maternity leave, partially during the pandemic and an unsupportive employer.

"My manager is very unsupportive of maternity leave and working from home. Makes you feel undervalued…[my manager] doesn't understand working from home, doesn't support it and sees us all as key staff and that we should come to work as we are key workers."

She went on to explain of how despite many employees working from home, the manager is still reluctant to implement such working long-term and lacks understanding:

"I know some people have been going in now and then and people work from home, [I] was hoping she would understand it means people can work from home, she still doesn't support it. When I went to discuss my return to work [after maternity leave] she made it clear she won't support working from home. I like to have the flexibility; it helps with childcare."

The participant also expressed further concerns surrounding uncertain future childcare provisions to allow her to return to work:

"It is uncertain [pandemic], I can't hand in paperwork [facility closed due to pandemic], not sure [what to do] if it falls through [nursery application]. What do I do with my job? Will they be supportive? I am too nervous to mention it.

Prior to all of this I wanted to join baby clubs. I was looking forward to it and having time with my child, prior to nursery. That's been taken away from me now. I feel like I don't want to miss out and I don't want my child to miss out but that might happen.

At the start [of the pandemic] I was thinking if I can go to work, can I get childcare, [now] I can't go to any groups or meet friends. Even physically going to the park, café, have lunch etc. It does impact you socially and how the child is socially. Before I was slowly going out with the baby but then it's stopped."

Returning to Work

Upon returning to work sometime after they have had a child/ren, many women felt at a disadvantage to their colleagues, due to the time that was spent away from work, employers not keeping their side of contractual agreements and how they are

viewed returning to work as mothers.

The fear of being at a disadvantage was also expressed in the consultation where we had the opportunity to ask women about how Covid-19 has impacted them. Many women who have children expressed feeling as though they are not doing enough compared to others who are learning new skills and taking up additional training online during the pandemic. They were unable to participate in this due to several reasons, namely childcare and home schooling; a task the primary caregiver is automatically assumed to carry out. These women expressed a fear of being behind their colleagues when returning to work.

A participant explained her story of being displaced from her position, with assumptions made about what work she would like to do and her aspirations now, as a mother:

"When I came back, bear in mind a whole year I was off nobody contacted me; you're supposed to keep in touch. But I kept trying to keep in touch… when I came back to do what I thought was going to be my job, **they decided that the person that replaced me during maternity was staying, keeping my job and that I would actually be found a different job**. And his, my first conversation with him [my manager] when I came back to work, he said, 'so you're going to need an easy job now. You've got a child'… And I hadn't talked about reducing hours. I still had the same ambition… When I came back, I wanted to look to get promoted and all those kinds of things. So he'd made a real quick assumption that I was coming back to work, and I'd just want to put my feet up, whereas actually what then happened is that my confidence in my ability… **him making those kind of comments to me, made me think, 'God, actually, maybe, I shouldn't be ambitious anymore.** Maybe I should do something easy.' And so, I ended up in a relatively easy office job, which didn't really suit my skills or anything. I was bored… But then for someone to say… 'Well, are you sure you can cope with that? Because, you've got a child', that's no one's business. I mean, this is up to me to know whether I've got childcare, whether I can do certain hours, whether I've still got the ability… But there was a lot of assumptions; once you've had a child, that's it, you just want to hang up your work boots. You don't want to do anything else ever again"

The unfamiliarity of having been out of the workplace was felt as a real barrier felt by some mothers looking to re-enter their existing or a new job:

"It scares you, because you're already going into the unknown. You're going in fearful anyway. So, you've already got those obstacles in your mind. And then, I've got children to think of"

"How would I tackle those boundaries? How well, you know, what training is available. Just how do I do the steppingstones?"

Managing work and childcare responsibilities is an issue a significant portion of women have to face. The women spoken to were ambitious and had personal goals academically and professionally.

It was clear from the testaments given that after having children, many women, often expected to be the primary caregiver, have their ability to recommence work negatively affected or limited by finance, caregiving responsibility and the latent guilt that accompanies not caregiving full-time.

This delegation of women to the traditional role plays out in women not pursuing, or delaying, their career goals, not being able to fully contribute to the economy, and having a chronic strain on mental health due to the stressful trap of the 'triple shift' and the chronic undervaluing of their unpaid labour (caregiving and housework).

There must be a greater inclusion and acceptance of mothers in the workplace. It is felt several ways this could be achieved include; understanding management for sporadic childcare needs that arise; flexible working arrangements becoming a more common corporate policy and no disparity between the policy and the managerial application; an open-minded corporate attitude to job-shares reflected in job advertisements; greater communication of female-identifying networking events or employee groups and a review of the 'free childcare' scheme to better support women to re-enter work, give them their autonomy and escape the aforementioned 'finance trap'.

There is also growing evidence that a four-day working week, where employees are still paid the same wage as a full-time employee are beneficial to employers, employees and wider society (Fontinha and Walker 2019). Productivity in the workplace has been seen to increase, workplaces save on the use of resources such as paper and bills (electricity). Alongside, better quality of life, less stress, more happiness from employees and less sickness related absence. Such a working week has also benefited the environment: less miles were being driven per week leading to fewer transport emissions. 54% of employees from the study said they would spend their day off shopping, 43% said they would go to the theatre or cinema and 39% would eat out at restaurants, benefitting the wider and local economies.

Though there are considerations to be made that implementing such a pattern of work would be harder to implement in service industries to meet customer demands and within smaller businesses. There would also be follow on effects impacting teaching, nursing, caring and other roles in society. Different sectors will have to respond in different ways. This may also support job-sharing; employees work 4 days a week that alternate with one day of overlap. This supports calls for flexible working and part-time work discussed in greater detail later in the report.

Recommendation: Flexible Working Arrangements (including flexibility in recruitment to facilitate job shares) to be implemented by employers in corporate policy and job advertisements.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to integrate an action into its Equality Action Plan to support and publicise more opportunities for women employees, including networking events and promotion of the Council's employee groups.

Leicester City Council to further consider and integrate an appropriate action into its Equality Action Plan ways in which to promote professional and employment opportunities and to provide more opportunities for women in the City to network (for example, an externally focused event, possibly in partnership with Economic Regeneration).

Recommendation: Leicester City Council's Communications team to communicate news of both Council-affiliated and external networking events to women-majority community groups (for example, library and children's centre 'Toddler Time' attendees), to offer mothers who are not in employment greater professional opportunities.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council's Human Resources team to consider implementing employee policy for those returning from maternity leave to better support both the employee and their manager's facilitation of their re-entry into work.

Recommendation: That the government flexible working taskforce continue to campaign for employers to adopt flexible working practises in the public sector and the private sector.

Recommendation: That the Job Centre Plus continue to build on its work thus far to promote flexible working practises, by additionally challenging appropriately and requiring adequate justification where an employer has communicated that an opportunity is not suitable for flexible working.

Recommendation: That governmental policymakers review the '30 hours free childcare scheme', taking into account and addressing the issues raised by participants, to give women a greater opportunity to re-enter work without suffering financially.

An over reliance on female family members to support with childcare responsibilities is also likely to have an impact on opportunities for those family members, who may need to juggle their other commitments and possibly their employment.

Recommendation: That governmental policymakers consider exploring the merits and risks to implementing an allowance or financial benefit (subject to certain conditions), where women are relying on family members informally to take on childcare responsibilities to enable them to work, to ensure that family members (particularly female family members) are supplemented and are not experiencing detriment financially.

2. Community Support

The City Listening project gathered a share of our research by joining existing community groups and speaking with the women in attendance. The researchers saw first-hand the essential role community groups play in supporting women.

Having a purpose to meet and an activity to do presents an opportunity for women to form support networks and open up where they may have otherwise felt uncomfortable to directly seek emotional support. In these groups, women forged friendships and supported one another – as well as providing crucial signposting information and advice.

In a context of chronically strained NHS mental health services and increasing poverty (Rose and McAuley 2019; Power, Doherty, Pybus, Pickett 2020), community groups play an ever more important role in supporting individuals.

These groups serve many functions, such as providing a sense of belonging and collectivism, therapeutic interaction, escapism and even career support:

```
"I don't have no social life"

"My therapy is coming to places like this; talking to women"

"Here [a Carers' Support Group] you can talk about it and they
don't judge you and you can be who you want."

"They're like family, actually."

"When we come here, we forgot everything; laugh, joke"

"So yeah, we're here and then we just kind of enjoy the
company of other mums and it's nice to get out and see others,
because I'm not from Leicester"

"Next month, I will go to London to start a job there which I
wouldn't have been able to do if it wasn't for the blog [I
write] and the support of other mums [in the group] and even
initiatives like you know, just [being with] you guys to sit
and talk to. I want to go to work because I want to feel
relevant. At the same time, I want to be able to be a mum, how
I want to be a mum"
```

However, the project heard from many women who had created initiatives in their communities, who voiced the perceived threats to the future of these services, namely, a lack of funding:

```
"We used to run a women's group, but the lack of funding – we
stopped."

"The problem is lack of funding, because we had that group, we
stopped because we were struggling with our resources. It's
hard to get the funding, manage everything"
```

This was also felt by commissioned community services, with concern that the tendering process is always becoming narrower, and this could threaten the longevity of an established service that provides essential advice and support, in this case, to carers:

"I think people devise their own kind of survival tactics and sometimes they work, sometimes they don't. And on the days when they don't, I mean, I see here… I can see the bonding, the support that's so invaluable, that you don't get anywhere else. Because, you know, if you come in here and whatever you're going to say, even if you don't say it in the right sort of way, people will understand… Every time when we have to put in the bids, you know, for the competitive, tendering and all the rest of it, the brief gets narrower and narrower. I mean, I just don't like the current social care legislation because even to have advocacy, you've got to have significant communication needs"

Group organisers spoke of the difficulty with accessing funding for community groups such as the Council's Ward Funding, advocating for more information events for applicants, and simplified application systems:

"It's like the City Council should, if there's money there – the people who have never applied for funding before – give them a helping hand."

"We didn't know what kind of answers to put in the form, it was so hard!"

"They [The Council] say that funding's there, but they just make it so difficult for you, especially for people who have never applied for funding before. It makes, us as a group, not want to apply for funding anymore."

A participant also spoke at length about their positive experience of attending a bid application workshop led by a local chapter of a national charity: the format providing her information and the opportunity to ask and discuss the more complicated aspects of applying for funding.

The Council's Ward Engagement Officers do hold information sessions for those applying for funding, however it was apparent that participants involved in community group leadership weren't always aware of this.

Additionally, if participants are describing the funding bid process as hard and complicated to the point of dissuading potential applicants, there is likely an issue with the accessibility of this system. As we champion accessibility in the Council, with the priority focus being on Leicester's citizens accessing essential services, it is recommended that any in-house bid application process be reviewed to promote inclusivity in light of this feedback.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to review all funding application systems, to check accessibility and make the relevant changes where any issues with accessibility are determined.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council's teams dealing with bid applications (within both Neighbourhoods and Procurement) to consider how contact information for advice and support is published, to ensure maximum uptake of

such offers of support.

While Community Groups have been championed by many participants, it also became clear that there are still some gaps to be filled in what support is required and that for some women, there are barriers to accessing such groups.

```
"There is a lack of groups in Leicester, especially for women"
```

```
"Stuff like this like in the libraries is good. But there
needs to be ways to help develop people because eventually the
kids will go to school. And if no one helps you or shows you
the way to keep your life going. All of sudden, they'll go to
school and you'll be like [what next]"
```

```
"There should be other [carer] supports out there as well,
like this, because I think even location-wise, there are other
people in the same situation as me, and they can't reach or
come here."
```

```
"Your finances also contribute to the feelings of loneliness
if you don't have the money to go anywhere."
```

```
"Groups like [this mental health support group] only run term
time and it is a big part of my life. During the six weeks of
summer, it's closed. Christmas is the worst time if you need
something because everything shuts down. No support groups or
networks. They are not funded during to be able to run all the
time."
```

Women who used wheelchairs expressed frustration at transport links and being unable to use the bus, due to no guarantee of being offered an appropriate space or being unable to access bus stops not 'close by'. This was something all participants in the group who were also experiencing mobility conditions agreed with. The community group these participants attend was a lifeline for them, with discussion touching on suicidal thoughts and the support offered by women with similar life experiences in the group.

In discussing the intersecting concerns of inaccessible transport and financial constraint as barriers to accessing support groups, the members also voiced concern these felt barriers could affect the future of these pivotal services:

```
P1: "After six o' clock it is a problem to get a taxi for a
wheelchair"
P2: "Even on the weekends we don't get a taxi"
P1: "They charge three times more. Just an example, the
company I come with [to the current group] charges me £4.50,
the other company charges £13 from my home. Just imagine how
much difference [this] is. How am... Where am I going to get the
money from? That's the main question. Yeah. So you have to
cancel my programme because I can't afford the taxi, the
programme might be free but I can't afford the taxi"
```

Highlighting again the importance of career networking, the second participant illustrates the shift experienced by many mothers of their child progressing to school and the mother being left with some despondence as to their next step. There needs to be a focus in community support of building up members to flourish and grow beyond their group.

In the Council, we have a directory of care and support called ['MyChoice'](), which wasn't mentioned by participants other than the Council staff members who participated, suggesting that this valuable informational hub needs greater advertisement:

```
"Within Leicestershire, there are a lot of valuable services
available, but there isn't a signpost place where everybody,
everything, is under one roof, where you can be directed. Even
if it's just the website where you can say, 'I've got this
issue, where do I go? What are my options?'"
```

Additionally, in light of comments surrounding finance and location, MyChoice could streamline with Leicester Open Data to offer a mapping system, locating where particular community groups meet, to direct constituents. This could also be used to identify where efforts need to be focused, to fill the gaps of areas lacking essential community-based support groups. Leicester Open Data platform has already been utilised for this purpose by mapping support as part of the Covid-19 response. Leicester Open Data also has the benefit of being collaborative, meaning that VCS organisations and individuals can complete a form to add any groups or support that the Council are unaware of, thus promoting a more comprehensive picture, that is as useful as possible.

By utilising visual mapping, the Council will be able to identify and then target underserved areas, it can be ensured that barriers such as transport and finance don't stop women from tapping into Leicester's community support offer.

Recommendation: Adult social care and others who may have an interest in mapping the support offer to consider whether it may be beneficial to align to Leicester Open Data, in order that information isn't replicated and can be found in one place.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to develop a Comms plan which fulfils two functions; 1. to make VCS organisations and community groups aware of the Open Data Platform and to encourage as many as possible to add information to the relevant map and 2. to make citizens of Leicester aware of the Open Data Platform and how to use it.

Recommendation: Once the Open Data Platform is more developed, consider overlaying VCS support map with public transport routes map to establish whether there are any issues which need to be addressed. This will need to be in partnership with public transport operators.

3. Workplace – Policies vs Practice

"So, yeah, it was certainly just a kind of cultural

> expectation, really, it wasn't anything that you could have put your finger on. There was nothing you could have complained about… it was just the whole way the organization functioned."

In discussions surrounding work, our participants spoke around the following issues most frequently: unhealthy working environments where the workplace culture stifled women from progressing or being retained within their organisation, assault in their line of work, guilt for exercising supportive policies such as flexible working or parental leave, such policies not being properly implemented by managers, and, in some cases, seemingly illegal employer practice against employees in positions where they felt unable to protest this.

Protective Policies and (In)action

Employees of both public and private sector organisations spoke of experiences related to discrimination, inappropriate behaviour by colleagues and superiors, and potential corporate law-breaking. This commonality across organisations, experienced by women in a range of positions and in varying professional settings, highlighted that a proportion of organisations are complicit, to some extent, in sustaining inequality. In turn, some managers displaying inappropriate, unsupportive or discriminatory practice in their leadership modelled this approach for employees who do manage to progress through the ranks, sustaining inequality in the workplace.

The present position, as understood by many participants, is one wherein efforts to advance equality have seen society significantly progress – leading some to falsely believe we have now achieved full equality. In the context of the workplace, many women believed this has led to protective law and policy often becoming a tick-box exercise, which 'proves' equal treatment and opportunity upon audit. Participants reflected that under-exercised policies which are not meaningfully applied, coupled with forms of discrimination evolving to become more subtle, can also make it hard for employees to recognise, call out and resolve such issues.

The belief equality has been achieved in turn fosters the 'myth of meritocracy' (Bowles and Gintis 1976). Meritocracy is the belief that everyone has an equal chance to succeed, and that success is based on talent and effort, which in turn overlooks the real barriers to success felt by people with marginalised identities: 'we're working on an even playing ground'; 'the person who has several protected characteristics (which may be associated with experiencing barriers or inequality) *simply doesn't want to* or *isn't trying hard enough* to enter work or progress in their career'.

Where discrimination *is* identified, the belief of equality having been achieved also furthers the pervasive myth of a few 'bad apples', namely, the employer or organisation separating themselves from the problem, and a focus primarily on the individual acting in an unfair way: overlooking the systemic inequality that is likely to be present in many working environments to grow such 'bad apples'.

Individual ownership is important, but an organisation-wide culture shift, starting with the right 'tone from the top' is essential to making the working environment equally safe, fair and respectful for all.

This section explores the perspectives of women on workplace practices and experiences, and what they stress *needs* to change to truly shatter the glass ceiling.

Highlighting the difference between useful policies and proper implementation, this participant captured the inconsistency of support, due to manager discretion on implementation:

"We've got policies and procedures at [my organisation]. But everyone's experiences relate to managers and how they apply those… If you've got a supportive manager, they use the same policy as the non-supportive managers, but it's how they apply it and how they speak to you and how they make you feel. It's those things that affect people, not necessarily that we haven't got the right things in place."

Acknowledging the disparity of implementing supportive policy, a manager highlighted that there is no mandated form of training to effectively manage:

"I think when you get a job as a manager… There is no requirement to be trained, or training offered. I don't have any management training. I couldn't tell you what the policies are. For me, it's a reactive thing, as I do the best job that I think I can to support them."

Additionally, another manager striving to be a supportive leader highlighted the inaccessibility of supportive policies in their organisation:

"*I* don't understand how the policy works. I've read it like 600 times and still I'm not really clear"

Demonstrating the shallow application of supportive policies, participants who had experienced work-related stress in the public sector shared their experiences. The first participant left her job in relation to work-related stress, the second had sickness absence as a result of this issue, emphasising the lack of support had contributed to her needing time off:

"*It*'s very funny because if you start talking about stress at work, they'll just say to you 'well you need to take your breaks, you need to have your lunch', and all this, and **the onus is always flipped back on you** to be the one that fixes that, like, 'we've got everything in place for you, just make sure you have a break', so they felt like they ticked all the boxes about the work environment but they just ignored the stress that was going on in the workplace.*"*

"And when I'm saying, 'well, this is work-related stress, so had those [supportive] measures been put in place, then there wouldn't have been that many days off sick. But instead, you're giving me a warning'*"*

Similarly, another woman shared her manager's dismissal of her and her team's

reaction to stressful changes in their work:

"It was so dismissive to almost say that all the women got told, like, 'you're just – it's you. It's in your head'."

Speaking of their under-18 jobs, participants voiced being exploited by way of working over the maximum hours for under-18s without a break or working past their cut off time:

"I only just turned 18 yesterday, so they had to be careful about that, but at Christmas, they're a bit naughty, 'cause I should only do four hours without a break, but I did five. I didn't care, I just wanted the money to be honest, so I didn't really care that they were breaking the law"

"We had a bit of that, you know, in hospitality… the hours go out the window a little bit, whatever age you are"

The acceptance voiced by these women as to their agreements or employment rights being breached suggests this to be a normalised part of working.

However, the project also heard about how good management and policy application can benefit both the employee and their organisation:

"*She* talked to me about Occupational Health. She didn't say, 'I'm going to refer you to Occupational Health because your sickness levels are a concern'. It was: 'What do you think? Do you think Occupational Health might be able to bring something new to our conversations about how I can manage you and your condition in the workplace?'
I was like, in for a penny, in for a pound. Absolutely. Why would I not want to? 'cause I'm not looking to skive work; I'm looking to be able to carry on and I don't want to be the weak link in a team that's doing quite well and works quite well. And I went to Occupational Health. The recommendations that came back were really supportive. It was a very positive experience. But I know that there are people within my organisation that have had similar type, not the same with mental health conditions necessary, but the conditions where Occupational Health has been used as a tool, something to hit you in the head with. Because, 'you've had a lot of time off and it's costing [the organisation] a lot of money'. And the conversations have been very, very different and the feelings that have come out of that as a result have being very different. And that's about unskilled managers."

Continuing with supportive working environments, a young participant spoke of how progression schemes in her workplace have enabled her to sustain longer-term employment and professional development:

"I'm planning to go for an apprenticeship with them after college and then working my way up to be a manager… In the job

advertisement, one of that points were that 'we offer apprenticeships. Once you start with us, you can do if you want…' That's what gripped me"

Participants speaking of their experiences with managers and support linked directly to policy in practice, were explicitly asked how they feel this could be improved:

"I think managers should have much more training, ongoing training, not a one-day training. I don't think you learn anything in one day. No, no. It's got to be ongoing training about how you manage stress and anxiety for yourself, but also for the people you're managing"

"We should have a resource for managers as ongoing development of emotional intelligence"

The testaments given on policy application and supportive management highlight that high-quality management, which gets the most out of employees and also supports them to achieve their best in their work, cannot be achieved by any quick fix.

Employee policies should be explicitly clear with no room for multiple interpretations on overarching issues, yet reflexive enough to accommodate every individual's circumstances.

Given the participants' discussion of policy application, it would be most effective to prioritise ongoing training for managers in both employee policy and supportive leadership, to better understand the organisation's values and gain knowledge on how to appropriately and fairly adhere to policy. It could be beneficial also to have such training sessions allow time for best practice to be shared between managers.

Where managers feel they do not grasp policy, they should know exactly which member of staff in their organisation to consult and be empowered by their manager to pursue this learning, as a signifier of them being a conscientious manager.

Recommendation: That Leicester City Council's Equality Action Plan 2021 incorporate work internally to support line managers to understand organisational support mechanisms which are particularly relevant to the issues that participants have raised (such as the flexible working policy, time off for dependents policy) how those policies and support mechanisms support equality and how to make decisions which promote a supportive environment and also more flexible working, where it is practicable. This is likely to be achieved most effectively through some form of training or workshop style events.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to consider what training and/ or guidance managers are currently having on Occupational Health and consider reviewing this to promote an understanding of Occupational Health as a supportive tool, not a disciplinary measure.

Recommendation: That further work is undertaken with other services within the Council, for example economic regeneration, tourism and culture, to establish whether there are any actions that could be included in the Equality Action Plan 2021 which would encourage other employers in the City to promote supportive policies and work environment, for example flexible working and increased part-time working and job share opportunities, where practicable.

Recommendation: Organisations should review their policies collaboratively with their employees, by seeking feedback on how policy is currently used and understood. This could be facilitated by an anonymous internal survey, the information gathered aiding meaningful policy refinement. It is not within Leicester City council's remit to implement this in other organisations, but the Council should pay further consideration to how they might be able to influence and share best practice with employers across the City.

Recommendation: Awareness raising and information sharing locally and nationally to ensure that women understand their rights in relation to employment, and to increase women's confidence and ability to challenge effectively, where they have experienced both overt and/or covert discrimination, harassment or victimisation. This also links with a recommendation under 'Safety' to ensure that women are confident and equipped to raise concerns and complaints in relation to service provision (p.74-75).

Flexible and Part-Time Work

As touched upon in Careers and Motherhood, flexible working arrangements or a reduction of hours are essential in aiding employees who have either had a change in circumstance or additional needs, to continue to succeed in their employment. However, many participants stated that in application, reduced hours or flexible working arrangements, including working outside of office hours and working from home, have an impact on your perceived worth in employment.

On career progression, a participant stated:

"I have always stayed full-time though as I have never seen women working part-time treated properly, and even recently a woman was told that she had to reduce her grade because she couldn't do it part-time after having a baby. I have always felt that those who get promoted are those who do long hours – little more in some cases but with a family I am not prepared to do that. For that reason I have written off my career really – I have just accepted where I am – my younger self would never have believed that would happen."

On working through her pregnancy, a participant stated:

"There is no support and there's no understanding. I think what comes out of it is, basically, you are taking liberties because you're protected, because of policy. But there isn't

that understanding that, 'look, I'm sick. I can't make it or, I'd rather work from home for the next three days because it's easier for me if I need'. If I'm sick, I'm at home, I'm comfortable, you know."

Another demonstrated that while her organisation allows for flexible working arrangements, this type of work is not normalised and validated:

"If you work flexibly, that's great. But you're always looked down on, if you work differently"

If a manager doesn't support flexible working arrangements in spite of this being company policy, the stigma surrounding this is sustained in future managers' practice:

"But then I thought to myself, 'if you then saying this to me, I'm also a manager. And I also allow colleagues to work flexibly because they have got children. So then, you know, do I follow the same move then?'"

Several participants who had a combination of various additional needs or change in circumstance, including health conditions, caring responsibilities, or becoming single parents, acknowledged the worth in flexible working.

Flexible working supports a fair trade between employer and employee. For example, this participant acknowledged how flexible working support her, and how she is conscientiously working late as a fair return:

"I work on flexi hours, which is a godsend for me, certainly. So, if I was to finish at 4:00PM. Because I've got to go to an appointment or something like that. I don't think people are outwardly frowning down on me. But you feel like, oh, I'm being been given some kind of preferential treatment. But I know that I will have to log on in the evening to make up the time."

Similarly, other participants highlighted how flexible working can contribute to their happiness in work:

P1: "My work life balance is far better if I've had the opportunity to work from home."
P2: "You're lucky that you can work from home"

Unless there is a genuine business requirement for working core hours and/or working in the designated workspace building, flexible working arrangements (FWAs) for staff should be a part of all organisations, and opting-in to FWAs should be a simple process for employees and their managers to facilitate.

Standardisation and easy-to-follow set up would help to both normalise flexible working and promote the same credibility given to employees who don't use flexible working.

As our participants have stated, there are massive benefits to the employee being able to work flexibly: it supports employees to manage their work and life responsibilities more effectively. Flexible working is one of the main contributors to employee happiness, better facilitates mutual trust and respect, ensures a fairer trade and eradicates presenteeism by being output focused (ter Haar 2020).

In the current context of many having worked from home for the duration of 2020 in the interest of public health, flexible working is already becoming somewhat of a 'new normal'. Now is the ideal opportunity to make the necessity of flexible working a staple part of working culture post-Covid. It is appreciated that standardisation of flexible working may have some financial implications for employers i.e. IT equipment costs which smaller businesses or those in the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) may not be able to shoulder independently, which should be accounted for.

Recommendation: That policymakers consider providing some form of funding to SMEs and VCS organisations to enable them to purchase equipment, for the specific purpose of encouraging and enabling them to implement flexible/ home working.

Women who had reduced their hours due to a change in circumstance expressed frustration in that their hours (and consequently, pay) were reduced, but their workload wasn't, highlighting an exploitation of part-time workers:

"Coming back to work has been a bit more difficult, I feel like, and this is no one's fault except, **there's just not enough resources or enough people. I feel like I'm doing the full-time job in part-time hours**. So, when I'm at work it is just full on from the minute I get there to the minute I leave. And that's why I have very long days here. I work, certainly work more hours than I'm contracted for, because there's no other way of doing everything."

"I've heard from a lot of people who reduced their hours feeling like it was the same amount of work. Yeah, definitely, that is an experience I've had."

"Work expectations – I am good at my job so as a consequence I get given more work. I work part-time but have the same workload as full-time colleagues."

This participant spoke of returning to work after maternity leave and how the expected work-load partly led to voluntary redundancy:

"Extremely supportive when I returned part-time, although the demands and expectations to 'live up to' a full-time load partly led me to take voluntary redundancy in 2016. I also needed to look after my two sons as I had no childcare provision for my eldest going to Secondary school."

It was also apparent that there is a disparaging perception of those who do not work

full-time, which is perceived to link to a lack of opportunities to progress as a part-time employee:

> "I've only worked full-time for two years in my entire career and [in] part-time roles, it's very difficult to progress, or I find that I'm generally not taken seriously. There's this kind of insinuation that I've got 'a little job that keeps me busy'. Which is not the case. My job is a 'proper' job. It's just part-time."

> "It feels like there is a belittlement of my role because it's part-time. Also, in terms of career progression, I'm very limited because I am working part-time, but it's just not practical or financially viable for me to work full-time because we have three children."

Consistently, women make up a disproportionately large share of part-time employees (ONS 2020 in: Devine and Foley 2020).

As mentioned in Women and Childcare, many women involved in the project had to resign from employment to manage other obligatory roles.

Where women require and are able to work part-time, they should feel able to progress in their career and keep the same hours. The commonality of part-time workers feeling an expectation they are to give full-time output **must** be acknowledged and challenged within organisations.

This expectation highlights the preference for, and normalised nature of, full-time work, is unfair in trade between employer and employee, and by consistently working over contracted hours, could lead to issues such as work-related stress, which in turn affect corporate sickness levels.

If an organisation has expected outputs, it must pay fairly for these outputs.

Recommendation: The government flexible working taskforce/ policymakers to consider how they might influence employers to more openly consider employee part-time proposals and support part-time employees to do an effective job within contracted hours.

Recommendation: The government flexible working taskforce/ policymakers to consider how they can promote and encourage employees to offer job shares, to better support part-time employees to progress in their careers into more senior or skilled roles – benefitting both employer and employee.

Workplace Culture

> "At the back of my mind, I'm conscious of the fact that I'm a black woman. I know that I have to work extra hard to get to where I'm going. I know that, of course, we're being told there's no racism… It is still there - very subtle".

Unconscious biases are learned stereotypes that are automatic, unintentional,

deeply ingrained, and able to influence behaviour. Whilst direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of a protected characteristic, as defined under the Equality Act 2010, is prohibited, unconscious biases that are acted upon are often more elusive or subtle in nature which makes it very difficult to evidence unfair treatment and inequality.

This can be played out in actions such as othering or making pre-judgements of employees on the basis of their identity, that can impact on how suitable an employee is perceived to be for a progression opportunity. Many BAME women demonstrated the ways in which they are conspicuously treated differently in the workplace:

```
"People just make assumptions. They think 'you're oppressed'.
I've had someone say to me, 'Oh, are you allowed out the
house? What would your parents say?' People inappropriately
ask a lot of questions about marriage. They ask about kids,
ask about career choices, everything. And when I look around
me, no one else is asked these questions!"
```

Interrogations such as this are invasive, othering, and one of the ways in which unconscious bias can be acted upon. The effects of unconscious bias can be seriously career-hindering, as illustrated in this BAME woman's experience of her barred attempts to progress, which resulted in her resigning:

```
"I worked very hard for them, but they wouldn't let me
progress… They wouldn't move me up. They felt I was better
suited just there at the bottom level."
```

Subtle forms of discrimination allow inequality to prevail in the workplace, leading many women to feel excluded or othered from the group, foster imposter syndrome and have fewer opportunities than colleagues of more privileged groups or to progress. Within our consultation BAME women expressed how they felt more barriers in relation to their ethnicity or race than their gender. Due to the elusiveness of this differential treatment, it is incredibly hard to call out, know how to address, and sometimes even recognise as a problem.

A statement put forward by a respondent in the consultation highlighted differential access to opportunity in regard to race, how BAME women had to work for opportunities otherwise given to their white counterparts:

```
"Race is key, not only is there gender bias, but being a
person of colour, has also had an impact on opportunities.
most times you have to ask, whereas, I have seen white people
just been given them. and that means that it's not equal or
fair."
```

Language plays a significant part in unconscious biases. For example, describing women's passion as 'emotional' subtly undermines both their expression in the workplace, and their perceived professionalism:

```
"I'm very disappointed that when you're passionate about
```

something [in work], passionate is seen as 'emotional', because you're a woman… There's a difference between passionate and emotional. I think it's a sexist attitude. I think [with] women, it's a need to put down"

In terms of professional communication, meetings and other internal forms of communication are a common way in which power imbalances and unconscious bias come to fruition:

"And it always happens in this workplace. You get interrupted. So even if you're making a brilliant point and it's a lifesaving point and you've got all the facts, you will get interrupted no matter what… it'll be whoever's shouted the loudest. Yeah, made the big show. And I try and stay away from that because I feel like if you do, too many people do that, the work doesn't get done. But more recently I thought no. Like I said, I need to make my voice heard."

"As a woman, you're either classed as: 'You talk too much. So, I'm not going to listen. You don't talk enough, so I'm not going to listen'… I feel like even at home now, if you want to say something, you have to pick your moment and say it, for it to have the best effect... I think the same in the workplace as well… if you talk too much, they think you're trying to steer the conversation. And if you don't talk enough at work, they think, 'she has nothing to say, she might as well not be here'"

"I work at a University and the expectations of student care placed on me are different to those placed on male colleagues. Having worked at the same place for 7 years I am often still treated in a junior way by people outside of my immediate team as they assume my status.
Students routinely call my male colleagues Dr but refer to me as Miss."

In an intersectional manner, unconscious biases are experienced by people with varying privilege. In conversation about junior members of staff, a BAME female manager spoke to her experience of racialised gender discrimination, in the context of shared traditional cultural gender norms, as an affront to her authority:

"And the men, I'll be honest, they treat me like… that professional respect is not there because I'm a female, and they expect me to understand [my place, given] our cultural background and expect me to know… like, someone made a comment that 'the man in me is not going to accept that' when I'm giving management instruction. **And I'm like, 'hang on, I'm not your wife.** The man in you has got nothing to do with it!' It's the management instruction, you know. So, I find that colleagues who are from different backgrounds, when they come in, they are given that professional respect… from the men. But because I am a female with the same ethnicity as them,

that cultural, stereotypical behaviour comes into the expectations of me; "you can't tell me what to do. I'm a male, I'm older than you"

Another participant in our consultation told of how she struggles to be heard but understands it is far easier to be heard as a white woman and it is important, she and others give space to women of colour (WoC).

"It's harder to get promoted, respected and listened to as a woman than a man. Far less skilled, less clever males are in senior positions than their female counterparts and There is a gender imbalance in all sectors of education when you look at how 'female' the workforce is. However, as a white woman it's easier for me to get respect and be heard than for WoC. It's important to give WoC more space to speak and support as education is as institutionally racist and sexist as many sectors of society."

On the topic of multiple intersections of covert workplace inequality, a gender and class divide was identified by another in her field:

"And it's a very white middle class industry; alpha. If you don't play golf or squash, you know, there's no opportunity for you to socialise. You don't get invited to things and there's instances of that, where I've missed out on opportunities, because I wasn't the person they wanted me to be."

Case: How a Working Environment can be Hostile and Sustain Inequality:

"It was quite an aggressive selling environment… most of the women that work there younger, you know, if you were attractive, then you were more likely to progress…

It was quite insidious; it wasn't overt. it was very much an expectation that you would flirt and be sexually available towards the managers and [other senior members of staff]. And if you did that, you were well liked. And if you weren't prepared to do that, then you were kind of side-lined or made redundant.

Everybody was paid differently, and you were not allowed to discuss with your colleagues what you were paid. If you told anyone what you were paid, you got the sack… if you were pretty you got the best, the easy jobs.

I've never experienced anything like it."

Linking into the fewer opportunities felt by part-time women previously mentioned, these women illustrate an unwritten code in the workplace surrounding respect, inclusion, and in turn, who is better supported to progress in their career. Multiple

intersections of inequality faced (as discussed here, race and gender; gender and class) see those with certain protected characteristics experience greater barriers to career success.

Not seeing people you can relate to also contributes considerably to how comfortable a person feels in employment:

"I just thought, 'I'm not gonna fit in here'. And, you know, I just thought to myself, 'it's gonna be tough. Every day's going to be tough here'. And eventually I thought, 'I don't think I can stick it out here'. So, I moved"

One of the ways in which employers can foster an equal working environment is by either facilitating or supporting marginalised employees to create employee groups. However, those with intersecting marginalised identities vocalised feeling less able than more privileged employees to access such groups: a BAME woman vocalised feeling a disconnect between her employer's offer of employee groups that are relevant to her, and her feeling able to *actually* attend these. This participant elaborated, speaking to unconscious bias she has been subject to as a BAME woman, causing her to feel she must be more diligent than her white counterparts in order to be respected in her role.

As the workplace becomes more diverse, these groups become more obsolete, as they have served their purpose to support an underrepresented demographic population of the workforce:

"The more women we get [in work], the more we don't need the [women's] group, because you've actually got people that you can talk to out on site, rather than being isolated."

Still in some specific fields, career goals are entirely incompatible with family goals, considering the delegation of women as the primary caregiver:

"[Working in a] University or in academia means being able to conduct a lot of research, while also teaching or doing whatever else you do. That essentially means that you cannot have any family responsibilities. So for a lot of the female academics that want to have a family, that's just not happening, because they will only have the time to do all that additional research and have all those publications out there either before children are born or when they are old enough. And by that point, they [women] are probably too old."

"Women are expected to have families so therefore, the manager jobs are always outlined for men"

Those who are supported within the workplace highlighted that having such a manager or boss was not considered the norm and they felt lucky.

"I have a PhD and was extremely well supported by my supervisor throughout this process, but I would say he is not the norm. While he could be a demanding boss with very high

expectations, he also had a complete respect for family and home life and feels that a job should complement your life as a whole."

Despite it being illegal at recruitment stage to ask about family planning, a common report of women in employment was that many managers deem it acceptable to openly ask or talk about their female staff's fertility, and that this can have an impact on the desirability of an employee for opportunities in work:

"My boss at the moment is late 40s, doesn't have any children and constantly, constantly asks"

"A team leader phoned up H.R. in the middle of an open office and asked why his employee was entitled to maternity leave"

The senior officer in the latter quote displayed not only an incomplete understanding of employment policies, but also questioning 'why' his employee was entitled to maternity leave and doing so in a shared working space displayed a lack of respect for both this specific employee who would likely have been identifiable, and a message of nonacceptance to any employees in earshot who may start to or already have children.

One woman even spoke of her frequently informing senior staff members she will not be getting pregnant, due to the prejudice young; newlywed women experience as a barrier to career progression:

P: "I constantly sort of like put that out there so everyone knows that I would be a safe candidate."
I: "Do you feel that you have to tell people?"
P: "I think yes, because I recently got married. Now the people come and ask these questions. I look younger than I am. I don't look 38, that's why I constantly say this, I'm like kind of like, 'Oh don't worry. I'm already 38. I might never fall pregnant no matter how much we try'. But I feel I kind of have to put this out there because otherwise people might put me into this box of 'fertile young woman who might fall pregnant at any random point'. I don't want them to then exclude me for these reasons."

And for women returning to work following maternity leave, they are sometimes met with dissuasion:

"But then the second time around, when I came back, the lady that was covering, my God, two weeks before I was going to return to work she was ringing me and saying, **'it's so much easier if you just look for another job, 'cause I've done your job for so long.'** When I went back to work, I couldn't get into any of the files: it says I haven't got permission; you need a password. So, she put passwords on everything. And so, obviously she was finding it hard: she was able to stay, and she was offered a lower position. So, I would become her manager. But she didn't want that… I've just come back and

she's denied access. I don't want to give her a rollicking. But… I've come back. That's my position. She now needs to hand over to me."

It is clear that women who are mothers (or even just perceived of as likely to become a mother) do need more support to resume and progress in their careers in the same way women who do not have children, or other employees are able to.

Family responsibility has to be acknowledged in both recruitment and workplaces without stigma or as a perceived weakness, and rather, an accepted part of life experienced by a significant proportion of the working population.

The experiences voiced suggest women's fertility is a topic for discussion when in the perceived interests of the employer, however the debilitating health conditions surrounding this are topics that are taboo in the workplace:

"I have had times where I've had to be off school, college, sometimes work [due to period pain], and it's quite hard, especially when your boss is a man and you can't say… I just come up with an excuse like stomach-ache"

"I felt like I was about to drop. my blood pressure dropped. I was pale. I was shaking. I was cold. But I worked a full day because I didn't feel I was believed that I am actually not well [having a significant menstrual health condition]"

"I barely make it into work [when my periods are really bad] and it's really difficult actually, I think again because there's a stigma about talking about it. It's not really considered. So, there'll be some days where I'm really unwell. Yeah. I've not had much of an appetite. I've not slept well. I come into work and I've got 100 different meetings that could have been rescheduled at the time or I've got 100 urgent tasks that come in. And a part of me just thinks, 'Okay, that's just typical'. But then I feel like I can't say, 'Oh, gosh, I'm not well'. Yeah. Because this sort of thing, it's not really recognised much"

"I look at the dashboard about sickness. I don't think there is probably anybody that says that menopause is a reason that they're off sick"

Participants largely felt that there should be a greater awareness of women's health issues in the workplace to ensure women are respected, their needs are met, and that sickness data is more accurate.

Where participants had policies or open dialogues surrounding menopause as a health condition, they voiced being able to address their health needs and establish reasonable adjustments to do their job more effectively.

In experiences of more overt discrimination in the form of harassment, participants illustrated how the senior response to this varies considerably, with some

experiencing a hostile working environment:

> **Case: How harassment in the workplace is dealt with by management fosters an environment for continued harassment**
>
> When I was young working as a waitress, I worked with a family member. I was regularly assaulted by older men who were customers – [inappropriately touching]; brushing too close to me. My own mother at the time told me just to toughen up.
>
> Management did not care, and any kind of complaint would have been seen as being 'difficult'. It was commonplace for chefs to hit girls on the bottom with rolled up kitchen towels as they walked past. My friend got hit so hard by a colleague it broke her skin. In short - early days in a low paid job really pretty awful in the workplace.

P: "Well, I've had waitressing jobs, and there's times when customers have crept up behind me or for example, I'll have hands full of drinks and they come up and they'll just slap me on the arse… And then I'll go into the store and they'll come in… I've done self-defence and stuff, so I was able to deal with it…"
I: "Did you ever feel that you could tell anything about what was happening?"
P: "No. Because it was a lot of the managers, the chefs and some customers. One of the customers was a policeman and also, at my local church. So, I thought that, because he was supposed to be of a higher authority, I wasn't able to say anything."

And for others, a more positive reaction, as was the case with another service worker who spoke of a senior member of staff's supportive response to inappropriate behaviour and the significance of upholding workplace dignity:

"But it would be so common, there was a group of lads, tall kind of like 'lads' lads and I greeted them, was gonna sit them down at a table and they were making sexual jokes and stuff. And my manager on shift at the time was a man… I had so much respect for him true for because he heard that and he was a man in an industry dominated by like female waitresses and stuff, and he challenged it, he had my back and he didn't even remember that he did that for me… But it meant so much that he was a man and he challenged that - to me that was alien."

So, what needs to change to have workplaces that truly strive for equity?

Resolves must be focused on shifting the workplace culture, with senior staff members held accountable for modelling this; efforts that focus on the marginalised employees such as confidence or interview training place the onus of any failure on the person experiencing discrimination, and not the systemic inequality embedded in working culture that places employees from marginalised groups at a disadvantage – linking back to the employer separation from discrimination introduced at the

beginning of this section.

One of the main resolves can be enforcing safer spaces. Safe spaces refer to a 'place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm' (Oxford Dictionary definition).

Acknowledging the immense challenge of tackling inequality and in avoidance of damaging false-promises, operating on a 'safer space' policy is both more realistic for now, and less emotionally damaging if something does go wrong within the organisation marginalised members of staff would be led to fully trust as 'safe'.

Safer spaces can be created by having zero-tolerance equalities policies and mandated diversity and inclusion training for staff of all levels, encouraging staff to create or partake in employee groups and supporting staff members equally to engage, adopting a dignity framework to practically manage conversations and encouraging employees to take responsibility and do their diversity research, to both better realise how they can avoid being complicit in reinforcing workplace barriers, and actively support a colleague who is facing unfair treatment by learning how to call it out.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to consider implementing a zero-tolerance approach within the review of the Dignity at Work Policy.

Recruitment

Reviews of employment practice must also include recruitment, as identified by many participants. This participant drew attention to lack of diversity on recruitment panels and how a lack of relatability already places interviewees from protected and under-represented groups at a disadvantage:

"One thing that always made me feel a bit excluded when I went into these kinds of grad program interviews is you go in there and nine times out of ten the person interviewing you is a man in his 50s, usually white. And then the person who is alongside you is them, 20 years younger. Straight away they have this banter and that puts them on that front foot. And you're thinking, 'I'm already on the back foot here'"

She went on to highlight that comprehensive interview questions should be the main factor in assessments:

"The people that are being remembered aren't necessarily the ones that spoke up and did the assessment very well, it's the people that did the off the cuff chats very well – So if they asked more questions, everyone could answer – that would be a lot better"

The value of 'banter' or 'off the cuff chats' candidates of greater privilege can have by relating to their interviewer as a selling point in selecting an applicant was criticised heavily by participants:

> "I think we have to push for whoever is going to make the decision to actually question [job] applications more and not be sort of like blinded by this shiny male attitude"

The researchers heard numerous accounts of unfair recruitment practices which are often undetectable, perceived preferences and approaches. Many participants also had a sceptical opinion of departmental reviews, feeling that some are done for efficiency, but others are mechanisms to reduce hours or make redundant pre-selected staff, to replace with a preferential employee:

> "The first time I was pregnant, I told my employer and then they made me redundant… I do feel like it was because of my pregnancy. There were about six people made redundant at the time and **all six were women in their mid-twenties, either pregnant or just married**… the assumption being that they would be getting pregnant"

> "We had a review, all reduced hours. I reduced mine to four days. Some reduced to three. Fine, they've got enough FTEs, enough hours… Someone goes on maternity leave, so someone gets a secondment: he joins the team; he gets a permanent contract without an interview. I've just reduced my hours. I wondered: if they were recruiting. I wanted to be given that opportunity to apply."

This hidden preference in recruitment for those who aren't a 'pregnancy risk' was found to be a common experience of any woman of 'prime child-bearing' age:

> "I think it is it is one of those areas where on the one hand, we have developed to a modern society that tries to facilitate equality. But on the other hand, we just cannot work around the fact that pregnancy doesn't treat us equal, because it is only women who can become pregnant. And therefore, there always will be that issue and there will always be project teams where, even if it's not said out loud, they are going for a male applicant, because they say 'this project needs to happen within three years, we cannot risk taking on a young woman who might fall pregnant'. And obviously, they're not allowed to say this out loud, but they will find something in the CV of the male applicant; why they're going to take that person. And I think every young woman under 40 has experienced that to some extent"

This reinforced hidden preference is internalised by the woman experiencing such discrimination also:

> "I was probably about six months pregnant when I was made redundant. So, I worked a temporary job for the last couple months of my pregnancy. Because there was no way anyone was giving me a job with a bump like that…"

> "When I fell pregnant the first time I was working in the

private sector. I was made redundant at 14 weeks into the
pregnancy, I later found out that had I been 16 weeks or
beyond I would have been protected as a pregnant worker. It is
my belief that my ex employer objected to paying me maternity
pay whilst on leave. At that time, I stopped working until my
first child was a year old."

Additionally, another participant highlighted discriminatory practice and reasonable adjustments not being implemented in recruitment. This participant was pregnant during this time and was discouraged in her application by the recruiting manager, both verbally and by being provided incorrect information. Reasonable adjustments to the interview were planned and agreed prior to the interview but were not fulfilled.

Recommendation: Policymakers to consider ways in which to either encourage or mandate transparent recruitment processes that are publicly available for scrutiny and are designed using positive action where lawful, to reduce recruitment bias.

Recruitment bias can also be reduced by implementing measures such as standardised CV-blinding, mandated diverse recruitment panels, ensuring inclusive terminology in advertisements, seizing non-traditional recruitment opportunities such as having a stall or scheduling an agenda slot with a minority advocacy network's event, and choosing to conduct structured interviews that enable decisions to be made on evidence of suitability, not how much the candidate had in common with the lead recruiter.

Regarding mandated diverse recruitment panels, it is essential that all panel members are in positions of direct or indirect professional relevance to the recruiting post, and that all members have the same briefing and/or training to prepare for the task. This is to ensure panel participation is meaningful and all panel members are able to contribute with value.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to ensure that guidance on how to use the positive action provisions under the Equality Act and guidance on recruitment panel make-up is included in updated recruitment guidance for managers.

4. Recognition of and Support for Carers

It became apparent in discussions where the topic of unpaid caring arose that this is a responsibility often delegated to female family members, is an undervalued and misunderstood role both in society and interpersonally, and similarly to women being the primary parental caregiver, puts both career and education goals on hold, sometimes indefinitely.

The project heard from both women performing caring roles and those in social care professions, and the following findings were the overall consensus of both perspectives. For clarity, the phrase 'caring roles' used in this report refers explicitly to caring for a person/people with disability/ies, as opposed to motherhood and childcare – though that is not to say many aren't performing caring roles to their child/ren with disability/ies.

A concerningly common theme arising was that of women providing unpaid care not identifying as carers:

"I'm **responsible** for myself and my granny"

"You don't identify yourself… That's **just your duty**, you know. Because you don't go around saying 'I'm a carer'. You say 'I'm looking after my mom. I'm looking after my brother'. That's what we do."

"**It's just something you do**; You don't call yourself a carer when you said you don't identify yourself as a carer. You just become somebody who looks after your mom, your brother, sister, your dad…"

And inversely, a professional working in care also highlighted this:

"Some people don't say that they are carers, but they'll be looking after mum, or dad, or sisters, or whatever. It's one of those issues that we struggle with, identification of carers and getting people to self-identify, because it's like, **'I'm just their daughter'**"

Women frequently described their caring role without actually referring to themselves as carers in this manner, framing their caring instead as a 'family duty' that is expected of them.

Additionally, those who did identify as carers spoke about how caring responsibilities are shared with family members and it appeared that women disproportionately were the primary carer, which arguably is a result of the traditional caring role placed on women which remains prevalent today:

"I do everything [for my daughter with disabilities]. So, my husband is at work and I am just only with her. I don't have anything… I left my school because [my daughter] is going to be very sick … So, I can't concentrate on school… If the teacher says something; he'd say to me, 'Oh, you are very good, but your mind is somewhere else'. Yeah. my mind is at home"

"My daughter's 14 years old. And now she's looking also after my daughter [with disabilities]"

These two findings considered together highlight the issue that **a disproportionately female population of unpaid carers are likely not accessing the carers' support they are entitled to**.

Contributing to this issue is that for many carers, self-identifying or not, structures like school, healthcare, workplaces or family/friends do not recognise carers as such, or do not understand caring responsibilities.

Those that became young carers spoke of distress in school where they felt they

should have been 'flagged up':

"I was a very young carer… why was I not picked up in schools? We're obviously neglected in schools because our education, most suffer. Your studies will suffer. We should be recognised in schools as well. The teachers should be trained to be identifying them as well. You know, if a child's behaviour is struggling, there's a reason for that"

Indeed, teachers and other professionals working with children have a legal duty to identify young carers and refer them to the local authority to be assessed for support, however a poll of teachers by the charity Barnado's in 2017 found that 40 per cent of the 808 teachers polled said they were not confident that they would recognise a young carer in their class.

Self-identifying carers were often not recognised as such by their GPs and struggled to be taken seriously as a carer and receive the support they were entitled to:

"I have actually said to them [GP receptionists], 'do you have any carers' packs?' 'Oh, yes, we do.' So why is it behind the desk? Why haven't you given [them] out?"

P1: "I should be automatically known as a carer. I mean, they've had my son since he was a baby registered at that doctor's practice. He's had so many hospital appointments, operations and everything."
P2: "But someone's not made link and they've just said, 'that's the mother'. Yeah. and they've just not connected as they should."
P3: "Maybe that's a bit of work that we needed to do to try to educate them or the doctor."
P1: "Well, that's what I mean. They don't have time to listen"

"When you register with a GP… they have a duty of care to say to you, we have carers' packs, we have to put you on the carers' register, or we have to flag a person up… And they don't do that. I've registered with a new GP and they have not flagged my son or myself, as a carer. And I've actually had to say to them… So even though your hospital letters come in for your kids to the doctor, they didn't see you as a carer. you will not be called in for flu vaccine or whatever"

"Like, even if you go to the doctors, you need that sort of support from the doctors as well. But they don't guide you where to go. Like for me to find this [carers support group] I was told through Housing. I wasn't told. I didn't even know about this place. Now, I was a carer for seven years, and I was a young carer."

Employers threatened workers who have to take time off for caring responsibilities with negative action:

P1: "That would look bad on my part, because if I did apply for a job, then they would just say, 'oh, she's been taking so much days off' and they don't know why I'm taking this off"
P2: "That's quite discriminatory actually."

P1: "I didn't take any action for it because I didn't want to, I didn't want to give them another reason to write in the reference [negatively], saying that 'ah yeah, she's an argumentative person'"

And with friends and family, carers felt unable to speak to them about the difficult role they perform:

"You can't talk to your own people that you're caring for because they've got enough problems. And so you're just looking after them. But then your mentality is, you go into depression mode, because you get isolated, you don't want to talk to anyone else other than your family. But then you need to talk to someone because you need that sort of help.

I: "What your experience with support for being a carer?"
P: "Mine's very limited. The only thing I have is the GP. If anything goes wrong - I just have to talk to the GP. In terms of family networks and stuff, **I don't really talk about it to other people and they wouldn't want to know more about it because they're not going through what I'm going through.**"

P1: "With family and friends, they want their own life, they don't want to get involved. cos they can see how hard it is."
P2: **"You don't want to burden them.** You don't have support. Really. This [carers' support group] is the only place I think we do find sanity, because everyone's experiences the same things. So, we can open up and its confidential. We can speak about what we go through. We feel safe here... **We cannot tell our families what we go through because they don't want to know.**"

"**Y**ou become depressed because you're not talking with anyone. You just kind of feel like you're left out, and your self-esteem just drops completely because you don't know what you're doing. You need to talk."

The shortcomings of these interpersonal structures present barriers to accessing health and wellbeing support and further isolate this already marginalised group. Those interacting with carers evidently feel discomfort talking about caring, which could be the result of lacking knowledge. Systems around girls and women to support them do not identify them as carers, suggesting shallow service provision or an unawareness of common caring signifiers. This absence of adequate support, as evidenced in the last quote, can be a significant contributor to mental health conditions. Greater awareness is required of how carers can be discriminated against professionally, and the topics surrounding a caring experience need to be more socially accepted.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to work with schools in the City to help to introduce guidance, training or professional development, as deemed appropriate, for teachers - to aid them in identifying young carers and referring to the relevant support. To publicise tools to aid schools in identifying young carers, for example the <u>young carers identification tool for education staff</u> on the schools intranet.

Recommendation: Policymakers to consider the issue more widely to see whether there are any additional national measures which could be put into place to better equip teachers in identifying young carers.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to consider the merit of PSHE/Citizenship in the City's schools including a lesson on being a carer and having meaningful conversations about caring. Although this is not directly within the Council's remit, it is worth considering how the Council might effectively engage with schools to achieve this.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council's Adult Social Care/Communications teams to share information with schools in the city on what support is available for young carers.

Ineffective Support

A lot of the carers spoken to gain a lot of their knowledge from speaking with others in carer support groups, reiterating the earlier point of the essential support community groups can provide an individual. This community information-sharing function, in the felt absence of formal service communication, was demonstrated multiple times in carers' focus groups:

P1: "Social services can give you a mobile phone with a tracker…"
PX: "No, no."
PX: "I didn't know about that."
PX: "They're on their budget. They talk about being on budget. so, they don't tell you that sort of information."
PX: "This is the information you need to be told."

P1: "I've got help where a carer comes in like four days a week. It's just for two hours. And I get help and she takes her out and everything."
P2: [knowing the caring situation] "Reapply. Because you, you're definitely entitled to more."

Many felt otherwise, they wouldn't have sufficient knowledge of the services available:

"I think there's a lack of support. And if there is, we're not aware of it. We need to know what support there is out there for us"

P1: "it's like doctors, you don't get to know everything."

> PX: "…I know you have to do the research yourself as a parent. They don't tell you anything."
>
> PX: "You can only find out those sorts of things through other people who have experienced it as well."

One participant explained how she works full-time but is also a carer and has always felt there was a lack of support available:

> "A lot of carer support even today is during the day, which is no good for someone who works full-time."

Continuously feeling let down by the support given by formal agencies and receiving little information from healthcare professionals has evidently caused many carers to lower their expectations of service quality: citing individual laziness or organisational funding cuts as the cause of their ineffective support.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council's Adult Social Care Department to work with health partners to review the way in which information is shared with carers; to make information packs more easily accessible, so that service users know exactly what support is available and whether they are entitled to such services. To utilise the Council's communication mechanisms, including social media, to raise awareness of information and support for carers.

Caring and Respite

Women who care spoke passionately about the financial constraints and financial support (DLA, Carer's Allowance) they receive not adequately covering their needs, as well as the disparity between their benefits and the wages of paid care workers. It was frustrating and disparaging for these women to be paid less than professional workers to do a greater share of the caring, and women felt that the Carers Allowance, DLA etc. was not practically designed.

When speaking about care workers, female carers voiced a mistrust for their external paid support, based on negative past experiences. The difficulty in this is that respite care should be sufficient to the condition of the person receiving the care and the primary unpaid carer should be able to treat this as respite; a 'break'. Unfortunately, due to perceived incompetency, not enough hours of respite, or the difficulty of establishing respite patterns, this was never the reported case.

Carers voiced that their paid respite support did not cover essential needs – which leads to primary carers allowing them less responsibility in providing respite:

> "They come into your house, these carers, and they automatically think you're going to do the job. So, half the jobs are not even done because they automatically think, 'oh, yeah, mum will do it'"

> "I have not asked them to actually do the sugar level; I like to do it myself, the medication as well. Because… Okay, I have seen… sometimes the doses have been wrong and sometimes the medication has been missed… [or] he hasn't had that medication. I have seen that."

One carer detailed her daughter not receiving the correct provision in college, leading to her getting lost in public, and the difficulty of addressing this misdemeanour, due to the college avoiding informing the parent:

"And she has got lost, the school staff, they sent her out on her own. She's never been on her own at all. And they didn't keep her; they didn't do a shadow as well. They should have done the shadow, step by step... they [the college] didn't let me know straight away. And after two days [my daughter] opened up cos she was finding it very hard and frustrating as well. So, she couldn't speak up for herself, but she was acting like - I knew something was wrong... Because whether its [a respite charity] or anywhere else, you are giving your child and their trust, so they should know her abilities. What she can do, and she can't."

And the difficulty with getting the correct support in place, taking years, if not decades for some:

"I waited over a year to get allocated respite from my son because he used to go to [an organisation] where you were allocated to family. He lost his family due to - it wasn't working out the family, unfortunately... we weren't able to find him another family. So, I had to wait for a year and a half to find some other kind of respite."

"I never had a carer 'til 2007. my son was born in 1997, so he was 10 years old. I was struggling and they wouldn't give us anything. And then I had to go to my MP, I had to fight for it."

"I'm still struggling, still chasing [for the right support] like all of us."

The difficulty of the care recipient adjusting to the respite care and the carers' mistrust felt towards their respite care sufficiently meeting the required needs both defeat the objective of this being carer respite:

"The adjustment to that was still very hard and very stressful for me just to send him for two days. And even that it wasn't easy, wasn't relaxing"

P1: "You can't depend on anyone else."
PX: "No, you can't."
PX: "It just like it's only you, from the very start. It's like you're only the carer for her so you have to do everything"

Additionally, there is the pressure of ensuring the care recipient receives their support – even if the carer doesn't feel comfortable doing so – otherwise such support, that was incredibly hard to fight for, is lost:

```
P1: "So if you think to yourself, like, I need a break but
reality, you get 'a break', you don't really get a break."
PX: "But in order to do that [get respite], you have to do
everything yourself."
PX: "And then reassuring my son [it's safe] and also making
sure he gets it. 'Cause if he doesn't use his respite for 28
days in the year, we lose it"
```

Even when everything is in place to ensure alternative care provision, the primary carer is still left to recover everything already planned out, even when incapacitated, as heard in one participant's testament of going to hospital and the provision laid out in the carer's assessment not being carried out:

```
P1: "Technically, I thought that part of the carer's
assessment was to look at what happens."
PX: "Yeah, you do have the carer's assessment for that
reason."
P1: "But unfortunately, the last time I had to last time I was
in hospital, I actually had to do everything from my hospital
bed. even the respite whilst I was in the hospital. So, it was
quite difficult. but I had to do it. Believe it or not."
```

Recommendation: Undertake further work locally with the relevant service area to understand and respond to the issues raised by participants in relation to respite.

Caring and Aspirations

Caring responsibilities often put a pause on the primary carer's life aspirations, as they felt no other choice but to prioritise their dependant's care and wellbeing.

Carers voiced significant frustration with being dependent on the state for an insufficient income:

```
"They can't understand that I'm a full-time carer, but I wish
to even work part-time, because financially, you want to be
independent, you don't want to rely on anything. I personally,
I never wanted to rely on any form of benefit. I wanted to
become independent that way. But, you know, when you have
family and when they're ill and obviously you don't want to
like feel guilty for leaving them and just getting a job and
doing your own stuff because, you know, you've got that burden
on you, that you still have to take care and push things
forward. But for me, just getting Carer's Allowance at this
moment, it's not even enough for me to be honest. You can
imagine."
```

This project heard of many women who care having to stop work or school altogether, causing significant frustration;

```
"I want to go back to employment. But the struggle is there
for me… at first my problem is a reference. Then the next is
```

how will I manage with my family and being a carer for them?"

"I did media [at college] and then I quit media cos I was caring for my grandma."

"I was in and out of work and I was looking for work. But then I had to give up my job because I had to become a full-time carer for both my mum and dad, with all the medications and stuff, I had to take them in and out of hospital. And yeah, then I became a full-time carer. But like she was saying, you lose your identity"

"I need to get out of this vicious cycle. I need to do something."

Carers voiced their work or education opportunities were hindered, due to the incompatibility of these goals (which were often linked to better supporting their care dependant) and their caring responsibilities;

"And at the time, the career progression up was to become a data analyst. Well, that scared me because I always got taught that I was never good at maths. I was never good at formulas, Excel like, it scared me to think, to use Excel. So, I thought, 'Okay, maybe not'. At the time, I was actually looking after my granddad and he had dementia so I couldn't travel, and at [my work]. It was a lot of travelling involved doing research, had to go for training courses here, there, everywhere"

"One of the reasons why I can't go back to [an employment agency] is because I said to them 'I'm a part-time carer, can you find me a job in somewhere along with me being a part-time carer?' They said, 'well, there isn't any job that can [fit around this]'"

"It's really hard to get a job full-time and be a carer at the same time. Because then you have to just put your life on standstill. And then just work your way round and try and find jobs are available. But there aren't many jobs available."

"And when you don't go to Uni, you realise that people who did go to Uni, they have that ability to talk and have the confidence. I'm saying that because they can back themselves up; they've got this degree to back them up… at least they can manage to get themselves into a job, even if it's not in their field. They can get a job… I can't get into a job. The jobs that are available are cleaning. And that's not something that I want"

"That's another thing, I don't have an up-to-date [CV]. 'cos obviously, seven years. What can I put on? 'Still a carer'"

"It's difficult because I can't, I'm not good at selling myself, because I just think that when they see you're a carer. They just say, 'Oh, you're just doing that because they're your blood. And that's what you do… right?'"

"I can't find a job and care like, you know, my son is so ill. and I want to spend as much time with him because I already lost two of my sons. And I know when the time comes, that will just come so quickly… I don't want to be doing that shift over there. And something goes wrong with my son. And they say, 'he stopped breathing', and I'm at work. Things go wrong very quickly."

"Nobody's going to give me a job, like, 'Oh, my son is ill now… Today's sugar levels are high, I need to be home', who's going to give me a job like that?"

Case: Inability to pursue aspirations and the financial implication:

"I'm a single parent carer of adult [son] with complex disabilities… No respite available. No Personal Assistant for the number of hours I would need if working full-time. No support during college holidays.

I've calculated I need to earn £40k pa to pay for additional care for my son.

I've been out of paid employment for 10 years. I have the skills to do a £40k job and I've done lots of voluntary work over the last 10 years, but no employer is going to consider me for a job with that level of responsibility."

Some voiced trying to meet both their caring responsibilities and pursue their aspirations, to be met with significant strain:

"I became a driving instructor [to fit around caring responsibilities] but then again, whenever I'm getting a call, I have to ask them 'Where do you live?' and I have to think how far they live. I don't take one which is more than 10 minutes away."

P: "I want to continue with the study because actually I need it for my daughter, to improve my English writing, all like that. But at that time, I couldn't do that because she got really poorly. Yeah. And got seizures and like that. So, I said, 'no, this time I want to stay at home with her'. And then they said, 'if she feels better'… I want to join again. This is, for me, really important to do something in English, higher study like that."
I: "Do you think even if you had a carer that was in place when you were doing your ESOL course, would you still be

worried? Would you not be able to go to the ESOL class, or if you had a carer, would you feel okay to go?
P: "If someone had experience with [daughter], I think I'd feels like relaxed"

And additionally, carers voiced being met with the loneliness of living a less typical life:

P1: "You don't call yourself a carer; you don't identify yourself as a carer. You just become somebody who looks after your mom, you brother, sister, your dad"
P2: "While you watch the people go out and have fun."

Having to prioritise another's care above personal aspirations further contributes to the isolation experienced by carers; this separation from others making it even harder to enter school or work when circumstances allow.

As heard, work and/or education is currently incompatible with caring responsibilities and their inherent unpredictability. Organisations should take a more carer-friendly approach, offering flexible learning opportunities such as relying on online study, or where possible, allowing for flexible working arrangements (including working from home).

As seen in the Motherhood and Careers section of this report, working has many holistic benefits for an individual, as well as allowing them to contribute professionally to society. No carer spoken to expressed being content with relying on state-support: carers want to work, for financial independence; a better financial position; being a part of a community; fulfilling their goals and being a positive role model to those who look up to them.

All of these setbacks have the impact of causing low self-esteem and consequently, leading carers to underestimate their skillsets, making (re)entry into employment or education much more difficult:

"Yeah, sometimes I do think in that form, when I'm applying for certain jobs, like if I do end up applying for a job that I wanted to. for instance, if it's an admin job, I don't think of what skills I have. Obviously, I'm always on my phone. I know how to use Microsoft and all of that. I don't apply, because I feel [that] the only thing that counts is the jobs that you've actually done. The paid jobs, not the ones that you're caring for. "

"But they don't see that as a like, they don't see that all these skills are all part of being a carer. And you don't think of it in that format… you can't put that in your CV, 'oh I'm a carer, and these are the skills that I've gained' and who's going to back me up?"

Positively, other carers, meeting in the format of carers' support groups, help make carers realise the transferable skillset gained from caring, and to view their role as having unique strength in the workplace:

P1: "You know, you've advocated. You've been in a caring role. You had all sorts of practical things to do with that."
PX: "Management skills."
PX: "All sorts of -"
PX: "financial."

P1: "You've participated. You've helped to organise all sorts of things. You've encouraged people, supported people, because actually a lot of people in that in their pay jobs don't do half of the things that we have to do."
PX: "Sure. You're actually communicating with a lot of agencies like your GP, hospitals, social care. You know, you're organising day to day lives. What we do a lot of people actually can't do."
PX: "And the people skills that you have, having to manage the person that you care for."
PX: "And you know those special things. Special skills that you've developed in terms of helping to persuade somebody. So, you know, you'd be great in selling and communicating and negotiating"

"One of the things that concerns me is that over the years that I've been working with carers. When carers get to a situation where they're kind of thinking about work, it's almost as if they completely dismiss what they've done in 'my caring role', but still, you know, if you think of all the things around a caring role, you've learnt how to organise and you've learnt how to communicate and you're good at time keeping through lots of things that you can tick… [our confidence sessions] really opens people's eyes because suddenly, you know, somebody says 'I've got no skills, got no experience, no nothing'. You know, you become a director, you become a PR person, a communications person. I mean, just think of those times when you're on the phone and you're persuading people: you're actually very effective. But because it's not 'work' Yeah, you dismiss it all."

As demonstrated, there are many transferable skills gained from caring that could be utilised in a range of jobs – and others who care encourage this realisation.

Where possible, organisations must learn to be more adaptive to their employees to accommodate for additional needs such as flexibility in line with the unpredictable nature of caring, or facilitating job-sharing where it isn't possible for an employee to work set hours:

"It's kind of the uncertainty of caring because, you think, 'Oh yes, they're at the day centre' and then stuff happens. So, you end up thinking 'I'm gonna be free on the Tuesday', but actually as soon as you commit, it all kicks off"

"If you think about it, because if you did manage to get a full-time job, you're still a part-time carer. I think they

need to be flexible because we can change our hours and stuff.
But if it's an appointment and certain things like that, you
we can't change that. That's out of our control."

 If more carers getting into employment which is adapted to allow them to demonstrate their best ability, more will learn that they too can commence work or education and have fewer barriers to achieving their goals.

The Disparity Between Primary Carers and Paid Care Staff:

"Carers get frustrated because they're not having enough
income coming in."

When speaking about caring and finance, all carers and advocates working in the care sector highlighted the unfairness of their financial support, against the job they do, which is only further accentuated by the wages received by external care staff.

This participant discussed her current situation wherein her son has been assessed as requiring two carers due to his height/weight, who work eight hours of the day, where she – a petite woman – is a lone carer the remaining 16 hours of the day, and receives £254 a month, against her paid care who, if they are working seven days a week, each cost £4380.48pm (av), highlighting a disparity she is conscious of and frustrated with:

"Now, this is the catch again, which I wanted to talk to you
about… Government gives me the money and I pay the carers.
They say 'because he's a big boy, he needs two carers'… now
the agency charges each hour, £18pp for the job. so, for two
people, the Government are paying me around £38-39, to pay the
agency, for one hour… I'm having carers for eight hours… so
I'm having a break… I'm gonna go back to where I was talking
to you where I get after a month, 16 hours I am looking after
him on my own… And I'm getting £254 pounds… the Government
needs to change something here… I am saving the government
money...£1000s! You come look after my child for a month and
I'd give a stick. £254. There is an issue; that help care is
minimal. cos looking after a disabled person. You know, it's a
24-hour job. You're doing it, and you're stuck with them all
the time."

Another carer highlighted the inability to commence work, as the prescribed hours to be eligible for Carer's Allowance are not commonly available in the working world:

"Another thing with Carer's Allowance. They do say that you
can work up to certain hours a week, but you can only get
paid, think it's one hundred pounds extra… you can't find a
job like that."

Additionally, there was frustration voiced with the government's perceived lack of understanding that their caring duties are a restricting and real barrier to work:

"I'm getting 254 pounds. That's not enough for me to survive

on. and the Government say, oh yeah, I can go out and work, but I can't leave him for so many hours… You know, he's a diabetic. I have to check this sugar levels before each feed – after. Sometimes he's not right, he needs to be deep suctioned. I need to do that. Carers can't do that.*"*

As stated earlier, all carers spoken with expressed a desire to work, for a number of reasons, including receipt of enough income to sustain and survive; the allowances received not going far enough:

"I want to provide. I want to give best to my child… and then if they helped me in my difficult time. Now, that would be great. I'm not asking for so much, like a big amount. And if I'm asking, for at least a thousand pound or fifteen hundred pound it's like, you know I can't get out of the house and work."

What goes unacknowledged in carers' benefits and allowances, many carers felt, was the additional costs that are innate to living in house with a care recipient. As suggested by this participant, there appears to be an illogical delegation of caring expenditure as the costs to maintain caring in-house are unaccounted for, however should she not care, she feels certain that she would receive more money to pay for more hours of external care:

"Everything takes electricity, I've got a big bill. So, after a month, they are helping me, 'oh there you go, £254'… they should give carers at least, I feel, £1000 or £2000 to survive… So that's why some of the – what happens is I see some of the carers, they don't want to look after the children. They just give their child to Social Services, because financially, they are so down, you're not getting any help and no relative helps, no one helps… [I do] not have any other support, whatsoever… I have to do it. If I say I can't do it, they will probably fund me more money to get a person with more hours."

The stringent delegation of financial support to carers and the lack of acknowledgement of the value of their role financially was succinctly captured by a worker in the caring profession:

"You know what, what is it? Sixty-seven billion pounds worth of care our informal caring communities providing across the UK. I'm sorry, but why are we arguing about budgets for supporting carers when the investment needs to be there. If you're going to continue to expect them to carry the weight of all of that on their shoulders."

At best, this chronic undervaluing of unpaid carers is damaging to a sense of self-worth, fosters frustration and causes tension with their paid care support. At worst, this causes some of the most isolated and vulnerable members of society to live in some degree of poverty.

While the cross-Government Carers Action Plan for England provided some short-term measures to support carers, there needs to be a greater revision of social care that includes carers support. The Green Paper on Social Care, which would allow a public consultation to be held, has been delayed multiple times, since Summer 2017.

Recommendation: Government to include policy ideas to address the nuanced issues raised in this report in relation to unpaid caring responsibilities, particularly in terms of the financial difficulties that they face, in the Green Paper on Social Care, and publish for public consultation.

Undervalued as Carers

Many female carers expressed feeling downtrodden and overlooked, both in their strives to advocate for the correct support for their care recipient, but also in the attention paid to supporting them to care and stay well doing so.

Many carers echoed one another's struggle to be acknowledged and listened to:

"*Social workers are there, but they expect you to do it. They don't do it for you because they're saying that they have so many other people to deal with. So, they don't want to just help us individually… But what about the people who are caring for them? What's it like? It's just very hard for carers to get any form of support.*"

"*We're just being ignored or we're disappearing as human beings.*"

"*We're seen but not heard.*"

"*I didn't want to tell everyone I'm a carer. That's all I'm doing. Because… other people don't - they judge - they don't see you, that you're a carer. They just see, 'oh, you're just a relative of that person. That's what you're supposed to be doing. You should be also be working'*"

"*You actually forget who you are… You lose your identity because you're caring. You become a mother. You become the daughter. You become the sister. You lose your own identity. And then your own health declines.*"

One participant expressed that the caring role is hardly valued and spoke to the differential treatment those with caring responsibilities and those with childcare responsibilities receive:

"*Women with children are always given more understanding about caring responsibilities, compared to women without children… you can experience caring responsibilities linked to wider family members, but they have to be more justified.*"

Caring and Health

Many carers prioritise the health and wellbeing of those they care for over their own. As pointed out by a long-term carer, if you don't look after yourself, you are not able to provide the best care to those you love who are dependent on you.

While this should not be the overarching reason for looking after yourself, this resonated with the other carers, who went on to explain how they neglect their health and wellbeing.

Carers explained the very real impact this duty has on their health:
"I'm taking time out and caring full-time for my son. It can be very challenging because he's an adult now… You have to juggle caring and be the mum… it impacts on your own health"

How they ignore their health needs due to the all-consuming nature of unpaid caring:

"Just coming back to the doctor thing, when the carer is ill. I find that they tend to ignore themselves because they're concerned: 'We can't go. We… don't have time for themselves'. So that's when their health gets worse. Whether it's mentally or physically."

Placing the health of those they care for above their own:

"If it's my mum's or dad's or sister's appointment, I'd put theirs first and I would just ignore mine because I know mine's not a priority. But then again, I don't think about my health or anything. I just think that that there are lots of bigger priorities than mine. So, then I just ignore mine and hope that nothing ever happens to me or just deal with it as and when I can."

If addressing their health concerns, the difficulty with communicating their needs and fully utilising care services for their own, as opposed to their dependent's needs was highlighted:

"It's really hard for me to open up to the doctors because I don't go there for myself. I just see it as going there for my parents or my sister. And I talk about their illnesses and their conditions."

The effects of exacerbating conditions by not paying due regard to their own care:

"I do go sometimes, but with my health myself, I've been really unwell. So, I've had two knee surgeries and it took me right back for coming. You know, because my walking and I've got fibromyalgia with it. I'm not taking good care of myself; I should say."

And in conversation about chronic health conditions experienced by carers, being unable to be a carer and have healthcare needs, due to stigma associated with being 'fit to care':

```
I: It's that disconnect between being a carer and
acknowledging that you have your own health conditions -
Ps (in unison): Exactly.
I: - That are valid, and they don't make you 'being a carer'
any less valid.
P1: No, no. That's right.
```

As stressed earlier, caring lends itself to being ostracised and marginalised, this isolation having an effect on many carers' mental health:

```
"I've isolated myself. It was my own fault that I kind of
isolated myself like that. But my lifestyle and everything did
impact on that… It wasn't that easy for me. So, I thought,
'just stay indoors and keep to myself and mind my own
business'. So, I think it didn't work well. It worked out -
but it didn't get me anywhere in terms of my mental health"
```

As captured in this section, carers struggle with advocating for their own healthcare needs; feel the way caring expenditure is granted is out of touch with real need, leading many to experience poverty; the effects of consistently being overlooked or their carer identity being valid leading to isolation, low self-esteem, and an internal devaluation of their skills and impacting on their ability to enter work or education; missteps in the care received fostering mistrust towards the exact services put in place to support them and their care dependant, and the carer-inaccessible set-up of work or education acting as a real barrier to many.

It is felt a lot of these issues boil down to poor inter-agency interaction and organisational structures that are difficult to hold to account for mistakes, as well as a lack of awareness surrounding caring, and a displaced societal duty to accommodate this work.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to ensure that the relevant corporate policies acknowledge carers and the discrimination they can face arising from their association with someone with a disability/ies (discrimination by association).

Participants suggested specific acknowledgement of carers by private businesses via occasional free treats (proposed by participants as free cinema tickets every few months) would go a long way in recognising carers and the work they do, as well as the limited incomes many have.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to consider offering carers discounts, deals or occasional free treats at City Council run sites (museum and heritage sites, for example) and events, to acknowledge the hard work of those who care and the minimal disposable income available. To encourage other businesses in the City (who are in a position to do so), to also consider offering discounts or deals for carers.

5.Sports and Access

One of the main barriers felt by women in accessing sports is the gendering of certain sports as 'male'. As illustrated by the participants, this message is perpetuated by social agents via alienation and belittling of their engagement when it comes to what are typically seen as 'male' sports;

"She played a lot of rugby. And one thing I did notice is when she was growing up, a lot of men in the family would be like, 'why are you playing that? It's a men's sport. Yeah, I play that'. She goes, 'no, I enjoy it'. She would love it. And at one point I just went, 'she can do what she wants and she's enjoying it'"

"'Bet you don't really box. I bet you you'd probably like do some boxercise, you don't do any proper -' so you get that kind of vibe"

This message is then practically enforced by the segregation of P.E. activities in school,

"*I*n the actual school. I mean, girls could pretty much just play netball, and that was it. Yeah. Particularly during my time in school, the only thing they had is netball – and gymnastics… a lot of my friends played netball and that's why I got involved into it"

"My cousins are in high school… And I've asked them this as well. I'm like, 'have you not wanted to play football?' And they go, 'yeah, but there's not much of a choice; not a ladies' team or club, it's more focussed towards the boys'"

P1: "Well, it's like subjects at school as well. Even in stuff like P.E. the girls do netball and boys do football. Yeah. Why can't they both just do both?"
PX: "Yeah."
PX: "You know, I don't think that's fair. I took P.E. at school and I was gutted when I weren't allowed to join in, with the boys."
PX: "Just simple little things like that, they should give you the opportunity to try everything."
PX: "You know, whether it be something that is 'meant for boys' or 'meant for girls'. It shouldn't be meant for either, they should get a chance to do everything…"

This is further supported by an absence of a range of, if any, clubs targeting girls and women in the community, causing some women to accept participating in 'female' sports as this is their only opportunity to engage:

"And then there just wasn't enough interest and they stopped it [the girls' sports club]. I feel like that was maybe the wrong approach. They should have just kept it going, because as you keep going, more and more people will be interested"

> "Hmm, I don't know any [community sports] groups for women"

> "I'm not really interested in it [netball], but it was like, 'no, go and play. That's the one. If you want to join a team as a girl, this is probably the one team you will have a good shot getting in'"

> "I think there is a lack of opportunities for women to learn new sports especially as an adult. As a teenager sport often focused on male participation. There are often lots of sports clubs for males-football, rugby and hockey for instance."

> "Inequality in time available for sport/exercise: Society expects that men should find time to do physical exercise but that women should forego physical exercise to take look after children/care for family."

As captured by the participants, even in 2020, it appears that some schools do not provide the same offer to boys and girls when it comes to their mandated P.E. lessons. Reinforcing the gender script via P.E. conditions adolescents to think certain interests, beyond just sports, are only for one gender, and that in turn, certain personal qualities are an exclusive, gendered domain - with non-conformance resulting in ostracisation:

> "For the kids, there's a lot of peer pressure as well. One of the lads, you know, shows his feminine side or whatever. He'll get picked on for it and bullied for it. My boy gets it at school all the time, because he's very girly, let's say. So yeah, he gets bullied for being a bit of a [redacted - slur], but he does what makes him happy… It is a lot more accepted. Yeah, definitely. But it still goes on."

While ensuring equal access to sports within school will not solely dismantle the gender script perpetuated by many social agents including schools, rectifying this to ensure sports within school are universal could help to normalise the engagement of underrepresented genders in certain activities.

Some participants expressed a desire for 'women only' spaces when referring to sport, health and exercise. In some instances this was referred to in relation to cultural and religious reasoning, a means to be able to encourage women from all walks of life to improve their health and well-being. Whilst in other cases women referred to these spaces in relation to safety; how safe they feel. This would accommodate for women who may have been through traumatic experiences of abuse and assault. It may encourage women from older age groups to re-engage with sports, having grown up and the idea of sports being 'gendered' reinforced throughout their education experience and through other societal structures and systems.

> "Access to support facilities in gyms for women only, especially considering the demographic of women in Leicester and health consequences of them not engaging in physical activities."

> "I want to exercise in a safe space for women of my background and ethnicity... I'd like to educate my local community on health and exercise, and I want to advocate to my local council to improve the socioeconomic conditions that effect the health of the people in this city because I don't think there's enough."

> "I'd like to see more women only exercise groups as well…I feel awkward exercising in front of men".

> "I would never go for a run or cycle for instance on my own during the day or night. I wouldn't walk or exercise on my own because I feel unsafe, however I think this is something men do not have to think about."

> Consultation question: "Are there any places or times you feel unsafe?"
> P: "The gym or public pool if I am alone"

Recommendation: The Department of Education to give guidance to schools and colleges relating to the P.E. Curriculum and equal access to sports in practice, to ensure education providers are aware that while they can separate by sex for P.E. lawfully, they are obliged to provide the same opportunities for both girls and boys to engage in sports.

Recommendation: Existing Council-operated sport and gym facilities to consider expanding their selection of 'women only' classes where there is evidence of need and to offer these at a range of days and times, accommodating for the many responsibilities women take on (as highlighted throughout this report). In addition, to advertise services more widely to enable women to participate.

Upon adulthood, a lot of women expressed their engagement in sports being heavily linked to their personal safety, which can be achieved with the financial freedom to afford a gym membership:

> "I have a gym membership, so I go running; I go to the gym because I know that it's safe"

Safety and sports will be further explored in the next section – however it must be acknowledged that access to sports that are safe and in accordance with cultural and religious requirements, for some, is contingent on having the disposable income to access.

Finally, sports can be utilised as a safety mechanism for boys, asserted a participant who created a boxing initiative to target boys at risk of engaging with knife crime in her neighbourhood. This participant spoke in depth about her work, which acknowledges the physical urges felt by the boys she works with, and instead of trying to diffuse these, she has created a safe environment in which these feelings can be explored. This reflective practice demonstrated a successful community engagement initiative, and the role of sports in avoiding anti-social and potentially life-affecting behaviour.

6. Safety

Personal safety came out as a common concern to Leicester's women. This section will shed light on how real safety concerns impact on how women live, how unsafe situations can be mitigated, and where crimes have occurred, women's experience of engaging with the police and support services.

It cannot be stressed enough that when discussing mitigation, we are relaying the methods participants voiced using to feel protected, as well as how women could be supported by others and authorities to be safer. Women who do not use the safety mitigations highlighted are never to blame for any harassment, victimisation or assault experienced.

Safety Methods, Fear Barriers and Solutions

"I tend to work until late at night, so 'til like 7, 8PM, cos I'll help out for it if needs be. [My managers] won't let me walk home, they'll either get one of my co-workers to drop me off. Get me a taxi or they'll walk with me just to make sure I'm safe."

Common safety methods used by women in transit include getting lifts with family or calling friends on journeys home; such prevention methods relying on trusted support networks, that are the norm for many women:

"She would ring me, and we would stay on the phone together sometimes to be safe. It's just this extra stuff that you do"

"Town, it's very dangerous at night. So, when my mum picks me up because I can finish at like half ten, so by then, especially at the weekends, it gets really crazy and rowdy. but if my parents can't pick me up for some reason, then they always pay me to get a taxi"

While the proactive and resourceful personal safety measures can be respected, this does allude to the question - if a woman doesn't have someone they can rely on to boost their confidence and aid in their safety, how does fear of danger impact on the way women are able to live their lives?

"I work long hours; I don't have the time to go to the gym. But I want to go for a run… But you know, at the time that I would have available to go for a run would be in the evening. But I don't wanna go for a run by myself…"

"I'd like to go running, but I wouldn't go running on my own at night, because there's the assumption that I'd get murdered"

As illustrated, not having the correct safety mitigations in place causes women to avoid doing what they want to, and not make the most of the opportunities available in Leicester.

Regarding solutions to make cities safer, this project supports Plan UK's call for women and girls to be made a priority in future redesigns of cities and involved in the process. Women commonly voiced several problems relating to neighbourhood safety, with clear solutions:

Firstly, a crime deterrent that women frequently expressed would significantly bolster confidence is street lighting:

In our consultation women were asked 'what would help make you feel safer?':at least 43 responses out of 151 mentioned better or more street lighting.

"*I*t's really darkly lit as well, and there's a church across the road and it's just little nooks, but you notice all these things, you know, you're walking, and you think…*"*

"If they kept the odd streetlight on it would be alright. every other one or something.*"*

"At 11PM, every other streetlight, 200 yards, all the lights go off. There are certain cul-de-sacs where there's no light whatsoever, so you have to be in at a certain time, otherwise its pitch black. So, it's not very safe."

With one participant voicing a loss of faith in the local authority following a lack of response to a dimly lit, crime-attracting local area:

"We live right next to an alleyway, and it's a long alleyway. The lights in the middle of the alleyway don't work, they've stopped working for about, what, three months now… what if somebody walks through there… *t*here was a stabbing. But there's still no light there… nobody's doing anything about it. So, it's just going to stay that way.*"*

While Leicester is striving to be as green as possible given the declared climate emergency, safety also remains a priority. Leicester's residents must feel some confidence to travel by foot any distance at night.

Recommendation: Local Authorities to consider keeping intermittent streetlights on to ensure no one area is pitch-black. This local strategy should be individually tailored to neighbourhoods, with priority given to areas of higher criminal activity.

Safety in travelling to and from their parked car and not having enough safe parking areas were also acknowledged as problems:

"I would finish a shift sometimes 8PM, and where we were was in front of [a city centre area] renowned for a lot of drug users, alcohol addicts, Yeah. Not a nice place to be really.

And I would have to park my car and walk past there. And I just thought to myself at some point, 'why isn't there parking areas or spots for females?' Particularly women that are working late at night or work in the city.

In a response to a high level of crime in the area, teenage girls were provided with rape alarms from their college. When discussing this, the women expressed feeling 'patronised' as these were not given to the boys and they did not wholly make them feel safer:

I: "When you were given the alarms did it make you feel more safe or less safe?"
P: "I Suppose a little bit of both"

While good intention was there, it's likely this also contributed to them realising the real threat to girls and women in public spaces. One of the participants went on to illustrate the rape alarms weren't practical:

"If someone comes for me, I'm not gonna just take that out my pocket, you're either gonna defend yourself, or you're gonna run. there's no, 'oh wait just stop there while I take my [rape alarm out]'"

Many women expressed how their relationship to their own safety and the safety of loved ones changed after becoming a mother:

"I find that before I had my son… I felt safe to walk about and do things, but now I'm a mother I feel on the streets, I feel like I don't want to take those risks because I feel I've got to be here to look after my family. Anything goes wrong with me, who would be there to look after my son?"

"I think at the minute, it's all open isn't it, the danger is open. It's there, whereas before, many, many years ago, it was hidden. It was still there. You had the stalkers, the paedophiles, but they were all hidden. They weren't very out there. Now it's just you step out of the house and you know, you know that someone's watching you all the time."

"So, I've got two little girls and I'm constantly holding their hand a bit tighter, reminding them to be with mummy all the time. I don't really like that. I don't know how you guys feel about it. It creates something in their mind that, you know, they're not safe all the time. But then that's life, isn't it? You're never safe, really."

Safety and the night-time economy were addressed as a point of concern. As acknowledged by this participant, women being in such spaces do experience harassment, and should they not meet advances, face intimidation and aggression:

"Couple of times when I've been out with friends… you'll be out with a group of girls, there's usually only about four or

five of us… We'll be talking, and somebody will just come and sit the table… But then **there is this expectation that you will be nice to this person and if you are not, they will very quickly turn into. Slightly aggressive… they get very angry like you owe them something,** you have to speak to this person. Or you'll just be having a friendly chat with someone. And then you go, 'I'll see you later then' and then they're like 'Well, like what?' You know, they're expecting more because you've spoken to them. And I think. I guess just being in a group makes you feel safer. **I think if you are separated from friends, then that would be quite a scary situation to be in.**

The theme of victim blaming, a fundamental element of rape culture, was rife in discussions of safety, with some of the women speaking about safety with a subliminal victim blaming undertone:

"Bearing in mind that I'm kind of like mid-30s; mum. I can't imagine how bad it is for a 20-year-old. You do have to kind of be careful that you're not giving off the wrong signals or, you know, you don't speak to the wrong person and they get the wrong idea."

"To an extent, in general lifestyle a lot of women won't go out 'cause they might get raped or hurt. Or, 'don't wear this, don't wear that', when that's not our fault as women, but we are held back for it"

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to consider the merit of PSHE/Citizenship in the City's schools including a lesson on a rape culture and identifying harmful views and behaviour around love, sex and sexual assault, (such as shaming women who are sexually active or based on how many sexual partners they have, rape jokes, victim blaming, judging what women wear, 'cat calling'). Whilst this is not within the Council's direct remit, it is worth considering how the Council might effectively engage with schools to achieve this.

Looking to best practice internationally, in 2018, Plan International launched their 'Safer Cities' programme, in which girls used technology to create safer local spaces. This innovative piece of collaborative work involved using the popular videogame Minecraft "to recreate the neighbourhood as a virtual world, where they can design and build solutions to the problems they've identified, such as increased street lighting, separate sex toilets, covers for gutters at the side of communal areas and bins to decrease littering. The girls are then able to prioritise the changes they want to see and pitch these solutions to local government officials to implement in their neighbourhood" (Ashmore 2018).

Recommendation: Feed the issues raised in this section to the Smart Cities Team and Community Safety to consider whether we can use technology as a means to collaborate with citizens, to identify problems in their neighbourhoods and help facilitate a safer Leicester.

Recommendations: The Council's Community Safety and Protection team to

support local community awareness initiatives relating to standing against rape culture and violence towards women (i.e. in externally circulated communications such as Your Leicester).

Experience with the Authorities:

It is noteworthy that women's experiences of working with the authorities following victimisation were polarised: some praised the service received and others felt their service was a severe injustice. This is likely due to the seriousness required for many women to feel they should seek support and/or report a crime, and the sensitivity of experiencing a crime.

A participant discussed a crime she experienced, in which she sought support and was unable to gain the assistance of other civilians:

"We were walking home really late at night and… I just sensed something; we look round and this bloke was flashing at us… we saw some houses with lights on, so you're banging on the door. Because you could clearly see he rode past us first, on his bike. Then he must have done whatever, he's parked up… Then we're really paranoid. Thinking; 'oh god, he's gonna get on his bike and follow us', because it was quite late at night. And so, we saw these houses, lights on. Knocking on door, you know; people are looking at the curtain saying, 'we're not opening the door', and we were really panicked… *[we]* ran home, reported it in the morning."

The next case is a woman's positive experience of police and social service support in an ongoing domestic abuse situation, where she was treated with respect and comprehensive aftercare, that led her to feel empowered:

"*T*he police were amazing… I had to rely on them a couple of times… it was a Saturday night and I think there was only about six police in the whole of Leicester and they were all, all of them, sent to my house and **I felt so guilty** - not 'guilty' cos it's the wrong word to use but I thought 'god, this is what we have to do, to get help' - especially with domestic violence, it irritates me. I just thought 'gosh, how stretched we are, as a police force'. And a woman needs help, you know, if it was a man it would probably be different. It does happen. But the support I got with that. I mean, the police were amazing. I can't fault them at all. they were so good. Didn't look at me as a 'poor woman', they were just matter of fact: 'no, he's put his hands on you, we'll sort this [expletive] out', and then after, the support was there after. The police, next day, came around. 'Are you okay?' and a phone call came, Social Services rang up to make sure the children were fine. So, I think that was such a good, good, good, lovely support… I wouldn't let a man bring me down now.*"

The same woman went on to discuss how victims can be negatively perceived and treated by those around them:

"One of my friends was saying in her domestic violence, that she felt like she was made to feel [as if] 'you are a poor woman that suffered'."

Another participant voiced that when she reported her domestic abuser, as the victim, it was her life, not her abuser's that was unnecessarily disrupted and she felt that she was racially discriminated against:

"[If I] were a British woman they would take him out of the home."

Recommendation: National policymakers consider ways in which women who have experienced domestic violence are enabled to safely stay in their own homes should they wish to, and instead perpetrators are required to leave the household.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to do some awareness raising work on how constituents can raise complaints and escalate concerns about any public body/authority if they feel that their complaint has not been sufficiently dealt with. Work may also need to be undertaken nationally to ensure that women are equipped to challenge effectively. This links with a recommendation in the section 'Workplace – Policies vs. Practise' (p.35) which recommends that awareness raising work is undertaken to ensure that women are aware of their rights in employment and are equipped to challenge where these are breached and where they have experienced discrimination, harassment and victimisation. It may be that these two recommendations can be combined, if appropriate.

While this report is focused on the experiences of women, it is important to acknowledge that men who experience domestic violence often have a hard time finding related support, as a participant vocalised:

"My partner has got a chronic history of abuse… 'he's in an absolute mess because of abuse as a child? Because of domestic abuse? A man, struggling with domestic abuse?' You know, that was really hard for him to access services. We live in a really horrible world… But the support doesn't feel proportionate."

In other focus group sessions, women have reported a 'loss of confidence in the police' generally, stressing that this can only be restored by action. Women have voiced frustration with 'time lapse' incapacitating them from following through the Criminal Prosecution Service (CPS); because so much time has passed between the period of abuse and them feeling able to report this that it has passed the point of the CPS being able to get involved.

Women also questioned, 'who polices public authorities?' Demonstrating that some are currently not aware of independent scrutiny bodies or means of escalating complaints, and work to make the public more aware of these mechanisms could strengthen perceptions of public authorities. Additionally, it has been stressed that advocacy for women, particularly more 'vulnerable' women such as women with disabilities, would help considerably in strives towards women receiving the correct

service provision: Unfortunately, not all women are in a position to speak for themselves about the victimisation they have experienced.

Domestic Violence and Resources

Moving away from direct relations with public authorities and onto the interpersonal difficulties of domestic violence and support, many victims of domestic abuse are unaware that they are experiencing abusive treatment, and it takes good support from indirect services to flag this and help the individual to become conscious of the situation:

"We ended up being allocated a support worker from one of the children's centres, who did some work with my daughter, and it was through the conversations with him, where he kind of said you're talking about being a victim of domestic abuse… this power struggle."

Being unaware of the extent of abuse or feeling able to leave an abusive situation when it's in a familial setting, was, for some women, in part due to cultural expectations and not bringing disrepute to the extended family, as highlighted below:

"For me personally, I was in a 20-year marriage [with] domestic violence, and then I had this daughter, with cardiac issues. She came at 31 weeks due to the domestic violence; I nearly lost her. And then I decided that I was going to walk away from a marriage. I couldn't walk for 20 years because there was a lot of, you know, in Asian culture, 'you don't leave your husband and its written for you', et cetera. And then I remember laying in ICU. Because what he'd done is thrown me on my stomach. And then the doctors told me that I'd lost the baby. So, they had to do a C-section to take her out. But prior to the C-section, they said that your blood pressure's so high that you're gonna have a stroke. Your organs are going to collapse. So, you're not going to make it… I decided. I thought right, 'I've got three girls to set an example to and there's no way in the world I'm tolerating this anymore'. And I came home and told my gran, and my grandma's [saying]: 'don't you dare think about leaving him'. And I thought, 'You know what, done it for 20 years for you, now, it's my turn, and I'm walking away'. and I did just that. I've never looked back. So, from that point on, I've literally just turned it and I'm trying to make every effort where they see me being a strong independent woman. We don't need to rely on anyone. We don't need this cultural pressure. We don't need any peer pressure. We are who we are. Yeah. And I really feel passionate about spreading [this message] to other parents as well, cos I see a lot of moms struggling. I mean, even if they're living with in-laws, there's a lot in our culture where, because of the financial strains, you are forced to live as family under one roof. But that has pressures in itself. There's abuse from family members, which you don't have to tolerate, but you do it because you don't know how to

handle it"

Another woman spoke to her experiences of how insidious, and therefore, difficult to identify, domestic violence can be:

"I was always made to believe that my voice, my opinion and everything about me was invalid when it came to my husband… Initially, it started as him raising his voice. Then it started with him hanging me by my neck, on the wall, to show me how strong he was to intimidate me. Then just getting us into debt all the time. And I used to work my guts out to pay the debt; before I know he's got us into debt again and nothing to show for [why]. He'd have his friends around – I'd have to cook for them all hours. His friends, you know, would do inappropriate, say inappropriate things, and I was not allowed to say anything, because it was my husband. I felt dirty in my own home… It was almost degrading. I lost faith in myself. you know, I was a quite successful academic. I was quite successful from a work point of view as well. But I just felt invalid in myself."

Women also reported not going forward to report or pursue divorces and separation proceedings of any kind due to the cost involved. Comments made by services in some instances had also been unhelpful and unwelcome. In many cases, women experience further detriment by often being the one that has to leave the household and go to a refuge, whilst their ex-partner remains in the home, without worry or fear. This can leave women feeling trapped in an unhappy relationship. These feelings of being trapped are heightened during the pandemic, especially during the initial strict lockdown period.

Participants have voiced in these situations that there must be more community education and discussion about domestic violence, and community assistance to help victims of such crimes acknowledge that abuse is not acceptable, and that their safety is more important than stigma:

"I think there's a lot involved in it [why people stay in abuse], it's cultural, lack of education, lack of confidence… everything all boils down to the same thing, really. And I think [we need] a lot of team building activities, trust building activities and things like that should teach people. How it's okay to be treated and how it's not okay to be treated"

Recommendation: Leicester City Council and the Government Equalities Office to continue to support campaigns to increase awareness and recognition around the different types of abuse, where and how to get support, both locally and nationally.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to ensure our relevant commissioned services (in Community Safety, Housing and Social Care) continue to make available practical help and support to survivors of domestic violence, taking into account the lived experiences of those seeking support and taking steps

to ease the process of resettling and in some cases, becoming independent for the first time.

7. Personalisation of Services and Communication to Service Users

The project heard a variety of negative experiences of female-identifying service users in regard to depersonalised services. Seeing a different doctor or support worker at an employment agency upon each appointment were the most common issues, likely due to both the commonality and sensitivity surrounding chronic health conditions and strives for employment.

Women strongly voiced that speaking to a different person each time made for an inconsistent standard of support, with greater opportunity for mistake by service provider, due to poor internal communication, in addition to fostering a sense of being a number to get through the system; not a person to work with.

These effects lead to service users losing trust in service providers, and therefore being less forthcoming in experiences of such services, leading to poorer quality interactions that sustain ineffective service provision.

An additional result of this was women fostering anger to other people in similar situations to themselves, who felt the support they received was lesser than another's, causing internal class friction.

Housing and Financial Support

One of the main findings surrounding this theme is internal class divisions. In Leicester, a considerable amount of the population experience economic deprivation.

It became evident that living through economic hardship, caused a reactionary anger and had left many working class people resentful towards other working-class people who had experienced similar hardship to themselves.

This is particularly clear in conversations about housing and welfare, which will be explored in this section.

As discussed in the Carers section, many carers do not feel the support they receive is sufficient. In regard to housing, frustration was voiced around accessible housing support:

`"We own our own property. If we were in a council house, then they would pay for this [equipping the house with a shower accessible for the resident with disabilities]"`

A common frustration voiced was that of working-class families in which the parent/s work full-time struggling to make ends meet and finding no support comparing their situation to other parents who are receiving more support. For these women, the current welfare system implicitly encourages a parent – as the typical primary caregiver, a woman – to stay at home and not work. Women have frequently expressed frustration between this state persuasion and their opposing career goals:

`"If they [the Government] could help those ones who are`

working full-time because… When I apply for council house, they say, 'you're not eligible for it' and I'm going bonkers. I'm like, 'I do full-time, my husband works full-time. This is why you should help us'; we work full-time… And I'm like, 'so you're encouraging me to not work'… most of the time we come out in the end of the month, we barely have anything to sustain ourselves with. And still, you need to go back to work and Council are not helping out with things… If you can at least save £20 in your house. It does really help for many parents. I have people who has dropped work saying they can't do that anymore, they had to. It's better for them to be a full-time mom at home, getting the benefit. And I don't see myself ever doing that because I want to work more. They're not helping."

Logically, for some women this has fostered a resentment felt towards others in relatable experiences who in their eyes, unfairly 'get an easier ride':

"I've got a full-time job, 37.5[hpw]. And some of those not working, is getting everything. *And* they've got council housing."

In some cases, this push for an adult to leave work to receive the support they are seeking has been grossly explicit, as illustrated in the cases of these two women facing difficulties with their private housing:

"They just said, 'look, I'm sorry, we can't do anything really – only if you quit your job'. They will tell you straight on quit your job"

"We'd been asked to move out from our first house, went to council housing. 'Unfortunately, we can only help if one of you drop from working' and if one person is working it's not truly supporting because of the bills, which everyone knows how dangerous the bills are and having to care for kids as well"

On the other side, women in council housing feel that they are in an equally precarious situation, in that they are unable to become mobile in their career standing, for real fear they will be forced out of their home to a more dangerous situation, should they commence work:

"So, they say if you go to work, you'll be kicked out of the council house. You go to a private renter yourself. So, it's hard. It's not just you… they said that if you go to work full-time, more than 16 hours, you have to get to a private rented [house] and private renters are not wanting to take people who are on benefits anymore"

Private renters placing blanket bans on recipients of DSS was recently ruled as unlawful under the Equality Act 2010, as a form of indirect discrimination (Richardson 2020). This recognition is a positive step for fairer access to private tenancies,

however work to debunk the prevailing expectation of private renters not taking on those who are in receipt of benefits as touched upon by this participant may be required.

Jobseekers

Women commonly spoke about negative experiences with employment agencies that boil down to a lack of tailored support. The following participants illustrate this, comparing current experience to historical ones, detailing the infrequency of meetings and one-to-one support, and the formal nature of their support – which is understandably intimidating and off-putting:

"Back then, it was completely different. I was on income support. The leader told me to find a job or think about the kind of option that I wanted; we talked about my skills. She directed me. I applied for the jobs and basically, she helped me step by step, bus fares, uniform costs and she was really encouraging. And she had a meeting with me every week to follow up just that motivation. Just keep on top of it and it really kept me motivated… And now what's happened is that I have a meeting once every six months. And it's, you know, it feels really formal. It feels like you're under pressure, you're scared to attend these meetings now whereas back then, it was motivational. It was different. I used to look forward to going. Now it's too scary"

"Not as personalized, it's very robotic. It's very scripted and it's very formal. Yeah. Whereas those ones were casual. Yeah. The people spoke causally, and they relax, and I think a lot of the time, the pressure at the moment is the queues, you're constantly waiting in the queue, so you're constantly under pressure about parking, bus fare and all of that. And also, it's just not efficient. I think back then people were skilled and equipped. Now there's, you know, the people that you see, they're not the same people every time. There's not a consistency. And I think there's that's a one to one relationship – that makes a difference"

"it's become robotic. I mean, it's become formal. And it's… a bit intimidating"

The removed nature and formality of employment agencies explains why so many women have voiced feeling as if in a "tick box system". Additionally, participants spoke of being placed in unsuitable jobs as a deterrent to returning for support:

"I didn't want to go back to [my employment agency] because they would send me to jobs that I didn't even like doing, they would just give me any sort of job."

When trying to find employment, work must be suitable for skill and practically for the individual's lifestyle, but it also should be somewhat relevant to the individual's interests and career goals – otherwise the work will be a temporary stop-gap

solution, as opposed to a long-term fulfilling investment for the individual and their employer. Whether employed or seeking employment, women deserve to be satisfied in their work.

Personalisation is so important to ensuring a good fit for individual and work, but also in ensuring the job-seeking experience is respectful and not daunting. Seeking employment is a stressful and sensitive experience, this must be acknowledged in the support offered to ensure individuals are getting the most out of job-seeker services, and not returning after several months of ill-fitting employment, or leaving the support service while still looking for work.

Personalised services would be beneficial to both those using employment agencies and employees. Providing such a service is of benefit to employees in that they get to see a customer through their job seeking journey, facilitating greater investment and personal reward to see their assigned cases succeed.

Caring and Correct Support

Women who have caring responsibilities frequently voiced that within health and social care, the support received was of an inconsistent standard and highlighted the frequency of falling through the gaps.

Women spoke of red flags being overlooked (regarding timely diagnosis or adequate support, as listed in care plans), their advocacy being dismissed by health and care professionals unless they possessed the knowledge and interpersonal skills, and clear cross-agency miscommunication, all of which lead to poor care experiences.

This participant highlights required care not being implemented, in her son's hospital experience where a Learning Disabilities nurse was flagged as needing to be involved:

"When I went to the hospital and then afterwards, I saw a Learning Disabilities nurse on site – meeting that I attended, I asked her, I said, 'why didn't you attend my son? Why wasn't he flagged up? His records are flagged up as red.' 'I'm really sorry. I don't know why he was missed.' Well, why was he missed?"

Carers have repeatedly voiced exasperation with being dismissed as an advocate when seeking health and care support:

"It takes quite a long time for the process to happen [establishing social care for their dependant] because they tend not to want to listen to the parent"

"Makes you wonder how the system works with someone who either doesn't have a carer or has a carer that is a bit reticent or frightened by the system."

"When you don't have a voice or when you don't know the protocol… When you don't know how to approach people or how you need to speak to them, they ignore you."

As highlighted by the second participant, this does pose a question of the quality of care and support against needs being met for both the person requiring care and where applicable, their carer, when they do not have the same resources as other carers.

Similarly, in a school context, a parent of a child with additional needs voiced frustration with 'lip service' meetings, her concerns not being met with sufficient action:

"For me personally, I found that I had endless meetings with the staff members. Yeah. But I wasn't getting any joy; I was getting a lot of lip service, but I wasn't getting any help."

Additionally, it was highlighted that where oversights occurred in relation to the correct care for a person with disability – where things went awry – this resulted in interagency scapegoating, leading the women experiencing this to be unsure of where to turn to, to rectify the situation:

"They [the Council] keep saying, oh, the college, you have not sent any information… They keep blaming each other."

"They have [in hospital] a department over here, and a department over there and they don't talk to each other!"

In discussions surrounding mental health, poor inter-agency communication was a common finding as well.

Linking into some of the issues highlighted in relation to care agencies, multiple women have expressed difficulty with getting a diagnosis for their children with SEN and/or autism. Commonly women report that concerning behaviours of their dependant they have flagged with their GP are not taken seriously, until an external agency such as nursery or school states the behaviour is disruptive. This parental dismissal is both frustrating and demeaning; the child missing out on earlier support to live with their condition:

"Autism – It's being diagnosed so late. Children are 3, 2-3 years old are being, you know, they have symptoms or ADHD. You can clearly see it as a child with a behaviour issue, but they're not picked up by the services until they're going to school. That's too late."

"[My son] wasn't actually diagnosed [with autism] until he was twenty-nine."

"I know a lot of people here. I think even when they come to the meetings, they're still struggling to get their children's statemented… a lot of parents I have spoken to are often struggling to get their children a statement" ['statemented' referencing an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)]

"I spoke to a doctor or someone: to get a diagnosis, it's really hard… if it's just mild autism, even if the child is

not coping even at home but is coping at school. It will just get missed."

"Now it's getting harder and harder for families to get educational psychologists in to see a child, because of funding"

The struggle to get the correct level of support was felt by many carers the project spoke to, with many feeling that the only way to gain this is to persevere with force:

P: "For us to make changes, we have to get Social Services [involved], but then we chase them… like, I spoke to a social worker four days ago, but he hasn't got back to me. So, we have to constantly chase them to get back to us. So, we basically try to do their job for them as well"

I: "Do you mind explaining a bit about how it is to get the service in the first place?"

P: "Sometimes it can be very frustrating… I asked him to do that on Monday. I've given him the details of this new support worker. So, he's meant to get back with me so we can give notice and get the ball rolling for that to happen. So hopefully he should get back to me today. Yeah. This was Monday and it's Friday today. He hasn't got back to me with an update to tell me what's happened. Have [respite organisation], you know, accepted support workers details? How long will it take? So, he should have got back to me with some kind of [update]"

These statements shed a light on the difficulty of carers advocating, or people with caring needs, in accessing the appropriate health and social care. The women carers spoken with evidently have had difficult experiences, which with the right knowledge and interpersonal skills can be fought against, but not all will have the same assets to hand to push for fair treatment.

Recommendation: Ask the CCG to suggest that GPs document conversations on concerns voiced over dependant's behaviours and commit to listening and exploring these with the advocate.

Recommendation: Reviewing the sharing systems of key information in health and social care patient files.

Recommendation: Social care workers and health workers to provide service users date deadlines to provide updates/information where possible.

Child to Adult Support Transitions:

Participants who were in situations that made them more dependent on services spoke out about the drop in support given, when transitioning from adolescent to adults' services:

"After the age of 25. And you have a person with a learning disability or any support need, mental health, looking for something is really hard. There's basically nothing out there, you have to really, really fight for something."

"There's no more places they [people with disability] can go, it's limited"

"I don't feel that there is enough help and support out there for people who have been in care… When you've left care, when you're 18, that's it. The support is all gone, is completely gone."

This care leaver ended up having a short period of homelessness following her leaving care.

Dramatically dropping service provision is distressing and can leave many in a situation of instability as new adults.

Recommendation: Social care services to continue to review the way in which dependant services users go through from child's to adults' services and respond to feedback to ensure a gradual and manageable transition for the service user.

Education

In education the project did hear of what good service provision looks like, in the case of a young woman with epilepsy and her reasonable adjustments. Sadly, this support wasn't as frequent as she required, but she did suggest it helped her to perform her best:

P: "I have a mentor and like she sat down with me and we did a learning plan. Because when I get stressed as well, it sets off my epilepsy. So, we kind a learning plan and whenever we did assessments, I was allowed to go for a 20-minute walk if I needed to go to calm down and that really helped me because I was able to concentrate more"
I: "Do you feel like there is kind of enough support in place?"
P: "They help when they can where they can but it isn't always available, which is something that is kind of hard because when you really need it… they're only there on Mondays… so if something happens during the week, I have to wait until next week. To go and talk to her, and it could've escalated, or it could have just been forgotten about."

This participant went on to speak about a difficulty in college in which her mentor fully supported her, illustrating how good service provision can be when it's tailored and consistent. However, in the experience below, due to an administrative issue the participant was made by her teacher to feel that she was to blame and that her teacher was averse to her, which could potentially lead to this participant becoming less engaged in college:

"They've lost a year's worth of my work (college) and they're
making me redo it… and then they're sitting there, and they've
been complaining at me saying I'm failing the course... she's
just doesn't like me"
I: Does anyone support you to make a complaint?
P: "Yeah, my mentor, because of my anxiety. My mentor was
like, 'don't worry, you write it down and I'll give it to the
course leader', so she went to the course leader herself and
she went to the teacher as well. And she had a go at the
teacher for me and I was like, 'thank you.'"

Many young participants, speaking of their current or recent experiences, felt their college post-18 support is or was insufficient. The sole concern for teachers, perceived by these participants, was getting their students into University, without fully explaining the process or responding to questions:

I: "You mentioned that you found UCAS quite daunting. What was
daunting about it?"
P: "The point system, I just didn't really understand it. And
my tutors were just like, 'oh, no, you just gotta do it.
You've got to do it…' nobody wanted to explain it further and
I had no interest. I just did not."

"She's not academic, she's not into education. She came to me
a year and a half ago, absolutely broke down because she
couldn't cope with the schooling system and what the education
system was demanding off of her. But she's – take her aside.
She's been one of the most committed, reliable, hardworking
members [of this organisation]"

"I think most of them were overwhelmed with the [amount] of
students"

"I had a French teacher at GCSE, and I was constantly trying
to get more information from her, but she just did not have
time to sit down and have a one to one with me. And I think
that was a big reason why it didn't end up going into it."

"They see children in a way as tick box exercises."

Additionally, current schooling does not support alternatives to University as equally 'valid' options, meeting students with hostility:

"We went in [to college] the other week and the teacher was
talking about applying for Uni and she asked us who wasn't
doing it. And about 10 of us put our hands up and she was
like, 'ok, then go look for jobs'. And I said to her, 'what if
we've already got a job? Do we have to be in this session?'
She was like, 'you like making my life difficult.' I was like,
I'm sorry, I literally felt so bad in that minute"

The consensus was that post-college life decision making is not being taken as

seriously as the gravitas of the situation. Students deserve to feel informed and listened to when they propose their plans post-college, and colleges have a duty to be the primary source of information to support their students to make informed decisions that are right for them – providing comprehensive support for all options.

Recommendation: Feedback to colleges the need for post-college lessons to both pay fair attention to all career paths (not putting the onus on University) and for such sessions to take a more collaborative structure, in which students are made to feel comfortable asking questions, and confident their query will be met with a response.

Many women who are over the age of traditional students today (over 25) expressed a desire to return to education to carry out further study. However, they were met with several barriers surrounding childcare, financial constraints and worries about having to stop working or reducing hours. Those who are currently in education whether they are following a traditional route or studying after some years also expressed similar concerns.

```
"I feel unable to access more beyond a degree due to time and money."

"No money, no education."

"I would consider further study but it is expensive."

"I was supported [in university] but wish there was less of a financial burden at uni."
"More information on adult education and access courses. People can't afford to reduce the hours they work for courses so there needs to be some sort of funding."
```

Where women over the age of 25 were out of tradition education routes, they expressed they felt supported in pursuing education with their employers. This was beneficial to both the employee and employer.

```
"Employer is encouraging to access an apprenticeship to benefit all, there is no pressure but [we] can take advantage of working hours and this will benefit myself and family."

"Supported at uni, currently with an employer that funds and supports additional project management qualification."
```

Some participant highlighted how having a childcare facility attached to educational setting was beneficial. This is similar to what was stated earlier in the report with regards to child friendly workplaces or joint childcare facilities.

```
"Having an educational setting with a creche was immensely beneficial and useful, however now that would not be possible."

Paraphrased: "
Women from BAME communities also expressed that they felt they
```

were not supported during their education and experienced discrimination:

"[I was] supported until my apprenticeship where [I] faced discrimination due to [my] skin colour"

"[I] felt oppressed due to the colour of my skin."

"I was supported well however felt held back due to lack of experience or professionalism, lacked due to background or no access to the same culture employers were looking for"

"I was supported at uni but unable to take part in activities out of studies due to culture, never aware of other pathways to success other than via uni and this limited understanding of passions."

Recommendation: Universities and other adult learning institutions to identify and establish whether there is a need for childcare facilities and act accordingly to accommodate for this. This may be in the form of creating links with nearby nurseries to offer parents subsidised rates or priority places for children.

Recommendation: Employers in Leicester and across the country to be encouraged to support their employee more widely in gaining additional qualifications.

Health

A lot of women voiced feeling let down by their primary care services, whether it be due to inaccessibility, sudden drops in care, lack of information, or the effects of procedures relating to female health. These subjects are explored in further depth in the Mental and Physical Health section of this report; this sub-section focuses on the quality of service received.

Starting with post-natal care, it was acknowledged that they could not access the health services they required due to post-natal physical recovery:

"Even doctors' surgeries, you can get appointments, but you have to walk to go there"

Continuing with post-natal experiences, one participant spoke of the debilitating condition they experienced following a procedure error:

"With my first I had an emergency episiotomy, but they overcut from one side to the other. And then two days later, the stitches opened, and they said to me, there's nothing we can do. You have to wait for them to naturally heal, and it took one year. One year. Yeah. Yeah. So, one year not to be able to walk."

Additionally, post-natal women spoke to the difficulty of having their care suddenly

and dramatically dropped:

"*E*ven the midwife visits and the health visitors, you might find for the first six weeks you get a lot of visits, and then all of a sudden, it's gone. And you're on your own."

As touched upon earlier, having a different professional upon every service encounter contributes to an experience which is not person-centred, as well as providing inconsistent information and guidance, as demonstrated in this participant's experience of navigating menopause through her GP service:

"I think that if you're a woman of a certain age and you're experiencing the menopause you do not get support from your GP. Every time I go to the GP, I see someone different. They tell me something different"

It is worth stating that a condition such as menopause is spoken about very little in society, and due to the nature of the condition and stigma, is incredibly personal, so sensitivity and consistent information sharing is vital to making the menopause a manageable experience.

Women also voiced frustration with the differing rules accepted for patients and GPs in regard to appointment cancellations, with either party being cancelled on facing cost in some capacity:

*P1:"Bu*t they do cancel quite a few appointments don't they, NHS themselves"
PX: "Yeah"
PX: "It's all right for them to do it but if you do that then they say that this is how much it's costing them if they you cancel it."
PX: "It's costing me a day's work!
PX: "When they cancel it's OK, yeah."
PX: "Only ten minutes late for a doctor's appointment!*"*

Women also highlighted the need or preference to choose which gender GP to visit. Accommodating for the needs or preferences of many women in this manner contributes to a more respectful and accessible service:

"If you want a specific doctor that you want to speak to. Like if it's a female doctor, the date, they want to know why you want a female doctor, or they would just give you any doctor. But for me, I'm not saying I'm fussy, but I'd prefer if it was a female doctor because I'm more comfortable around talking to a female than I am with a male doctor"

"Usually my practise is quite good when they have the option – Male or female – which helps"

Some participants stated that getting a GP appointment was hard enough, so they have learned to accept talking to a male doctor about a female health issue.

In some instances, participants expressed how once they were able to get appointments, they were told they cannot speak about a second condition or issue. Appointments were 'one appointment per issue' despite comorbidities and overlapping health concerns and problems. Or how a ten-minute time frame was not sufficient enough to discuss the co-morbidities and overlapping health conditions. Where this was the case participants were told to book another appointment to continue the discussion. However, this was not always suitable and meant more time off work or the flow of conversation and context being interrupted.

In the context of living through the Coronavirus pandemic and avoidance of face-to-face interaction in standard doctor or nurse appointments, telephone appointments have become standardised. While in some cases, face-to-face appointments are required, telephone appointments as a standard route to care should remain in place to accommodate for patients who are unable to travel to their surgery.

Recommendation: The GEO to consider feeding back to the Department for Health the expressed need to assign 'lead GPs' to patients and prioritise this GP as the care provider, for patients to receive consistent care. Similarly, in a longstanding condition, the GP first approached with the concern/s should be the one to oversee this care, to ensure continuous support, non-conflating information or guidance offered, and lesser oversights via inter-GP communication.

Digital Exclusion

Finally, one of the main concerns of service provision being of adequate quality today is digital exclusion. Participants voiced their frustration with services they require being digitised and because of this, inaccessible, with other participants advocating and voicing concern on behalf of the digitally excluded not having the same access to vital services as others.

Digitisation allows for greater collaborative opportunities, more opportunities for service users to address issues with their service experiences and for some, a more convenient way to access services.

However, as illustrated by this project's participants, it must be acknowledged that digital inclusion is a privilege not afforded to all.

While the percentage of adults with disabilities not using the internet has been steadily declining, in 2018, 23.3% of adults with disabilities were not internet users, compared with 6.0% of adults without a disability (ONS 2018).

Not all have the same access to the internet, and this cannot be rectified by simply offering community computer lessons; a sizeable proportion of the internet is inaccessible for people with vision conditions, who have English as a second language or have poor literacy skills.

Digital services as an option for access is not a bad thing, but by transforming services to become online-only, organisations who do so are preventing many from accessing the services they require.

163

Participants addressed the misconception digitised services are universally more convenient and accessible, speaking passionately about the unequal access opportunities:

"They've also done this digital thing, for people to make life easier. But to be honest, it's not making life easy, is making it more complicated."

"We're working with all the people in the most poverty, the most distressed, basically digital exclusion. And every time somebody puts a form online, what they forget is the person who can't read and write and the person who can't go into a computer… if you were excluded, that person then can't get that service"

"I hate the term channel shift… cause, if you work with vulnerable people, channel shift is not a shift in the channel; it's the closing of a door."

Essential services that promote online use significantly over other forms of contact result in women who are digitally excluded finding it harder to access these services:

"I want to fill up the application for my child, the school, he's gonna go next year, and they said to me, 'you have to fill in form online now'… that I don't know"

A woman who has English as a second language explained her frustration with being unable to communicate via online-only services, explaining that she can have better interaction by speaking than writing:

"It is so difficult to explain it in English. Who is going to write a letter to the city council like me? A woman? I do, like, get stuck. It takes a lot effort and time instead. You know, if they send a letter there's a phone number you can just ring them. Yeah. And have it told, that's it, job done. Nowadays they said, write an email So who's going to do it? Like, OK, the next generation is coming. They might be able to do it like us."

Additionally, digitisation can make accessing the right services difficult when the service user is in a complex situation, as demonstrated here by a participant who is carer to several family members:

"That system online. I think that's a bit confusing because they don't tell you… they [also] don't mention the name of whose blood test or whose prescription is… And now recently they've said that it's not an automatic thing where you can get your prescription. But if you if you forget to, then they won't get their medication. And that happened to me just recently, like in December time. It's only November. I think they started it. I didn't know this was taking place, even though I did get a text message. But I was too busy with my

sister's issue that I forgot that they said that you have to go online and order your prescription… Luckily for my parents, they had extra medications, both my mum and dad. But they didn't have a one-month worth of medication from the pharmacy. And we used to nag the pharmacy, 'you haven't given the prescription and blah' But in the end, they said, 'oh, well, what can we do? You didn't order it online'."

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to ensure where decisions are made to channel shift our services, that an EIA is completed - demonstrating consideration of our PSED.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to ensure that service users are given notice of our services digitising and to make online access an option to using services, not the only method of using the service.

Recommendation: In recognition that digital inclusion plays an important role in enabling women to not only access services but also to engage fully in public life (including work and education), particularly given some of the additional barriers posed by Covid-19, the Smart Cities, Equalities, Adult Skills and Learning and Neighbourhoods, in addition to other relevant services, will work together to scope a proposal for a project to deal with issues that have been highlighted as part of this project and more widely in response to Covid-19 – such as lack of access to devices, including appropriate devices for work and study and lack of access to adequate internet connection.

Acknowledging Diverse Needs in Service Provision

Participants who were apart of multiple marginalised demographics addressed the failure of services designed to support them, in meeting their needs. This is a practical translation of intersectional barriers not currently being fully recognised in the Equalities Act 2010. This sub-section explores the accessibility and quality of services for those who are apart of multiple marginalised communities, focusing on these intersectional barriers when accessing support.

A participant from a 'strong religious background' voiced that they felt very unsupported by a voluntary organisation that offers relevant advice and support, as well as their GP, when gender transitioning. They advocated for greater support for more marginalised members of the LGBT+ community from relevant support services.

Another participant voiced feeling reproachful about talking therapies, after a negative experience in counselling in which her faith was insensitively assumed as the reason for her mental health condition.

8. Finance

Leicester is a city experiencing significant and chronic economic deprivation (The English Indices of Deprivation, ONS 2019); widespread poverty likely to be further exacerbated by the impact of Coronavirus (The World Bank 2020). The economy has historically hit women hardest in a variety of ways.

"The "crisis in care" has been ongoing for years, leaving women run ragged, whether from childcare or elderly care; women are much more likely than men to be found in low paid parts of the economy feeling undervalued and overworked. Women's low level of earnings compared with men makes housing unaffordable, and means they build up much less of a pension pot over their lives. And then, when Covid-19 hit, women were more likely to be found on the frontline, exposed to risk but in jobs that paid miserly wages." – Dr. Victoria Bateman, Economics Fellow, University of Cambridge 2020 (in: Aspinall 2020).

In this section the main concerns voiced by women will be explored: the impact of changes to benefits including the introduction of Universal Credit, dependency on male partners in heterosexual monogamous relationships, a lack of understanding of gender pay gaps and pension, Period Poverty and the mental and physical health implications of being disproportionately affected by poverty and economic hardship.

Period Poverty

Following years of campaigning and awareness raising, in March 2020, it was announced that the luxury taxing of menstrual products was to be abolished as of January 2021. This news is wholeheartedly supported by the project; prior to this announcement, participant voiced frustration at the unfair tax classification of menstrual products:

P: "*If* all women have to go through it, I think it ought to be brought down or not taxed… I find it absolutely ridiculous that there is a tax."
I: "It's taxed as a luxury item"
P: "It's not a luxury item!*"*

While the scrapping of 'tampon tax' is incredibly positive news, there will still remain many people who have periods, who are unable to afford the appropriate menstrual products for their needs, known as 'period poverty'.

Nationally, 27% of women and girls in the UK cannot afford menstrual products. In Leicester, this figure rises to 35% of the female population (Ginger Comms, Bloody Big Brunch, Hey Girls in: Watson 2020) Trans men are at higher risk of poverty and homelessness (Action for Trans Health 2020) and experience the additional barrier of either 'outing' themselves and risking their safety or avoiding asking for help altogether when experiencing period poverty.

For those in more financially strained situations, who suffer with more frequent or longer than average periods, purchasing menstrual products is a felt strain as illustrated by a single mother and carer, who is unable to work:

"I have very heavy periods at the moment, mine have been like 14 days. So, I'm spending probably double what most women would spend, and the cost of it is just ridiculous."

Following on from this, menstrual care product donations are often neglected when it comes to homeless shelter collections. This neglect may in part be due to the stigma still surrounding periods, but as stressed below, menstrual care **is** an essential need:

"But where women cannot afford to buy sanitaries [sic] or

tampons… it's ridiculous. *No woman should ever have to make a choice between food or period products. It should not be a question of either or."*

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to address period poverty in the Equality Action Plan - as part of that work opening a dialogue with Leicester's Homeless Charities on access to menstrual care products for people experiencing period poverty.

Recommendation: When calling for physical donations, Homeless Charities in Leicester to include mention of menstrual care products on their donation list. When calling for fiscal donations, Homeless Charities in Leicester could mention this money, in part, will buy menstrual products – to boost awareness around this essential need often overlooked.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council to commit to providing free menstrual products in all Council buildings that are accessed by the public.

Considering societal, cultural, or gender expectations and related stigma, there must be a place those who experience period poverty are able to access menstrual products in a private and accessible manner.

Recommendation: That the Government consider the proposal that those eligible for free prescriptions be able to request free menstrual care products from primary healthcare services such as GPs and GUM Clinics.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council's Public Health, Sustainability (within Estates & Buildings Services) and Education services to consider the procurement of menstrual cups to be provided in school to each young person with periods, appealing to the Department for Education and their commitment to fully-fund access to free menstrual products in schools and colleges for funding.

The Effects of Economic Hardship

The stress caused by financial hardship and navigating ever-changing welfare systems in addition to many other life stressors, can manifest with mental and physical health conditions.

In awaiting the five-week return on her Universal Credit, one participant attributed the stress of this situation as a contributing factor to her physical illness experienced:

"I was so stressed out; I think that's why… I received the statement [to] say that, yes, I could get Universal Credit and payments [went] into my bank account about 48 hours later. That's when I woke up with Bell's Palsy – I think it's all of the stress"

The lack of clear direction in a complex situation of financial constraint, with insufficient advice available, leading to a feeling of being trapped:

"There's not enough resources to… Nothing to push you like,

'do you know what, we're going to help you, just, you know, what do you need?' So, it was the legal requirements; the red tape. How will I be impacted financially if I'm going to be financially strained? What's the alternative to try and get me on track or would it be better if I work?… you just feel like you're in a trap all of the time*"*

The mental toll of living in longstanding poverty and consistently being knocked back in efforts to escape this leading to mental health conditions including suicidal thoughts:

"You can try your best, but even your best is not good enough anymore. And I think that's a lot of [what causes] these mental health issues. You feel defeated every day. You wake up defeated, you sleep defeated… I understand the rise in suicides… because you [are] just trapped… Debt: it's just so common now, I mean, everyone around you is in debt. That shouldn't be the case. Not when you're enrolled in this working culture and we're all working this hard…*"*

As demonstrated, the impact on the health and wellbeing of women in economic hardship is significant and must be addressed. This will be explored further in the subsequent subsection: Health.

Changes to Support Including Universal Credit

Navigating government financial support is complex, but reviews of support add an extra element of instability which for women who are eligible, causes an additional source of anxiety. Reviews to support, as voiced by our participants, can leave women in stressful, financially precarious and unstable situations.

One participant illustrated the instability of financial support and the emotional toll this takes, when explaining that the condition of her son who has a disability hasn't changed, yet following a review, the financial support granted did:

"He was turned down with the PIP because they said he didn't get enough points… But he's still got a disability; everything is still the same. And when he's poorly, really poorly, he's in hospital and obviously I'd have to take time out for that couple of weeks to be with him… and because of the Carer's Allowance was stopped I had to go on Universal Credit. So, I'm still having to pay out for the medical stuff for him… So, I'm still paying for those, but I've not got the money to pay for them anymore… So, I've been really stressed out.*"*

The reform of many benefits, replaced by Universal Credit, was a frequently discussed issue affecting women.

The main issues highlighted were the five-week waiting period for a decision and the impact this can have on eligibility for other benefits – leaving women to take some chance, and potentially face having to repay payments – not to mention the complexity of navigating the system when eligible for multiple benefits;

P: "With the Universal Credit, you have to wait five weeks…
for even a decision to see if you've got it or not… I had two
choices, where I could wait [and] apply for the monetary
reconsideration. And that was a few weeks' and that was turned
down. I could have had the option to go on [through
reconsideration] again. But what I thought about it, I thought
there's no guarantee that I'd win the case. And then
obviously, if I was applying for Universal Credit, no matter
what situation, I would always have to pay the money back;
have to pay what Universal Credit I had, I would have to pay
that back and I was like, child tax credits… I wrote to the
Citizens' Advice. They said, I've got two choices. I could
leave it until I got the decision, because if I apply for
Universal Credit now, it might mess up all the other things.
So, I took that decision to wait until the decision. But
because I waited, I was penalized. I had to pay back a month's
money."
I: Who were you penalised by?
P: It was a Child Tax Credit. Because obviously I was getting
extra, because my son was on Disability Living Allowance. But
now, he's not on the system, he's just 'normal' so we've lost
loads of money. I'm having to pay extra for Universal Credit.
And his physical needs are just the same.

"It was just really stressful [applying for Universal Credit
and waiting for a verdict]. I was just in limbo. I just didn't
know what to do.*"*

The offer of being paid some welfare support in advance while waiting for a Universal
Credit verdict being an impractical solution to the long wait time, due to those who
are financially disadvantaged feeling a need to avoid incurring debt:

"It was just really stressful time because I didn't know if I
was going to be set for Universal Credit or not… But also,
they say that they can pay some money in advance, but then you
gotta pay it back. I thought, I don't be needing more debt."

The instability and ever-changing eligibility of benefits being a barrier to women
making efforts to get qualifications to work:

"Because even if I go to the [employment agency] and I ask
them, they put me on to this one course. But it ended up being
that if I actually ended up on that course for six weeks… it'd
completely missed all my benefits. And I'll be financially
worse off than I would [otherwise]."

The real potential of financial support being lessened to those who are already
financially disadvantaged, exacerbating poverty in Leicester:

"I think the biggest issue at the minute, in the last couple
of months I've experienced at the [employment agency], is the
change from benefits to Universal Credit… Everyone's

> financially strained; there's a lot of red tape; there's a lot of changes – and people are financially already strained. And then when you go there, and the change of benefits, and you're going to be less well off. Yeah, it's another strain in itself. And it's almost as – it's just debilitating"

> "You're not being frivolous buying milk for your baby [when it feels like it]"

With those who are in lone-income or no-income households, with no other safety nets, worst hit by the Universal Credit process:

> "I think it's because my husband's working, I was alright for the money, but I've heard that the wait time being five weeks is very difficult for some people."

Based on these participant testaments, clear, definite advice needs to be given to those seeking it from associated services such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau or employment agencies. This can only be realised with further revision of services such as Universal Credit: to shorten wait-times and more comprehensively assimilate welfare benefits to avoid risks of women shouldering government debt.

By penalising benefits on the basis of attempting to prepare for work, there is a discouragement of attempts to become financially independent, contradicting the efforts of employment services.

Recommendation: Benefits, both current and those being phased out, to be assimilated by the Government, to ensure no eligible recipient is left waiting for payments and that no debts occur from overpayment – with any debts incurred to be gradually redacted from the overarching eligible payments.

Recommendation: The Government to review of the Universal Credit assessment process to cut down wait-times for a verdict.

Recommendation: The Government to ensure that those who are jobseekers do not receive a benefit penalisation for attempts to make them better adapted or skilled to work.

Financial Dependence and Awareness:

Even today, many women in heterosexual monogamous relationships remain reliant on their husbands financially – whether it be for expenditure or future planning i.e. pension control:

> *P:* "I don't like relying on my husband so much, I want to be independent."
> *I:* "How do you rely on your husband?"
> *P:* Expenses-wise, taking me out. If I need to go shopping. If it's not within the area, he has to take me on the weekends"

> "I don't think about it [my pension] too much; my husband handles all that side of stuff; he just sorts everything out.

Additionally, pension was unanimously an aspect of finances that participants were unaware of how to access and manage:

```
"It's working it out though, you get your piece of paper with
what your predictions are. And you look at it… to I look at it
every year and think, well, I really don't know. All I want to
know is what me lump sum and how much am I gonna get monthly.
… But it's not very self-explanatory"
```

With 43% of consultation respondents saying they 'didn't know very much' or they 'knew nothing' about their pension.

In light of the WASPI Campaign bringing awareness to pension inequalities experienced by women, it is becoming increasingly important that particularly women have control and knowledge of their pension.

Finally, the project found that there was a general unawareness surrounding the race and gender pay gaps. Using the example of the gender pay gap, this refers to women getting paid the same as men for the same job, but within the organisation there is over- and under-representation at different levels of seniority, e.g. a lack of women at senior levels, perpetuating the pay gap. The pay gap is different to unequal pay (which is illegal, refers to paying people differently for the same job and is straightforward to correct), and is far more complex to resolve, as there are multiple factors which cause it.

Some participants were aware of the pay gap, but similarly to issues of discrimination and organisations separating themselves from this issue, women were unaware of their employers' pay gap, as demonstrated by the following participant, who's employer *did* have a pay gap:

```
"Luckily with [my organisation] there's no gender pay gap. So
obviously we get the same as the men."
```

The issue in not being aware of the race and gender pay gaps, or where opportunities to uncover unequal pay is blocked ("Everybody was paid differently, and you were not allowed to discuss with your colleagues what you were paid"), is that this dodges accountability for organisations and stifles worker attempts at recuperation.

Recommendation: Organisations to offer information to their employees on pension as a mandated part of their starter pack.

As of 2017, employers with 250 employees or more, must publish their gender pay gap data every year.

Recommendation: Organisations should consider periodically publishing data on their pay gaps in relation to protected characteristics beyond gender and making this information publicly accessible.

9. Health

This section pays attention to the most prevalent health issues impacting women, including specific physical and mental conditions and experiences of care, as well as how accessible healthcare is.

Postnatal Needs

Postnatal experiences including postnatal depression and difficulties in breastfeeding were significant areas of concern for women.

As illustrated below, participants felt that there was not enough postnatal care provided to identify and support post-partum women, who are often isolated when breastfeeding, with their mental health:

"I know it's not often that you hear it, but, you know, if you're looking through the news you hear about mothers who are not coping well at all that commit suicide and stuff like that… You know, when you do have your midwife appointment after you've had a baby, they ask, 'Are you coping?'… And that's probably the only – they don't really push as such. I mean, some people are probably going to be quite apprehensive about saying, yes, I am struggling… And that's where I think in admitting it, there's not as much support for women out there."

"I think there's probably not enough contact from the midwives themselves [in comparison to her past postnatal support]"

"It was just pretty much four months of crying and constantly sitting breastfeeding. I didn't go out at all. I was just housebound and it just kind of obviously get a bit depressed and you get to moods and things like that."

Similarly, women stressed that individualised support – which not all get – is essential in helping women to successfully breastfeed:

"But the problem with breastfeeding is that it's so varied in terms of the problems you can have, unless you speak to somebody who's quite familiar with the problem that you're having. Or somebody who's very passionate. A lot of mothers tend to give it up quite quickly."

Additionally, conflicting advice given by different professionals and dismissal of concern was an issue raised that impacted on mothers being able to breastfeed – linking back to the emphases placed on personalised, consistent and attentive care discussed earlier in the report:

"You get like conflicting advice or sometimes like when I went to the hospital with him initially. He's dehydrated they just stuff, a formula bottle with him and there like you're not producing enough milk. So, he's going to have to be on formula. But it's not something that anybody should hear… I feel really sorry for mothers who give it up very quickly. And

```
I think it is literally down to the support that they get"
```

A further barrier to accessing the necessary post-natal support was the societal pressure on women to be happy and enjoy life after having a baby, and the associated guilt with not fitting this expectation and experiencing postpartum depression; this image acting as a silencer when it comes to accessing potentially life-saving help:

```
"And if you see someone struggling, then you feel more open to
telling others that you're struggling as well. But if you see
everybody having such a wonderful time in their life then it
becomes more difficult to say that, OK, this is this is not my
life at all I'm completely the opposite and I'm struggling."
```

```
"In this country, they've created a situation where it's
highly unlikely to die during childbirth. But the main cause
of death of mothers is suicide… cos of anxiety and depression,
because we don't like to express that… it's more dangerous."
```

Additionally, participants voiced that when they did address their mental health concerns, they were offered medication, which was felt to be dismissive and not the solution they wanted – advocating instead for accessible community support in which they could speak with other women about their experiences.

Coping with Miscarriage

Miscarriage is more common than generally expected: among women who are aware they are pregnant, an estimated 1 in 8 pregnancies end in miscarriage (NHS 2018).

Women volunteered their stories of miscarriage and ectopic pregnancies, and their experiences of recovering from these traumatic experiences: the commonality being insensitive or insufficient care and support.

Several women were told their pregnancy was terminal, to then discover this was not the case:

```
"You haven't been told you're not pregnant, having to go
through those emotional torture weeks, not sleeping, thinking,
why is your fault? What happened? And after you've been told
you're pregnant again."
```

Doctors must refrain from saying a pregnancy is terminal unless absolutely certain, due to the turbulent emotions coming back from this news causes.

Insufficient support has many forms, such as employers not allowing any time off to recover, which for this participant, caused her to have to leave her job:

```
"We had a miscarriage the first attempt. And the job that I
did, in retail, as a retail manager. They just – it's all
about money. So, they hadn't no time to support me even having
```

a miscarriage. Like having time off work to recuperate. And we end up having to part ways. So, I ended up losing a baby and losing my job. My whole life just like changed completely cos I've always been this very strong, hardworking person. And all of sudden that was taken away."

Miscarriage is a medical condition that needs to be recognised by employers in the same way that other conditions are.

Women also expressed not having enough support following miscarriages or pregnancy complications. Signposting is essential to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of women following these traumatic experiences.

Comparatively, some women are supported with pregnancy-related health conditions, such as this participant undergoing IVF treatment who had her needs met with time off:

"I had to have sort of emergency days off because things change and stuff. And they've always been very helpful. I have to say, my colleagues are great. I know that not everyone has that experience."

Managing Periods and Endometriosis

As illustrated by our participants, there remains a lot of stigma surrounding periods, with people who have periods feeling pressured to hide them and the associated symptoms:

"For me, especially traditionally; where I come from, that's not something you're supposed to discuss. You know, your sister, who you can share the bedroom with is not even supposed to know when you're on, it that we raised"

"They kind of hide it away, that they're not feeling that great for that reason. And it becomes a bit of a taboo"

"[I] talk about it more with women rather than men. It's just something I would do. For example, if I was at work and I was on my period and I wasn't feeling well. Yeah, I'd be up to saying it to my female colleague quite easily, but I would not say that to my male colleague."

"All of us have been taught to hide how poorly we actually feel. And again, I think that is something why in society we are just not that far. I mean, just look at classic advertising for period products… We are essentially told that the 'perfect period' is the period where you can still be a full member of society."

The last participant raises an interesting point on what it means to 'full member of society' aligning this to not appearing to have periods or, not being 'female'.

The pressure put on those who experience periods to hide this risks people not getting the right adjustments in place to fulfil their duties to the best of their ability and discourages people from addressing abnormalities and concerns about their menstrual health when necessary with a GP.

The debilitating effect periods have for many people in the context of hiding such struggles was highlighted by participants not addressing their needs or having no adjustments in place to allow them to carry on their lives:

"I felt like I was about to drop. My blood pressure dropped. I was pale. I was shaking. I was cold. But I worked a full day because I didn't feel I was believed that I am actually not well"

"'Cos I'm very heavy and I've got very bad period pains there are times I've had to cancel, quite often I have to cancel things, 'cos I'm just not feeling well enough, don't feel like I can actually leave the house, 'cos I'm too scared of showing…"

"I used to enjoy swimming, got to the point that I was in the swimming club, doing competitions and winning, and then periods got in the way and I had to stop it, I just couldn't keep doing that"

The impact on daily life was also highlighted in voiced experiences of endometriosis:

"I have to think about – plan ahead a bit in terms of what I do on a daily basis… I try not to let it stop me, but it does sometimes"

In the context of the workplace, participants explained how managers responding to employees vocalising struggle with their periods, with trust and flexible options, contributed positively to the employees' sense of being respected and consequently their work output:

"'Just you know. I know you don't take the mick. Just get on and do what you need to do. I'll support you in whatever way I can', and it makes such a difference to coming into the office and doing your job"

Menopause: Assumptions and Stigma

Like periods, there remains prominent stigma surrounding menopause and a lack of acknowledgement of the menopause as a health condition. By sustaining this taboo of discussing menopause, many people lack the necessary knowledge to understand what is happening to them, or don't know where to turn to for this information:

"In the past it's not been considered something you do talk about. And that hasn't quite changed"

"[It was a] surprise"

> "But there is not a place where you can talk to somebody who has knowledge that can give correct advice and that **if that was a male disease**… **It would seem as a national issue.**"

As demonstrated by participants, there is additional stigma surrounding discussion of menopause in the form of an ageist devaluation of older people. Associating the menopause with getting older also alienates younger people experiencing early menopause from understanding their condition:

> "I think people don't want to talk about it because you think you talk menopause. It means you're old or you're getting old."

> "One of my colleagues was told that she was too young to have the menopause and they refused to give her a test"

Seeking Healthcare: 'Pain Bias'

Women are more likely than men to be inadequately treated by healthcare providers (The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics, 2001).

'Pain bias' refers to certain demographics being taken less seriously in health services than others.

The data gathered in this project also supported the claim that some women are less likely to be taken seriously than other women – namely, BAME women and younger women experience greater pain bias.

A BAME participant spoke of her work not taking her health needs with the appropriate

> "After the second hospital admission people [at work] start saying to me: 'Are you sure you should be working?' – you should have been asked that on day one. You know, the first time I went in."

Another BAME participant reflected on her experience of addressing health concerns at a younger age, and what it took to have her health attended to:

> "I've had really bad problems with things like periods and I just feel like it gets overlooked sometimes. Yeah. Symptoms used to get really bad, when I was at Uni and I think I went to the doctors a few times. They were kind of like, 'oh, it's just bad cramps. It was just this, it's just that'. And you go 'no, I'm suffering. Please, I'm suffering'. And it was usually the male doctors that would say, 'okay, well, just take it easy and see how it goes'. And I remember a few years later, I went again to the doctors. I saw a female doctor and she just said, 'you must be in a lot of pain. And I said, yes, I am' and she went, 'Okay', and she sat down and properly listened and gave me meds for it. But I think it took like several appointments for me to get heard. Then after that, I thought

```
to myself, 'okay, well, I'll only ever go if it's something
really serious'. But technically, any problem, you should go.
When I talk about, say, my symptoms, but my health, they do
listen quite well, which helps. I feel like because I'm older
now. Because when I had all my problems with my periods when I
was younger, about 17, 18, I'd say, yeah. And there was a lot
more difficult to get take seriously. And I think now I'm
twenty-six. They see me as a grown woman"
```

Demonstrated here is the pain bias felt by various marginalised groups, a concern because it stops some from having their needs met, and as stressed in 'Personalisation of Services', consistently poor standards make service users adverse to returning to the service, until it's "something really serious".

Myths about different people experiencing pain differently need to be debunked.

Recommendation: If not already, healthcare practitioners should undergo some form of unconscious bias training to ensure they are providing care that is fair and consistent to all patients.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council's Public Health to discuss with healthcare practitioners the need for training staff on 'pain bias' and dispelling myths of different pain and symptoms experienced by people of various backgrounds.

Barriers to Smear Tests

BAME women are less likely than white women to attend cervical cancer screenings, with 39.6% saying they would feel unsafe attending a doctor's surgery as a result of the current pandemic, compared to 27.2% of white women. (Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, 2020 in: Thomas 2020).

A participant spoke of the need felt to encourage "especially women from the Asian and African communities to go and have the smear test done", explaining the barriers she perceived as particularly affecting BAME women:

```
P1: "I think it's also a cultural thing. You're quite
protective of your body and it's quite invasive."
```

Contrariwise, another participant voiced frustration with the assumptions made about her not going for a cervical screening, and the betrayal of confidence following her standpoint being one that was disagreed with:

```
I: "Have you ever had one?"
P: "I've not had one. I've been given a letter to go but. I
don't wanna go."
I: "Is there any specific reason?"
P: "I just, just don't want to go… I think I mentioned to some
of my work colleagues that I'd gotten my letter to go to a
screening and they just got really inappropriate like that,
'You have to go. You need to go'. And there were just
mentioning in the open office and, I said this to you in
```

confidence, that I don't want to go because I just don't want
to go… people make assumptions. 'Oh, is it because of your
family? Is it a religious thing? Is it a cultural thing?'
Actually, no. I've got my mum and my sister telling me. I just
don't want to do it."

There are a multitude of reasons why women may not want to attend cervical cancer screenings that were not fully explored in this overview research.

Speaking to representation as a tool to encourage greater uptake from BAME women, P1 agreed to be in posters designed to encourage women to go for their cervical screening and chose to dress traditionally, using representation and relatability as a tool to call to African women:

"And I felt that women, in my group, if they see me in my
African attire with the head gear on… they wouldn't walk past
it [the poster] in the hospital… 'that outfit is something I
identify with'. They're more inclined to stop and have a look"

That is not to say equal access can be achieved by representation in persuasive media alone – however this is one element of good practice supported by the project.

Living with Disability/ies and Autism as an Adult

Participants living with disability/ies, or those who were advocating, most commonly brought up issues surrounding dignity and accessibility.

Speaking about busy shopping streets in the city centre and city wards, participants pointed out failures in accessibility, for example pavements not being wide enough for mobility supports and public toilets being in the vicinity, but never open.

Speaking about public awareness, a participant stated that the pandemic has highlighted how little people consider particularly hidden disabilities. She referred to her sunflower lanyard and how there needs to be greater public awareness of signifiers such as this.

Participants addressed the lack of value given to ensuring dignity, with one advocate telling the project about Social Services not being able to find an appropriate showering system to install for a person with disabilities (prior to Covid-19), meaning she had to go to a local swimming pool to wash:

"She had to go to Beaumont Leys swimming pool because they
couldn't find anything for her… so when the services can
arrange that transport, only then she can have a bath"

In discussions surrounding disability and employment, participants expressed fear they have or would be discriminated against on the basis of their disability. It became apparent that there was some lack of awareness of people with disabilities' rights, for example in job interviews:

```
I: "You don't have to disclose at an interview that you've got
any kind of health condition at all."
P: "At the job interview?"
I: "Don't have to say it."
P: "Really? I thought you had to tell everything. Otherwise if
you don't... you can get sack if you don't?"
I: "I would double check with whoever is dealing with your
case at the [employment agency], but from my knowledge and
experience of my employment, it's always been an optional
thing. You can disclose your disability, but I don't speak
about mine unless I feel comfortable speaking about it."
P: "Oh, that's good to know. 'Cos obviously my son, I don't
think he'd want to tell"
```

Continuing with not being fully aware of relevant rights, many participants with disabilities were unsure about applying for free bus travel and whether their carers could get free bus travel to assist them in transit.

Recommendation: Community-based officers should touch base with community group leaders to ensure they are aware of relevant support their participants may be entitled to. This could support constituents who don't have direct contact with the Local Authority to be more aware of support mechanisms in place, and access the full range of support available to them.

Several participants spoke about getting a late autism diagnosis, highlighting also that there are long waiting lists for adult Asperger's support – for some it took two years.

Autism is understood in terms of common traits exhibited in males but tends to present differently in females: participants stressed that female traits are under-researched, and as a result, frequently overlooked by authority figures and in standard diagnostic tools.

Additionally, women learn to mask their traits to conform with their gender role and societal expectations:

```
"Women have a better capacity to hide their symptoms than
males. It backfires on us."
```

Women are left undiagnosed or with significantly late diagnoses – and resultantly, not getting the right support. Participants voiced this absence of diagnosis and support disrupting their lives in significant ways, such as their ability to maintain a job.

Several participants with children who have disabilities spoke about the incorrect support being offered by their schools acting as a barrier to their education, with one participant disclosing being told by the school they didn't want their child in the school:

```
"At the beginning it was like they did him [child] part-time
and then some of the teachers, they need the training, but
```

they didn't get the right training. So, then they said to us, like, we don't want him in school because we don't know what to do if something happens."

Another participant spoke about her child's school not being equipped for the child's needs, highlighting the affect it has on her as a parent and her ability to work:

"And in her school, she's not special needs. Every school has special needs met. Yeah. She's got medical needs. So, schools are not equipped to deal with that… because they don't have the resources to do that, she's absent all the time… it has a knock-on effect [inconsistent childcare provision]."

As a carer, frustration was felt with tighter restrictions imposed on repeat medications making getting the medication at the right time more of a concern:

"They did say to me that sometimes people are over ordering and things like that. But you've got life conditions, you need your tablets. You can't over order because you constantly need them."

Mental Health The mental health of participants was an incredibly prevalent theme.

Frequently, participants expressed the distress experienced by long wait times for mental health related treatment, and that mental health was not treated with the urgency and priority it should be.

There was frustration felt in that increasingly, people are told to speak to a professional if they have concerns about their mental health, yet when they do so, there is no support available: this false promise causing many already 'vulnerable' people to feel let down.

Participants detailed their mental health affecting their ability to work, access the doctors, and a contributing factor to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

This section explores women's experiences of living with mental health conditions, the resources available, and NHS mental health support given.

Participants highlighted the absence of understanding and support, contributing to feelings of isolation, when managing their mental health; accentuating also the essential need for mental health community support services:

"It's really, really, really hard… Ugh, I have got to go back to school. I'm already in school now, I need to wake up at night to do the assignments… Sometimes you might be depressed. Obviously, you don't really have help. You don't have somebody to rely on. And the constant in the UK. Everyone is busy… who do you call to like, 'oh, could you help me? Stay with these kids for just even 30 minutes', it would have such help"

"You know, how [coming out as] LGBT+ is a big thing right now… there's all this encouragement about recognizing who you are

and changing who you are because you want to be happy. But once you've changed who you are. Who's there to help?"

"[There's a] lack of understanding, lack of support and lack of information about it."

"People are not understanding of mental health and the impact it has on you, whereas being in groups with people who experience similar things to you… they are understanding. You're not judged; there is space for you."

Misinformation about, and stigma associated with, mental health, led to the validity of some participants' conditions being disbelieved by those around them:

"You must fit a stereotype or expectation of behaviour before you are able to get help, but not everyone is going to fit that stereotype."

"My anxiety is like one of those where I sweat my eyes get watery and I'm not confident. So, I just keep to myself and people think, 'oh, well, maybe she's just acting it all up'"

Voiced also was the differential concern and value placed on mental compared with physical health by both the individual and their health provider:

"But I never go to the doctor or anybody for that matter, talking about my mental health to anybody. I just keep it to myself because I prefer to deal with it like that. But then again, if it's like a physical health issue, then it's another thing. Then I have to, you know. Because if it's like physical health, like, say, if something happens to me, then obviously I will go to the doctor."

"Processes for mental health wouldn't happen with physical health. When you start to improve, suddenly it's taken away from you, the support you were getting. You need services or things in place to help you maintain it."

"Unless you tell someone you are ending your life, there is no support. You are given a leaflet and phone numbers. To get regular appointments you must pay private."

When addressing mental health concerns with a GP, commonly mentioned was the lengthy process of getting the correct NHS support before and after diagnoses, with many participants voicing that it took years of waiting lists to get some support in place:

"The same with mental health like if you come forward and admit it, or you go to the doctor, something like that. What happens then? Because the doctors aren't trained so you have to be referred to like a specialist mental health nurse. That

kind of thing. But then the waiting lists are like a year long
or something. So, by then it's too late. I've decided I want
to kill myself… It doesn't make any sense."

Similarly, to discussion of carers advocating for the correct support, in discussions of mental health and NHS support, participants voiced having to be persistent with doctors and health professionals, otherwise these concerns are ignored or 'shrugged off'.

For some participants with anxiety, trying to get an appointment in the first place with a doctors' surgery wasn't feasible, as they had to call and give a reason for an appointment and due to their condition, were unable to do so. This accentuates the need for multiple forms of contact, or doctors' surgeries not requiring a reason where a service user doesn't feel comfortable disclosing.

Mental health and appropriate support are particularly essential in today's climate of living through a global pandemic. People should feel able to go to their GP and know that they will be adequately cared for, with the same urgency in response as a physical ailment is granted. This cannot be achieved by a one-off cash injection; the NHS mental health services need to have a long-standing, consistent, increase in financial investment.

Recommendation: Government to create long-term solutions to currently 'underfunded' (Mental Health Policy Group 2020) mental health support within the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Recommendation: Leicester City Council's Public Health to request local GP surgeries to offer multiple forms of contact and not require a reason to give an appointment, where a service user doesn't feel comfortable disclosing.

10. Covid-19

As part of our consultation we had the opportunity to ask women about the impact of Covid-19. Of the 175 responses there were 128 to this question. There were no additional themes identified due to the pandemic. Rather it highlighted the existing inequalities that women face in society as the unpaid carer at home and in society and the little value placed on this. This was highlighted in particular by the following participant:

"It has been an eye opener to my (pretty progressive) husband
as to how the food arrives in the house."

Most respondents reported having an increased demand on their workload. In addition to regular childcare responsibilities home-schooling had been added as another 'unpaid' role women were expected to carry out. There was some mentions of fathers or partners not carrying out this role due to their workplaces not making allowances for children being at home, workplaces still expected males to be as productive as they might be whilst in the office, showing little regard for children at home. However, this same disregard for increased childcare and home-schooling was present for women in their job roles, yet as primary caregiver still carried out home-schooling whilst still being expected to be as productive as they would be in 'normal times'.

"How can we work to the level we were doing when we have children that need more time and emotional support. No acknowledgement from my employer of this."

To make up for this women might be working more at home or forced to leave their jobs as stated by this participant:

"I have had to give up work due to needing to look after my daughter. I am a single parent and have anxiety and depression and panic attacks and Covid-19 has made it worse."

In any circumstance this is difficult but during a pandemic when there is already economic instability during the height of lockdown and going forward the looming rates of unemployment, the impact is harder.

It was also reported that whilst school vouchers were helpful, there was still difficulty in managing the increased cost of living during the pandemic:

"My rent increased just before lockdown, my four teenage children are at home and eating more, we're using more electric because we're at home and yet the amount of benefits I receive has remained the same. I lose approximately £300 a month due to the cap and have found it a lot harder to budget during lockdown. The vouchers from my children's schools has helped but I am spending a lot more money on food and am only just managing."

Some women reported being trapped in a mentally abusive relationship and abuse increasing at home during the pandemic.

"My husband is still working and has told me that he hopes he'll bring Covid-19 home, because it'd be okay if it hurt or killed me.
My husband usually behaves worse at weekends, but now I'm on the receiving end of his passive-aggressive behaviour (sulking, crying, blaming etc.) almost every day."

Other comments made in response to the impact of coronavirus largely include increased feelings of isolation and fear, leading people to feel anxious. The mental health impacts of this can last longer than someone would anticipate, providing further support for long-term investment into mental health services as mentioned previously.

Bibliography

Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms. *Doing feminist research, p.*30-61. London: Routledge.

Duncombe, J., Marsden, D. (1995). 'Workaholics' and 'whingeing women': Theorising intimacy and emotion work — the last frontier of gender inequality? *The*

Sociological Review. 43 (1), p.150-169.

Oakley, A (1974). *The Sociology of Housework.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2019) *English indices of deprivation 2019.* Office for National Statistics.

Fontinha, R., Walker, J., (2019) Four Better or For Worse?. *Henley Business School.* [https://www.henley.ac.uk/news/2019/four-day-week-pays-off-for-uk-business] Accessed 23.09.2020.

Rose, W., McAuley, C. (2019) Poverty and its impact on parenting in the UK: Re-defining the critical nature of the relationship through examining lived experiences in times of austerity. *Children and Youth Services Review.* (97). p.134-141.

Power, M., Doherty, B. Pybus, K., Pickett, K., (2020) How COVID-19 has exposed inequalities in the UK food system: The case of UK food and poverty. *Emerald Open Research.* 2 (11).

Bowles, S., Gintis, H. (1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America.* London: Routledge.
ter Haar, A. (2020) Making flexibility work in the 'new normal'. *People Management.* [https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/voices/comment/making-flexibility-work-in-the-new-normal] Accessed 23.09.2020.

ONS in: Devine, B. F., Foley, N. (2020) *Women and the economy.* House of Commons.

Ashmore, B. (2018) 'Using technology to create safer cities for girls'. *Plan International.* [https://plan-uk.org/blogs/using-technology-to-create-safer-cities-for-girls] Accessed 24.09.20.

Serafino, P. (2019) [2018] Exploring the UK's digital divide. *Office for National Statistics.*

The World Bank (2020) Poverty Overview. *The World Bank.* [https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview] Accessed: 23.09.2020.

Dr. Victoria Bateman in: Aspinal, G. (2020*)* How will the recession impact women? An economist explains. *Grazia Daily.* [https://graziadaily.co.uk/life/in-the-news/recession-impact-uk-women] Accessed: 30.10.2020.

Ginger Comms, Bloody Big Brunch, Hey Girls in: Watson, H. (2019) 1 in 3 women in Leicester 'can't afford sanitary products during their period'. *Leicestershire Live.* [https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/1-3-women-leicester-cant-2574161] Accessed: 30.10.2020.

Action for Trans Health. (2020) Housing and Homelessness. *Action for Trans Health.* [https://actionfortranshealth.org.uk/resources/for-trans-people/housing/] Accessed: 30.10.20].

NHS (2018) Miscarriage. *NHS.* [https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Miscarriage] Accessed 30.10.2020.

Hoffmann, D. E., Tarzian, A. J. (2001) The girl who cried pain: A bias against women in the treatment of pain. *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics.* 29 (1), p.13-27.

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust in: Thomas, T. (2020) Cervical cancer: minority ethnic women more likely to miss screenings in pandemic. *The Guardian.* [https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/aug/25/cervical-cancer-bame-women-more-likely-to-miss-screenings-amid-pandemic] Accessed: 30.10.20.

Mental Health Policy Group (2020) 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review. *Rethink.* [https://www.rethink.org/get-involved/campaign-with-us/resources-and-reports/mental-health-policy-group-2020-comprehensive-spending-review/] Accessed: 30.10.20.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

No specific financial implications arise from this report. The research should be taken into consideration when making future policy and strategy decisions, and any costs should be included as required. Similarly, any specific initiatives that might arise should be costed and funding identified at the time. - Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance, tel. 0116 454 4081

5.2 Legal implications

The Women Talking, City Listening is a research project funded by the Government Equalities Office with the aim to learn about the barriers faced by women and how women can be better supported in the City. The research has been split thematically into the specific areas it consulted on. This report summaries the findings of the consultation and research which has been annexed to the report. Officers have derived a number of recommendations specific to each theme / area it had identified following the research.

The summary report in section 2 has explained that the main recommendation is that the Local Authority should use the research in future policies and strategies.

Whilst the research is not legally binding, the Local Authority can use the findings of the research to assist in developing future policies. Further legal advice should be sought at the time as and when these policies develop.

It is worth noting that some of the recommendations within the report would be applicable to the Council, some which the Council may have influence over (eg VCS groups etc) and some which fall outside its remit (eg the changing of legislation)

Suraiya Ziaullah, Solicitor, 0116 454 1487

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

There are no significant climate change implications directly relating to the presentation of this report. However, many of the issues raised and recommendations made will have significant links to the council's sustainability work, for example where they cover access to public transport, digital inclusion and homeworking, street lighting and various other areas. These implications should be considered individually when assessing implementation of the recommendations made.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

5.4 Equalities Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which means that, in carrying out their functions decision makers have to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The report makes a number of recommendations which support the aims of the PSED and other duties placed on public authorities under the Equality Act 2010, including responsibilities under the equality Act as an employer. Whilst the report specifically focuses on the experiences of women, a number of intersectionalities are identified and the project involved women from a range of different backgrounds with different characteristics and identities. It is worth noting that some of the recommendations within the report would be applicable to the Council, some which the Council may have influence over (eg. VCS groups, employers in the City etc) and some which fall outside its remit (eg. the changing of legislation). Different organisations may have different levels of responsibility under the Equality Act.

The Local Authority can use the findings of the research to assist in developing future policies and projects and can be utilised to improve service delivery from an equalities perspective. Further equalities advice should be sought on any proposals for changes to or new policy, practice, projects or provision developed arising from this research. In many cases, new proposals or changes to existing policy and provision are likely to require equality impact assessment to ensure that any disproportionate negative impacts for any protected characteristic groups are identified and mitigated, opportunities to progress equality of opportunity are maximised and to ensure that due regard to the PSED is paid before and at the time a decision is taken.

Hannah Watkins, Equalities Manager ext 37 5811

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

187

Interview Schedule – Focus Groups

Family and Community
- Tell me about your family, growing up.
- Do you think men and women are treated differently? When did you realise this? In what ways are they treated differently, and by who?
- What kind of responsibilities do you have for your family now?
- Do family commitments hold you back from doing anything you want to do?
- Do you worry about what your community may think or say about you if you act in a certain way?

Education
- How important was it to you in doing well at school?
- Why did you take those subjects? (i.e. was it what your friends were doing, were you encouraged into those particular subjects by anyone, were you most passionate about them?)
- Were there any subjects you wanted to take but didn't? Why? (Intimidation; ridiculed; self-doubt; 'male', fear of being the only girl; judgement)
- Were you involved with any school clubs?
- Did you face any difficulties at school? How well were you supported? How did that support end? (i.e. additional needs, reasonable adjustments, bullying and discrimination, mental health, sexuality)

Relationships and sexuality (partners)
- How do you feel about the relationships in your life? (friendships/relationships)
- How supportive is your relationship or have previous relationships been?
- How much control does your partner have over your children, activities, or finances?
- Every couple argues at times – what are your arguments like at home?

Relationships – peers (friendships)
- How would you describe your friendships? HA
- What does a good friend mean to you?
- How satisfied are you with your friendships? Has it always been that way?

Paid work, unpaid work and pension
  <u>Current Job:</u>
- What are your working hours like? Why is that?

- Tell us about your experience of finding work right for you.
- Have you ever not taken an opportunity to progress your career? And if yes, why? (If collective 'no', why is that?)
- Do you think women and girls are discouraged from becoming leaders? Why?
- Do you act differently at work? If so, why? (Behavioural changes)

Maternity:
- How did you feel about having to tell your organisation about your pregnancy, or if you haven't had a child, but think you may in the future, how do you feel about having to potentially tell your organisation about your pregnancy?
- If you had a child with a partner and you both work, how did you split up parental leave with your partner?
- If you took maternity leave, what did you do after your maternity leave had finished? Were you encouraged by anyone to follow a particular path?
- What was your experience in returning to work after maternity leave?
- How did you feel emotionally during pregnancy and after?

Motherhood/Caring
- Do you feel any expectation to have a baby, or that people expect you will have a baby?

Volunteering
- Do you do any volunteering work, and if so, what?

Pension/Finance
- If you are not doing any paid work or have had to take breaks from paid work (for instance to care for the house, your children or other family members), how has this made you feel about your state pension?
- If you care for a dependent, what kind of support do you receive to do this? (benefits, financial support from partner, respite, support network)
- What kind of support could help you to live your life as you wish?

Role Models and Aspirations
- If nothing held you back, where would you like your 'future you' to be?
- Do you think you'll be able to achieve this?
- What would need to change for you to be able to achieve this?
- Do you feel there are expectations to be a certain way, or to fulfil a certain role? (Yes: what do you think is expected of you – and where is that coming from?

Mental health/Image
- Do you feel like there's a certain way you're supposed to look or act? What is that ideal, and where do you think it comes from?
- Do you try to look or act in the way you think you're expected to?

- Have you ever been concerned about your moods, and turned to someone for help? (If yes, who did you turn to, and how supportive were they? If no, why did you decide not to?)

Pursuing Interests
- Talking about things you enjoy, is there anything you would like to do, but feel that you can't? Why can't you do that activity?
- Do you feel that you can't pursue any of your interests because you're concerned about your safety? (if 'yes', how do you feel your safety is at risk? What do you do to avoid that risk?)

Safety/Crime/Violence
- Have you ever been harmed by someone?
- Has anyone close to you ever threatened or hurt you?
- Thinking back to a time that has made you feel unsafe – what would have helped to make you feel more safe?

Physical health
- How comfortable do you feel talking about women's personal health issues (i.e. periods, menopause, health)?
- Has being on, or expecting your period, ever impacted your ability to do something?

Generic
- What stresses do you currently experience?
- Do you feel constrained (held back) in any way?
- Do you think you've been treated differently to other people? In what way?
- Are there any other issues you've experienced as a woman that we haven't discussed, and you'd like to share?

Women Talking, City Listening – Data Collection Guidance

Introduction
The purpose of this document is to provide you with a step-by-step guide on how to collect data on our behalf and feedback to us. References in **bold** will be made to one of the documents in the data collection pack folder. Those of you collecting data on our behalf will be referred to as 'community champions'.

We request that community champions are female as there is a genuine occupational requirement (GOR). This is due to community champions potentially engaging with women who have experienced domestic or sexual abuse, who may feel uncomfortable disclosing such information otherwise.

Project aim
The project aims to identify the barriers and challenges that women in Leicester face to enable us to make effective recommendations as to how women and girls can be better supported and given equal access to opportunities.

Project information
Leicester is one of three cities that won funding from the Government Equalities Office (GEO) to carry out the City Listening Project. This is a one-year project which started in September 2019 and will end in September 2020.

We want to speak to those that identify as females, aged 18 and above across Leicester. The barriers and challenges women face cover a range of areas, any and all areas women feel are important to them.

We will analyse the data we collect and set out a series of recommendations in a research report, informing of the ways in which women can be better supported. This report will be presented to our City Mayor, other LCC executives, GEO and any relevant organisations. There will also be a report made available to the public. We hope these organisations and bodies take the recommendations on board to implement policy change and initiatives both locally in Leicester and nationally.

Data collection
Please ensure you have read, understood and signed a copy of the data processing agreement and that this his been sent to us before you start any data collection.

Introduction and consent
1. Introduce the project. Please refer to the **consent statement in the data collection pack folder.** It is important you go through all the points on this

document to ensure participants are fully aware of what they are taking part in. If there are no objections, check they are happy to proceed. You can email participants a copy of the consent statement, but you must read it out to them first and make a note of whether they give consent or not.

2. Answer any questions the participant(s) might have. Please refer to the **information sheet in the data collection pack folder.** A lot of frequently asked questions are answered here. If, however you feel you cannot answer the question, get in touch with us on 0116 454 4178. We are available Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm.

   Inform us if you will be having a discussion with someone outside of these hours. Where possible, we will arrange for someone to be on standby to answer any questions. If we are unavailable, make a judgement as to whether you feel it would be wrong to continue the discussion without answering the question. If so, end the session and re-arrange for another time.

3. Ask participants if they want us to include their name in our acknowledgements page of the report. If so, what name would they like to use? They can use their first name only, full name or create a fake name so that only they would be able to identify themselves. Make note of their choice and share the information with us. You must always keep information safe and secure.

The interview process

4. The structure of these interviews is 'semi-structured'. You can ask questions to explore areas that are being said by the participant in more detail. However, it is important to ensure these are not leading questions. A leading question is when you are asking a question in such a way to gain a desired response. Keep the questions open ended to allow for women to think and speak as freely as they want.

5. Don't push for an answer if you find participants are unwilling to share. They are free to answer questions with as much information as they feel comfortable to share during the entire process. They can also decline in answering a question.

6. Please refer to the **interview schedule in the data collection pack.** Begin by asking the first question. This will give you an insight into areas of their life that might be worth exploring further.

7. The questionnaire is a loose guide and does not need to be followed strictly. It is normal not to cover all questions listed, if you feel you have covered the main areas and areas raised by participants, this will suffice.

192

8. When we have carried out these interviews or focus groups in person, they usually last anything between 1 and a half to 2 hours. This allows us to collect rich and in-depth data. However, there is no real time restriction or expectation, as mentioned above women are free to speak as much as they would like. You should allocate a maximum of 2 hours for the discussion but don't feel you are restricted to this time frame. When you are at the end ask if there are any additional points the participant(s) would like to make that may not have been covered already.

Data storage and use

9. All data must be kept in a safe and secure location and/or device. You must always uphold confidentiality and anonymity. If there is any information that identifies who someone is, we will remove this information.

10. You should ensure where possible, discussions take place in a setting where there is privacy. This can be difficult when working from home, if others cannot hear the conversation, this will suffice.

   You should **not** share any information that you learn through the discussion with anyone other than the research team or participant(s), unless there is a genuine safeguarding requirement to do so. This is only the case where you are quite sure the participant/ other people may come into significant harm; disclosure of petty crime is not a reason to breach confidentiality.

11. To record what is being said you can write or type notes. If you have access to an audio recorder, you can also audio record the conversation. Though if you are having a telephone interview, audio recording will probably not be possible.

   However, if this is something you can do, think about how you can protect recordings i.e. storing them in a password-protected folder and speak to us if you have any concerns about how to safely store data. To see how to manage audio recorded data, see point 14.

12. It would be best if you make notes on a word document, this will make it easier for you to share with us. However, if you want to handwrite the notes and then type them up, please do so. You should type them up as soon as possible so the conversation is still fresh in your mind. Hence, typing as you have a conversation will probably be best. All notes need to provide us with enough information to understand the conversation and key points.

For example, on a document you could write 'Q1.' and then make notes. 'Q2.' followed by notes and so on. Make sure you write down any questions not on the interview schedule.

    a. Discard any handwritten notes in a confidential waste bin or shredder. If this is not immediately possible, keep them in a secure and safe location until the opportunity to destroy them arises.

    b. If and once you have typed your notes up, you must ensure that they are kept in a secure location on your PC or device. An example of this is a password protected device. You may want to add a password on the document or on the folder in which you keep all notes for this project.

13. Once you have typed your notes up, send them to us **as soon as possible.** If you have created a password for the document or folder, please remember to share this with us to access the document.

14. If you have a recording device, you can record the conversation between you and the participant. Ideally this should be done in an area where there is minimal background noise. Once the session is over you can send the recording to us and we will manage the data from here onwards.

15. Once you have shared data with us, we will confirm that we have had the opportunity to read through it. At this point we will also ask you to delete **all** data that you have and ensure you remove it from the recycle bin. Failure to delete and discard of the data you have collected will result in action as you have signed the data processing agreement.

Debrief, withdrawal and safeguarding.

16. Please refer to the **debrief sheet in the data collection pack folder.** Once your discussion with the participant is over it is important that you debrief them and thank them for their time, speaking to you and trusting you.

17. You should provide a verbal summary to participants. Where possible you need to email a copy of the debrief sheet to participants.

18. Please refer to the **list of safeguarding resources in the data collection pack folder.** Where possible also email a copy of the safeguarding resources to the participant. This is so that they can seek further help and assistance if they feel they have been impacted in any way by the discussion. If you are aware of a service not already on the safeguarding database, please contact us so we can update our list– we want our support to be as comprehensive as possible.

a. If they do not have an email address select a few services you feel might be relevant if any, based on the discussion you had with them and provide them with details of services.

19. It is important that you remind participants they have until the research report is written to withdraw their data from the project. They don't need to have a reason for this. We will delete it with no questions asked.

20. Regardless of whether you have emailed a copy or gone through the information verbally, tell participants should they have any further questions or concerns to contact the City Listening Team on our contact details provided below.

21. Ask participants if they would like to receive further information or any updates about the project and if so whether they are happy for you to share their contact details with us. For example, an email address or contact number.

22. **You must always comply with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Leicester City Council's privacy notice can be found [here](#), outlining how we follow GDPR.**

<u>Our contact details:</u>
Email: womentalking@leicester.gov.uk
Call: 0116 454 4178

We are hugely appreciative that you can collect data on our behalf. By doing so, you are helping us to reach women in the city we might not have access to speak to. This also helps us to shape the way forward towards gender equality and giving women the opportunity to have their voices heard.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this document and I hope it has provided you with the confidence and all the information you need. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Many thanks,
Halima Abowath
City Listening, Project Officer.

Women Talking, City Listening – Dialogue Questions

Title	**Education**
Idea	- How important was doing well at school for you? - How long were you expected to stay on in school? - Why did you choose to study the topics you did? - Was there anything you wanted to do with your education but didn't? - How could you have been better supported in school?
Why the contribution is important	These are just a few ideas to get you thinking about your experience of learning. You're welcome to answer as many of the above questions as you like, write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.
Title	**Family and community**
Idea	- How able are you to be yourself around your family? Has it always been that way? - Are there any parts of you, or your life, you have had to hide from your family? - What kind of responsibilities do you have for your family? - Do family commitments hold you back from doing anything you want to do? - Do you worry what your community may think or say about you?
Why the contribution is important	Family means different things for different people. These are just a few ideas to get you thinking about the immediate people around you who matter. You're welcome to answer as many of the above questions as you like, write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.
Title	**Relationships and sexuality**
Idea	- Talking about partners, what is your experience of being in a relationship? - Is there any difference between what you expect of a partner and what you have experienced? - How supportive have you found your current or past relationships? - How much say does your partner have in decision making? - Has your partner, or a previous partner, ever made you feel unsafe? If yes, how were you supported with this?

	• Have you experienced any unjust treatment linked to who you choose to be with, or your sexual identity?
Why the contribution is important	Relationships should be a source of joy, care and support - though sometimes, this doesn't match our experiences. These are just a few ideas to get you thinking about your sexual identity, relationship experiences and expectations of a partner. You don't need to have experienced a relationship to talk about relationships and your sexuality. You're welcome to answer as many of the above questions as you like, write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.
Title	**Paid work**
Idea	• What is your experience of finding work that is right for you? • How do you feel about your current job? If you're unhappy in it, do you feel able to find another job? • Is your job as secure as you would like? • Are there enough opportunities for you to progress your career? What could help you? • Are women discouraged from becoming leaders? • How do you feel about your pension?
Why the contribution is important	Whatever your experience of working life, your opinion matters. These are just an idea to get you thinking about working life. You're welcome to answer as many of the above questions as you like, write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.
Title	**Parenting**
Idea	• Do you feel any expectation to have a baby, or that people expect you will have a baby? • How has being a mother, or a potential mother, impacted your life? • If you have had a baby, how did you feel emotionally the first few months after giving birth? • What was your experience of telling work about your pregnancy?
Why the contribution is important	Being a parent is a demanding role, whether it be with a partner or alone. These are just a few ideas to get you thinking about your experiences. You're welcome to answer as many of the above questions

	as you like, write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.
Title	**Goals and aspirations**
Idea	 - If nothing held you back, where would you like your 'future self' to be? - Do you think you'll be able to achieve this? - What would need to change for you to be able to achieve this? - Do you feel there are any expectations on you to be a certain way, or to fulfil a certain role?
Why the contribution is important	We all have hopes for our future, and those close to us are likely to have hopes for us too. These could be hopes linked to our career, our family, our personal interests, our health, or another thing that is important to us. These are just a few ideas to get you thinking about what you would like to achieve. You're welcome to answer as many of the above questions as you like, write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.
Title	**Image and mental health**
Idea	 - Do you feel like there's a certain way you're supposed to look or act? What is that ideal, and where do you think it comes from? - Do you try to look or act in the way you think you're expected to? - Have you ever been concerned about how you view yourself and turned to someone for advice? What was your experience of this?
Why the contribution is important	These are just a few ideas to get you thinking about how you view yourself. You're welcome to answer as many of the above questions as you like, write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.
Title	**Safety**
Idea	 - Do you go out of your way to avoid feeling unsafe, and if so, what kind of things do you do? - Thinking back to a time that has made you feel unsafe – what would have made you feel more safe?
Why the contribution	Personal safety is something we all think about, and it can

is important	affect the choices we make in how we choose to live our lives. These are just a couple of ideas to get you thinking about how safety may impact on your life, how you are supported to feel safer, and how you could be better supported to feel confident and safe. You're welcome to answer either or both of the questions above, write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.
Title	**Your health**
Idea	 • How comfortable do you feel talking about women's health issues? • Have you ever felt like you should go to the doctor but decided not to, perhaps due to embarassment or other time constraints like work or parenting? • If you are sexually active, how much say do you have in the use of contraceptives, and the type of contraceptive used? • Has your period or your experience of menopause ever impacted your ability to do something?
Why the contribution is important	These are just a few ideas to get you thinking about your health, and how able you feel to express and address your health needs. You're welcome to answer as many of the above questions as you like, write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.
Title	**Caring responsibilities**
Idea	 • Do you care for anyone (as a carer) what has this experience been like and has it impacted the way you pursue your aspirations? • If you care for a dependent, what kind of support do you receive to do this? (benefits, financial support from partner, respite, support network) • What kind of support would help you with caring responsibilities?
Why the contribution is important	Being a carer is an important aspect to the lives of many people and can be quite demanding. Ensuring that you are well supported is important. These are just a few ideas to get you thinking about your caring role and responsibilities. You may not have cared for someone else, but may be thinking about having to in the future - you can share your thoughts on this too. You're welcome to answer as many of the above questions

	as you like, write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.
Title	**Volunteering (unpaid work)**
Idea	• Do you do any volunteering work, and if so, is there a reason you choose to do this? • Do you carry out any paid work alongside this? • Are there any other forms of unpaid work that you carry out?
Why the contribution is important	Volunteering is just as important as paid work and so all experiences and views are equally important. This is just one idea to get you thinking about volunteering. You're welcome to write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.
Title	**Faith**
Idea	• What are your experiences of religion and faith? • Do you think there is equality?
Why the contribution is important	You're welcome to answer either of these questions, write about something else that's related, or make a suggestion. Thank you for voicing your thoughts.

200

About You:
Postcode and EM DATA.

Aspirations/ Goals
1. If there was nothing stopping you, what would you like to achieve?
2. What would support you to achieve these aspirations/ goals?
3. Does anything stop you from pursuing these aspirations/ goals now?

Community and Culture
4. Does your community or culture have any impact on what you choose to do in your life? If 'Yes' or 'Sometimes', how so?

Covid-19
5. What affect has the coronavirus (covid-19) had on you as a female?

Education
6. What is your experience of the education system? (i.e. apprenticeships, university) For example, how do/ did you feel supported / have access?

Employment:
7. What is your employment status?
8. Have you ever taken maternity leave? If yes, how did your employer react? What was it like when you returned to work?
9. In your experience, what's it like being a woman in the workplace?

Expectations:
10. Do you feel there are expectations placed upon you? If 'Yes' or 'Sometimes', what are they and where do they come from?

Family:
11. Do family commitments ever hold you back from pursuing anything? If 'Yes' or 'Sometimes', how so?

Finance:
12. Do you feel financially secure? If 'Yes' or 'sometimes', how so?
13. How much do you know about your pension?
14. What are your views on your pension (if applicable)?

Health and well-being:
15. What is your experience of accessing healthcare? (i.e. speaking to health professionals, getting the right help, being able to speak fully about a problem)
16. Women experience certain health issues and cycles. Have any of the following ever impacted your life in any way (for example ability to pursue something)?
Periods, menopause, abortion, miscarriage, other.
17. How do you feel about your mental health and the support that is available? Has this ever impacted your ability to pursue something? If 'Yes' or 'Sometimes', in what way?

Parental leave:
18. How do/ did you split up parental leave or childcare arrangements?
19. How satisfied are/ were you with your childcare arrangements?

Relationships:
20. What impact have relationships and friendships had on you? (for example, positive, negative, supportive, demanding, etc)
21. How have they affected how you pursue your interests?

Responsibilities:
22. Overall, what are your responsibilities and what impact do they have on you? (for example. Childcare, carer, household duties, etc.)

Safety:
23. How do you feel (or have your felt) about your safety as a woman? (for example, at home, at work, socialising, etc)
24. Are there any places/ times you feel unsafe?
25. What would help make you feel safer?

General questions:
26. Generally speaking, have you ever felt held back in any way?
27. Do you have any comments on other issues you have experiences as a woman that we have not covered?

Women Talking (Focus group postcodes)
- 10 to 17 (4)
- 3 to 9 (11)
- 1 to 2 (20)

City Listening (Online consultation postcodes)
- 2 (3)
- 1 (161)
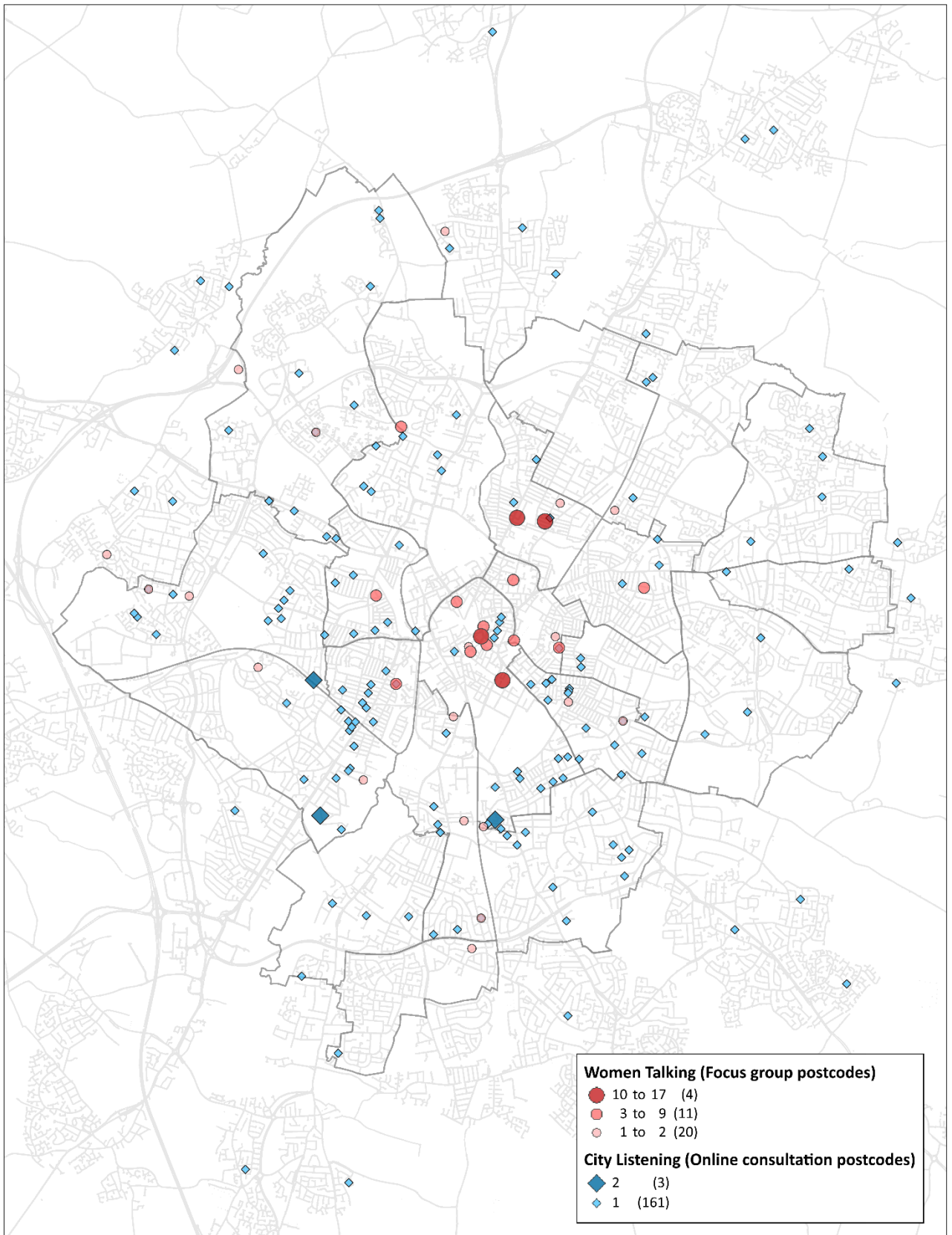
City Listening/Women Talking project
(Postcode mapping - City wide)

Date: 18/09/2020
Paper Size: A3
Scale: 1:45000
By: JR

Leicester City Council
Neighbourhood & Environmental Services
Standards & Development

APPENDIX E – City Wide Responses

Women Talking (Focus group postcodes)

- 10 to 17   (4)
- 3 to 9   (11)
- 1 to 2   (20)

City Listening (Online consultation postcodes)

- 2   (3)
- 1 (161)
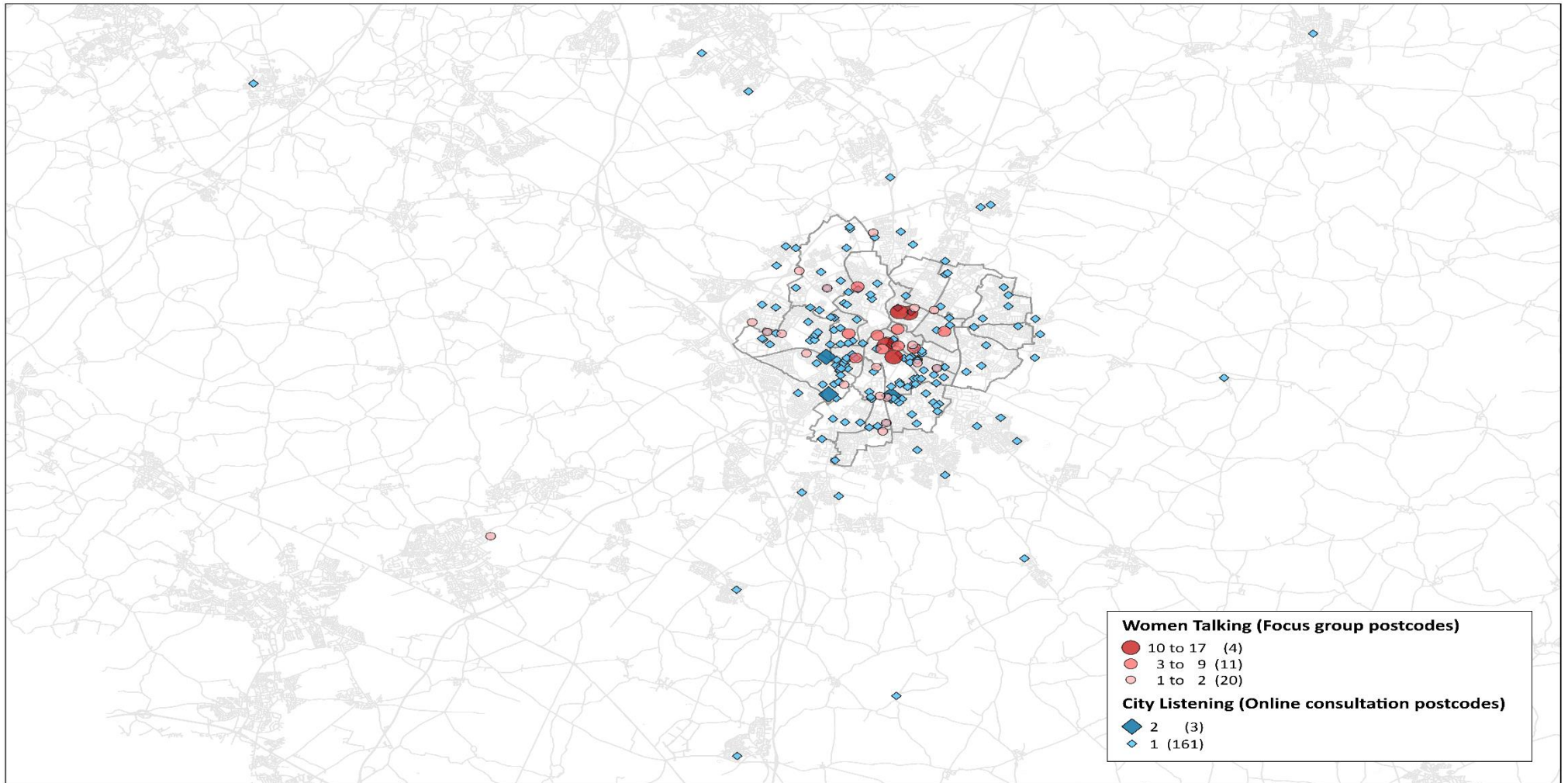
This map is (based upon) Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Leicester City Council. 100019264 (2020).

City Listening/Women Talking project
(Postcode mapping - all responses)

Date: 18/09/2020
Scale: 1:145000
Paper Size: A3
By: JR

Leicester City Council
Neighbourhood & Environmental Services
Standards & Development

APPENDIX F – City and County Wide Responses

Women Talking, City Listening – Participant Demographics

A total of 330 participants shared their views with us as part of the project, the different ways in which women engaged can be seen in table 1. All participants identified as female. 174 identified as the same sex assigned at birth, 4 identified to a different sex than assigned at birth, 42 preferred not to answer and we were unable to gather data from 110 participants. This can be seen in figure 1.

TYPE OF ENGAGEMENT	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	ADDITIONAL INFO
Focus groups/ 1-1 interviews	134	33 focus groups hosted, some of which were 1-1 interviews
Online consultation survey	175	
Dialogue	15	A total of 26 contributions made from 15 participants
Telephone interviews	5	
Email	1	
TOTAL:	**330**	

Table 1: The number of participants that engaged with the project through different types of engagement.
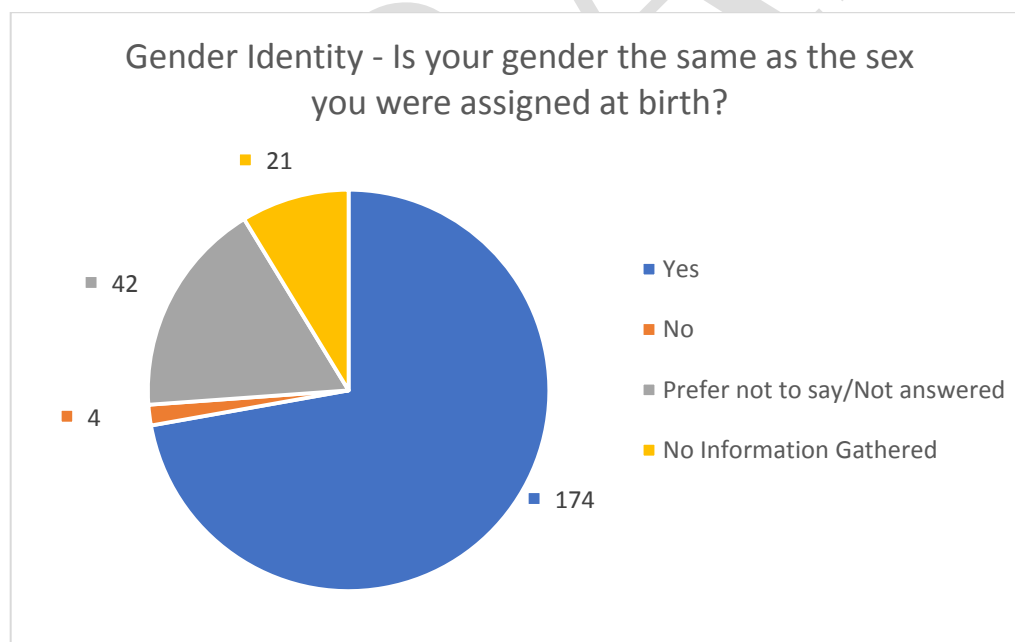
Figure 1: Responses to 'Is your gender the same as the sex you were assigned at birth?'

All participants were over the age of 18, the average age was 26.42, excluding the age category for participants from the 65+ age group. Age group data had to be combined due to discrepancies in the way age data was collected. This meant the final age categories had an overlap by a year. As it was only a year overlap this was not

deemed to be a significant issue. We were unable to collect age data from 110 participants. A breakdown of participants age can be seen in figure 2.

There was an underrepresentation of LGBT+ women. 16.06% of women identified as having a disability(/ies), 48.79% stated they did not and 0.91% did not answer. With regards to LGBT+ there was an underrepresentation, sexual orientation can be seen in figure 3.There was a fair representation of women from a range of ethnic background, this can be seen in figure 4.
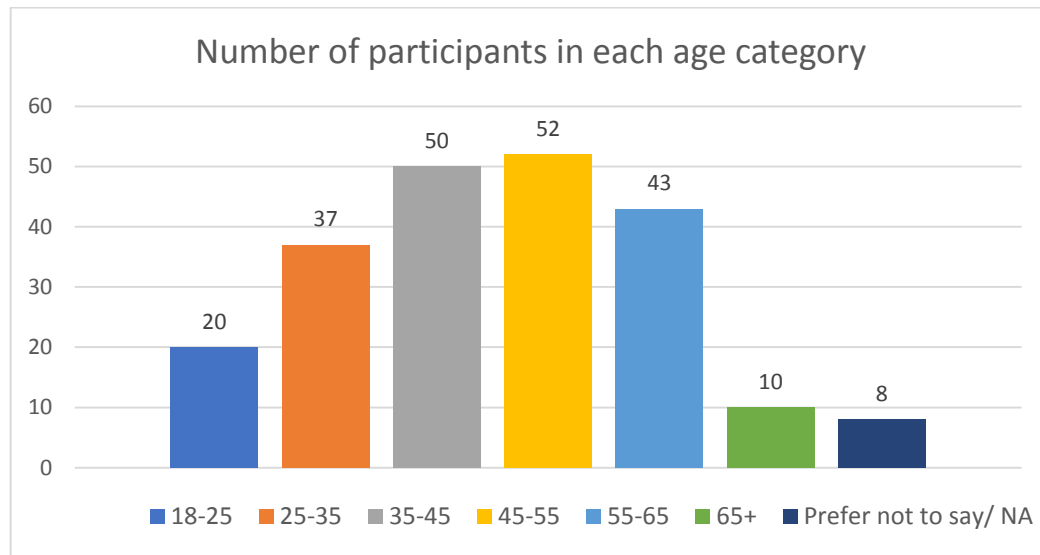
Figure 2: The number of participants in each age category.
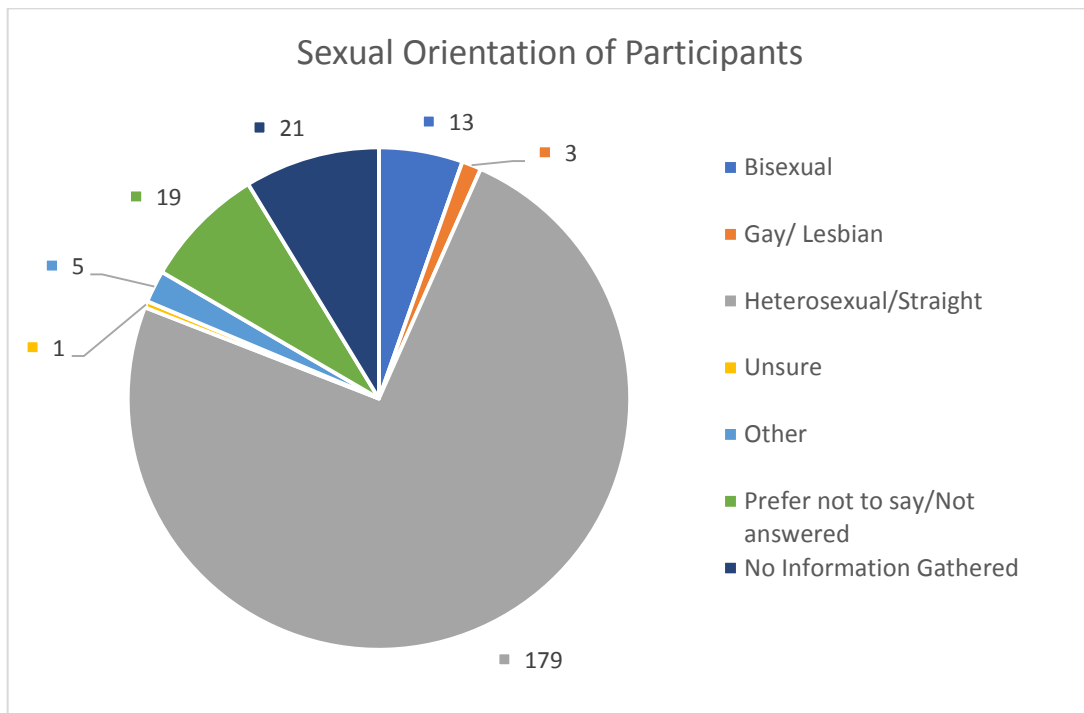
Figure 3:Sexual orientation of participants.
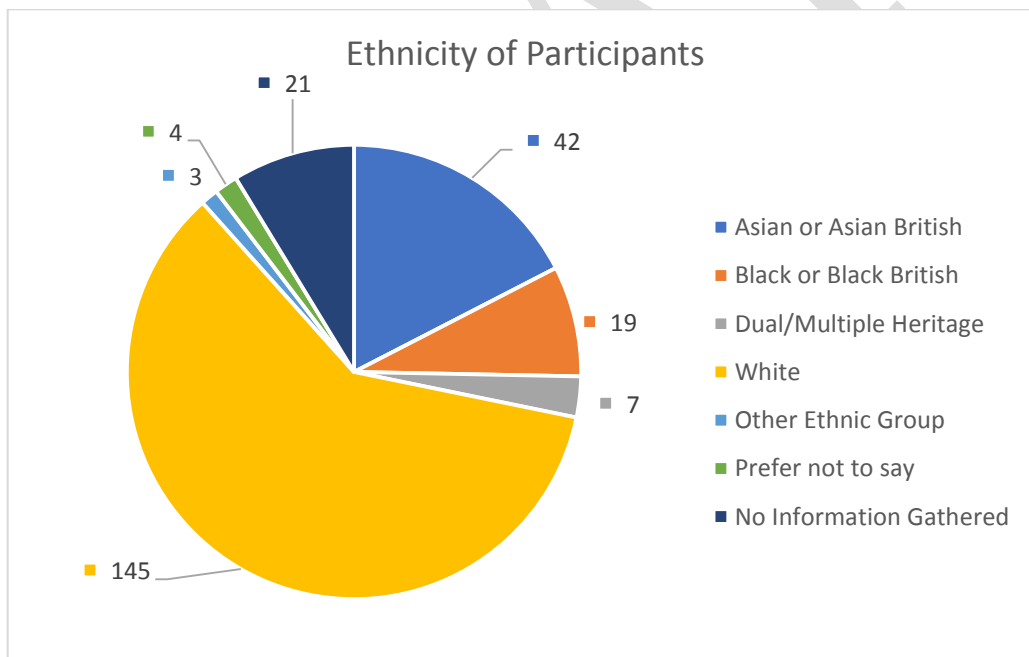
Figure 4: Ethnic background of participants.

Whilst we were unable to collect data specifically surrounding income, researchers that attended face-face research sessions established most women were from B, C1, D and E social grades (middle class – unemployed): gathering a god amount of our face to face research from those unemployed, or seeking employment via community groups and recruitment agency meetings. Other women were found to be in employment within low-middle class jobs.

Revenue Budget Monitoring April-September 2020/21

For consideration by Overview Select Committee

on: 3rd December 2020

Lead director: Director of Finance

1. Summary

This report is the second in the monitoring cycle for 2020/21 and forecasts the expected performance against the budget for the year. This report was written before the second lockdown was announced and therefore the impact of this is not reflected in the forecasts, although it is noted this is likely to increase the current forecast overspends, especially for those areas that are required to close again such as leisure centres.

The year has continued to be dominated by the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. The financial projection is currently anticipating an overspend of around £35m on service expenditure in 2020/21, which is almost entirely due to the pandemic. When coupled with the impact of council tax support and local tax collection, total costs will comfortably exceed £40m. We will also need to make a contribution to the capital programme to meet the cost of contractual price increases (see the separate report on your agenda). Our cost estimates continue to be provisional and will depend on when we get back to normal as costs could further increase if the second wave intensifies and we face further lockdowns. We also do not know what impact the pandemic will have on next year's budget: how changes to behaviour might affect our income, and how an economic downturn will affect our ability to collect future debt. Further cost in 2021/22 appears inevitable.

The pandemic has affected local tax collection in addition to service expenditure. The impact is becoming clearer but is still subject to a large number of assumptions about the remainder of the year and therefore volatile. Additional council tax support is forecast to cost us £1.5m, which could track upwards if there are redundancies once the furlough schemes end. Council tax collection was 3.4% behind the position in 2019/20 at the end of September (£4.9m); business rate collection was 4.9% behind (£3.4m). However, the Council will continue to collect outstanding tax and some of these losses will be recuperated in later years; some of the eventual cost will be borne by the police and fire authorities, and (in the case of rates) the Government. Nonetheless, we expect to have to make substantial extra provision for bad debts. The cost of council tax support and bad debt provisions affect later years' budgets. We are expecting some (unspecified) government support and the Government has confirmed that these losses can be spread over three years if needed, not the usual one. It is planned to set some funding aside this year to help meet these costs.

The Government has provided some additional funding to meet authorities' costs, with a total of £33m of unringfenced funding being provided to contribute to the total costs. In addition, the Government is partially compensating us for losses in income: the actual figure will depend on our final losses. This scheme does not compensate for losses in commercial rents.

Any balance of spending will fall to the Council to meet. As a well-managed authority, members have always approved a reserves strategy, and made monies available to meet the unexpected. At present, we do not believe residual costs will be unaffordable.

Our approach to monitoring the costs of the pandemic are as follows:

(a) Extraordinary costs which the Council would not normally incur have been charged to a new budget. This has been used to record costs such as the food hub, IT to support working from home and accommodation for rough sleepers;

(b) Costs of a type the Council normally incurs have been recorded as part of normal budgets, which will consequently overspend. In practice, this has only applied to adult social care;

(c) Departmental budgets will also overspend as a consequence of income shortfalls caused by the pandemic. Chief ones are for facilities that continue to be shut or those that have been and continue to see reduced demand (De Montfort Hall and leisure centres being the major ones) but other services such as parking have also been severely affected.

It was our intention to make a series of adjustments to departmental budgets at period 6, to ensure departments are compensated for pandemic costs (net of any expected savings). However, due to the continued uncertainty over costs and losses of income it is proposed to delay this, so costs can be monitored closely at divisional level.

The Government has also provided additional funds for specific purposes, which do not affect our overall forecast (unless the additional funds prove to be insufficient). These include:

(a) £82m for business support grants (£76m main scheme spend, £3.7m discretionary, £2.6m local lockdown);

(b) £48m for additional rate reliefs;

(c) £4m to provide further council tax reductions to those in receipt of council tax support;

(d) £7.3m for infection control in adult social care establishments;

(e) £3m to support national test and trace.

2. Recommended actions/decision

2.1 The Executive is recommended to:

- Note the emerging picture detailed in the report.

2.2 The OSC is recommended to:

Consider the overall position presented within this report and make any observations it sees fit

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

N/A

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

The General Fund budget set for the financial year 2020/21 was £282.4m.

Appendix A summarises the budget for 2020/21.

Appendix B provides more detailed commentary on the forecast position for each area of the Council's operations.

5. Detailed report
See appendices

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

This report is solely concerned with financial issues.

Alison Greenhill, Director of Finance, Ext 37 4001

6.2 Legal implications

This report is solely concerned with financial issues.

6.3 Equalities implications

No Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out as this is not applicable to a budget monitoring report.

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

This report is solely concerned with financial issues

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

No other implications are noted as this is a budget monitoring report, and therefore no policy changes are proposed.

7. Background information and other papers:

Report to Council on the 19th February 2020 on the General Fund Revenue budget 2020/2021.
Period 4 Monitoring presented to OSC on 24th September 2020.

8. Summary of appendices:

Appendix A – Period 6 (April-September) Budget Monitoring Summary;

Appendix B – Divisional Narrative – Explanation of Variances

9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

10. Is this a "key decision"? If so, why?

No

Revenue Budget at Period 6 (April – September), 2020/21

2020-21	Current Budget	Forecast	Variance
	£000's	£000's	£000's
Financial Services	11,147.9	11,279.0	131.1
Information Services	9,190.3	9,190.3	0.0
Human Resources & Delivery, Communications & Political Governance	9,912.4	9,884.4	(28.0)
Legal Services	2,745.2	3,203.6	458.4
Corporate Resources & Support	**32,995.8**	**33,557.3**	**561.5**
Planning, Development & Transportation	14,498.8	23,743.5	9,244.7
Tourism Culture & Inward Investment	4,117.6	7,889.6	3,772.0
Neighbourhood & Environmental Services	32,095.5	33,593.0	1,497.5
Estates & Building Services	4,667.1	6,039.6	1,372.5
Departmental Overheads	1,021.0	708.3	(312.7)
Housing Services	2,591.8	2,958.9	367.1
City Development & Neighbourhoods	**58,991.8**	**74,932.9**	**15,941.1**
Adult Social Care	**107,275.9**	**112,024.9**	**4,749.0**
Strategic Commissioning & Business Support	1,296.0	1,332.3	36.3
Learning Services	11,050.3	15,319.9	4,269.6
Children, Young People & Families	65,510.2	63,626.3	(1,883.9)
Departmental Resources	1,042.6	1,080.4	37.8
Education & Children's Services	**78,899.1**	**81,358.9**	**2,459.8**
Public Health & Sports Services	**23,379.5**	**26,052.9**	**2,673.4**
Housing Benefits (Client Payments)	500.0	500.0	0.0
Total Operational	**302,042.1**	**328,426.9**	**26,384.8**
Corporate Budgets	3,061.8	3,061.8	0.0
Additional COVID- 19 related costs (new budget)	0.0	8,159.0	8,159.0
Capital Financing	6,316.5	6,316.5	0.0
Total Corporate & Capital Financing	**9,378.3**	**17,537.3**	**8,159.0**
Public Health Grant	(26,599.0)	(26,599.0)	0.0
Managed Reserves Strategy	(2,377.4)	(2,377.4)	0.0
TOTAL GENERAL FUND	**282,444.0**	**316,987.8**	**34,543.8**

NB – Unringfenced Government grants of £33m will assist with meeting this forecast overspend, along with any support for income losses.

Divisional Narrative – Explanation of Variances

Corporate Resources and Support

Corporate Resources Department is forecasting an overspend of £0.6m on a budget of £33m.

1. Finance

1.1 The Financial Services Division is forecasting a net overspend of £0.1m. An overspend of £0.6m is forecast for delayed recovery of local tax– the division budgets for income from summons costs, which is not currently being received. This overspend is reduced by a number of vacancies generating an estimated saving of £0.5m.

2. Information Services

2.1. Information Services is forecasting a balanced outturn. Specific costs of £0.7m in support of the Council's operations during COVID-19 have been charged directly to the new COVID-19 account and are included in section 13 of this report.

3. Human Resources, Delivery Communications & Political Governance (DCPG)

3.1. The two areas of the division are forecasting a net underspend of £28k. This has occurred after underspends within the Division have funded the Digital Transformation Team. This has largely occurred due to the slowing down in recruitment of apprentices (£329k) and additional income of £146k from traded activity by HR Operations and Health and Safety.

4. Legal, Registration & Coronial Services

4.1. The Legal Services Division is forecasting an overspend of £172k due to the loss of income estimated at £320k in Registration Services, Local Land Charges and Property Planning due to COVID-19. This has been offset by vacancies of £139k in Registration services. The loss of income is not as severe as previously forecast, as actual activity has started to increase.

4.2. Coronial Services are forecasting an overspend of £286k due to high costs in pathology tests and increased workload including additional COVID-19 costs. This is a continued pattern of recent times. The

overspend will be funded from Corporate Budgets in line with normal policy.

City Development and Neighbourhoods

The department is forecasting an overspend of circa £16m on a net budget of £59m. This is an improvement upon the position reported at Period 4. Divisionally, the position is as follows:

5. Planning, Development and Transportation

5.1. The division is forecasting an income shortfall of £9.2m largely due to forecast losses in number of areas as a result of COVID-19, including car parks, bus lane enforcement, on street parking income, park and ride income and planning fees.

6. Tourism, Culture & Inward Investment

6.1. The division is forecasting a shortfall of £3.8m largely due to forecast income losses in number of areas as a result of COVID-19, including De Montfort Hall, the KRIII Visitor Centre and the markets. Some operational cost savings from closure of facilities have also resulted, which have offset the income losses to a small extent.

7. Neighbourhood & Environmental Services

7.1. The Division is forecasting an overspend of £1.5m, mainly due to forecast loss of income as a result of COVID-19 in areas including Building Control and Neighbourhood Services. There is a cost risk in waste management, as a number of contractual matters are under discussion and review. Some operational cost savings from closure of facilities have also resulted, which have offset the income losses to a small extent.

8. Estates & Building Services

8.1. The division is forecasting an overspend of £1.4m due largely to lower capital fees as capital schemes are delayed due to COVID-19 and the overall size of the programme being supported by the Division has proved to be lower than assumed in the budget. Risks to rental income from the Corporate Estate due to COVID-19 are noted at this stage, pending further analysis and consideration.

9. Departmental Overheads

9.1. This holds the departmental budgets such as added years' pension costs, postage and departmental salaries. Savings of around £0.3m are expected.

10. Housing General Fund

10.1. The Housing General Fund is forecast to overspend by £0.4m. Fleet services is expected to overspend by £0.5m as a result of repair costs on older vehicles, hire costs and prudential borrowing for the vehicle replacement programme. Additional grant income and staffing underspends within homelessness services will be partially offset by £0.4m of additional temporary accommodation costs resulting in a forecast underspend of £0.1m.

11. Housing Revenue Account

11.1. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced income and expenditure account relating to the management and maintenance of the Council's housing stock. The HRA is forecasting to overspend by £0.5m, excluding revenue used for capital spending (which is reported in the capital monitoring report).

11.2. Rental income is forecast to be £0.5m lower than budget due to the closure of Border House, reduced collection rates of hostel rent during lockdown, and increased void levels within general housing stock. Rent arrears have increased by £0.4m since April, largely as a result of COVID-19.

11.3. The Repairs & Maintenance Service is forecast to break even. As reported at period 4, spend on external contractors will be £0.7m lower than the budget. Underspends on staffing contribute £0.3m and materials a further £0.6m. Catching up on the backlog of work that has accumulated on tenanted properties during lockdown will cost £0.7m, plus a further £0.5m of maintenance costs on void properties. Income to the repairs service is £0.4m below budget due to reduced capital work and chargeable work being undertaken.

11.4. Management and Landlord services are predicted to overspend by £0.6m. The cost of council tax on void properties will exceed the budget by £0.4m and staffing costs in the property lettings team will be £0.2m over budget. In addition, £0.4m of COVID-19 costs on temporary

accommodation have been incurred, offset by underspends on staffing across tenancy management and STAR.

11.5. The interest payable by the HRA on its debt is forecast to be £0.6m lower than the budget.

Adult Social Care

12. Adult Social Care

12.1. Adult Social Care is forecasting to spend £4.7m on additional COVID-19 costs. During the pandemic additional payments have been made to domiciliary care providers, residential home providers, supported living and shared lives providers. This has taken the form of a 10% fee uplift which is intended to cover costs including those for additional PPE and agency staff from higher staff sickness absence. Domiciliary care providers also received a four-week advance payment to ease cash flow issues. The first ring-fenced infection control fund received by the Council of £3.7m has been paid out as directed by the Department of Health and Social Care, principally to residential home providers, but also to domiciliary care and supported living providers and this is intended to cover additional COVID-19 related costs incurred up to the end of September. A second infection control fund of £3.6m to cover the period from October to March 2021 will be given to councils in two tranches to distribute to care home providers and community care providers (domiciliary care and supported living).

12.2. People discharged from hospital since 19 March who required adult social care have received that care free of charge. For those who were already receiving adult social care prior to hospital admission, any charge to the person post-discharge has been stopped. For those discharged who were new to adult social care, the division has paid for their care package and then re-charged the NHS via the CCG. These arrangements came to an end on 1 September and anyone still requiring an ongoing package of care will be subject to the normal financial assessment process, although the backlog of cases will take some time to process. Hospitals will still discharge people back home as rapidly as possible with an initial package of care if required, which the NHS will pay for, but only for up to six weeks, until the person is assessed to determine whether an ongoing care package is necessary.

12.3. The number of new people using services during the first six months who are still receiving care is 14% higher than at the same point last year.

218

Over one third of these are from hospital discharges and this appears to have offset any reduction in new entrants from the normal community route as a result of the lock down period. The number of people leaving long-term care was broadly in line with the same period as last year, although the proportion of those exiting residential care was higher.

12.4.   The net in numbers of people using services was 2.7% (138) in the first six months which is equivalent to the full year growth seen in 2019/20. When those additional new people who were discharged from hospital have been assessed we will be in a better position to judge the full year impact on growth. The forecast assumes a return to previous growth trends in the second half of the year.

12.5.   The increase in the level of need of existing people using services was nearly 5.9% in 2019/20 (£6.5m), an increase of 0.4% from 2018/19. The rate of increase in need and the number of existing people with services seeing a change of package in the first six months is broadly in line with that seen at the same point last year. The forecast assumes that the rate of increase will conclude at 5.9% for the year in line with previous trends.

12.6.   Excluding the additional COVID-19 costs, the forecast gross package costs remain as per the budget of £133.7m, although there may be some savings if the current number of residential packages is sustained. This will become clearer as we approach the year end. No other significant variations in costs forecast at this stage in totality for care management, preventative services or other support costs.

Education and Children's Services

13. Education and Children's Services

13.1.   The department is forecasting to spend £81.5m, £2.5m more than the budget. £1.8m of the overspend relates to additional COVID-19 costs and £0.7m to non COVID-19 related costs of which £0.7m of departmental reserves will be used to offset the non COVID-19 related costs.

13.2.   **COVID-19 related additional costs**
As a result of the pandemic and the impact on the local economy the review of the Connexions service has been postponed with the loss of £0.24m of savings. The new charging arrangements for the Education Welfare service have been postponed for a year which, together with the loss of penalty notice income results in a £0.49m unbudgeted cost.
Whilst there are underlying pressures on the SEN home to school transport budget as outlined below, the impact of the pandemic has been

twofold. Firstly, taxi firms reduced their charges in June and July to reflect the reduction in activity and this resulted in an average 50% cost reduction for those months. Secondly additional segregation of children on the in-house transport fleet has required more taxi capacity estimated to cost an additional £0.75m.

13.3. **Non COVID-19 related additional costs.**
Additional unbudgeted resources have been deployed in the Special Education Service in 2020/21 to deal with a backlog of Education, Health and Care plan assessments and reviews which total £0.7m. The budget for the SEN home to school transport cost has been under severe pressure since 2018/19 from growth in demand. The current forecast underlying shortfall in the SEN home to school transport budget is £2.2m, with an estimated total spend of £9.3m. Savings in Social Care and Early Help and Performance totalling £2.2m (mainly staffing) reduce the non- COVID-19 over-spend to £0.7m.

13.4. The net increase in care entrants during the first six months was 1, with 622 placements at the period end. At this stage of the year overall placement costs are still forecast to be as per the budget at £33.9m.

13.5. Since the start of term City Catering has been serving on average only 70% of the number of meals pre-COVID. It is estimated that there will be an income shortfall of £0.4m on paid school meals compared to pre COVID levels and an overall loss of at least £0.3m compared to the budgeted break-even position.

Public Health & Sports Services

14. Public Health & Sports Services

14.1. Public Health is forecasting to spend £20.4m, £0.5m less than the budget of £20.9m. The underspend is mainly as a result of vacant lifestyle coordinators and advisor posts in the Integrated Lifestyle services team and a vacant commissioning manager and programme officer post in the main public health team. Three additional support posts have been recruited to support the test and trace programme which is being met by Government specific grant.

14.2. The costs of the sexual health service provided by Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust during the lock down are subject to ongoing negotiations as activity levels have been low during this period. The current forecast does not assume any reduction in budgeted cost at this stage, but this will be updated for the next forecast when the picture is clearer - a similar story applies to GP provided health checks which are also below normal activity levels.

14.3. Leisure centres re-opened on a phased basis from the middle of September with reduced services and programme offer in place to support a COVID secure operation. The reduced activity operating model is set to continue into 2021 with uncertainty remaining around future restrictions for leisure facilities.

14.4. Health and fitness membership in October has reduced by 50% from pre-COVID levels and swimming lessons are forecast to reduce by 40%. Overall activity levels in October are around 30% of the same period last year. There is clearly uncertainty over how quickly and to what extent service users will return to the centres. The best current estimate means a forecast income of £1.5m for the year, £4.8m less than the budget of £6.3m. Whilst this is offset with savings in casual staff who were employed elsewhere during lockdown (and will not return at the same level initially for group exercise instruction and for swimming lessons) and savings in running costs (mainly utilities) which together total £1.6m, Sports as a whole are forecasting a £3.2m overspend to March 2021.

14.5. In early July, the city was placed in extended lockdown, and an extensive local testing operation was launched. The costs of this have been recorded in the central budget for pandemic costs.

Corporate Items & Reserves

15. Corporate Items

15.1. The corporate budgets cover the Council's capital financing costs, items such as audit fees, bank charges and levies. There is no significant change forecast at this stage.

15.2. Since the start of the year, an additional corporate budget has been created for costs created by the pandemic. This has recorded all costs which have been incurred as a direct consequence of the pandemic, other than those which cannot be distinguished from normal departmental activity (the chief exclusion is social care costs, which continue to be charged to the department). All income shortfalls also fall to departments.

15.3. The table below summarises the types of expenditure recorded, and the estimated final cost:

Type of Expenditure	Forecast

	£000's
Food Hub	1,471
Community mobilisation	150
Accommodation	1,202
IT costs	653
Communications	379
Property costs including PPE	2,001
Security	260
Staffing	871
Other	47
Sub-Total	**7,034**
Costs of Extended Lockdown	
Communications	395
Reducing Transmissions	250
Supporting Self Isolators and the Vulnerable	100
Supporting testing	380
Other	0
Sub-Total	**1,125**
Total	**8,159**

Capital Budget Monitoring April-September 2020/21

For consideration by: Overview Select Committee

on: 3rd December 2020

Lead director/officer: Director of Finance

Useful information
- Ward(s) affected: All

- Report author: Amy Oliver

- Author contact details: amy.oliver@leicester.gov.uk / 0116 454 5667

1. Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to show the position of the capital programme for 2020/21 as at the end of September 2020 (Period 6).

1.2 This is the second capital monitoring report of the financial year. A further quarterly report and an outturn report will be presented as the year progresses.

1.3 The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the capital programme, with many schemes delayed. Some £25.8m slippage has been reported on work programmes, the chief reason for which is the pandemic. A number of projects have had to revise their forecast completion dates, some of these schemes are now showing as green as the revised dates have previously been reported. This will have an impact on capacity to deliver additional schemes next year as we make up for lost time.

1.4 Work is continuing to monitor any additional cost pressures as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some schemes are expected to suffer contractual cost increases.

2. Recommended actions/decision

2.1 The Executive is recommended to:

- Note total spend of £56.9m for the year.
- Approve an increase in the budget for Jewry Wall of £2.5m for additional works, to be paid for with Business Rates Pool funding.
- Approve addition of £1,251k to assist with making homes warmer, energy bills cheaper whilst reducing carbon emissions, to be funded by Government Grant, see Appendix B, para 3.2.
- Approve the addition of £1.1m to Connecting Leicester, funded from additional government grant through the Active Travel Fund. This funding will be used to make some of the pop-up cycling and walking routes permanent, along with stopping traffic rat-running through neighbourhoods.
- Approve addition of £1,500k for improving historic buildings, funded by grant from Historic England, Appendix A, Planning, Development and Transportation, para 2.2.
- Approve the transfer of £349k of the Emergency Active Travel Fund Grant from Highways Maintenance to Connecting Leicester, See Appendix A, Planning, Development & Transportation, para 2.1.

The OSC is recommended to:

- Consider the overall position presented within this report and make any observations it sees fit.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement
N/a

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

4.1 The 2020/21 Capital programme was initially approved by Council on 19th February 2020. It has subsequently been amended (including the 2019/20 outturn).

The capital programme is split in the following way:

(a) Schemes classified as '**immediate starts'**, which require no further approval to commence; and

(b) A number of separate '**policy provisions**' which are not released until specific proposals have been approved by the Executive.

4.2 Immediate Starts are further split into:

(a) **Projects**, which are discrete, individual schemes such as a road scheme or a new building. Monitoring of projects focusses on delivery of projects on time and the achievement of milestones. Consequently, there is no attention given to in-year financial slippage;

(b) **Work Programmes**, which consist of minor works or similar on-going schemes where there is an allocation of money to be spent during a particular year. Monitoring of work programmes focusses on whether the money is spent in a timely fashion;

(c) **Provisions**, which are sums of money set aside in case they are needed, where low spend is a favourable outcome rather than indicative of a problem;

(d) **Schemes which are substantially complete**. These schemes are the tail end of schemes in previous years' capital programmes, usually consisting of small amounts of money brought forward from earlier years.

4.3 A summary of the total approved 2020/21 capital programme as at Period 6 is shown below:

	£000
Projects	170,465
Work Programmes	142,245
Provisions	202
Schemes Substantially Complete	23,557
Total Immediate Starts	**336,469**
Policy Provisions	38,878
Total Capital Programme	**375,347**

4.4   The following changes have occurred to the capital programme since Outturn:

	£000
Connecting Leicester addition	5,100
Highways Maintenance addition	1,882
Parks and Open Spaces addition	724
Leicester North West addition	675
Phoenix 2020 addition	400
Transport Improvement addition	50
Net Movements	**8,831**

These movements are included in the table at 4.3 above.

4.5   The following appendices to this report show progress on each type of scheme:
- Appendix A – Projects
- Appendix B – Work Programmes
- Appendix C – Provisions
- Appendix D – Projects Substantially Complete
- Appendix E – Policy Provisions

4.6   This report only monitors policy provisions to the extent that spending approval has been given, at which point they will be classified as projects, work programmes or provisions.

4.7   <u>Capital Receipts</u>

4.7.1   At Period 6, the Council has realised £6m of General Fund capital receipts. These receipts are not required to fund the current programme. In line with our policies, with the exception of any earmarked receipts, these are set aside for future capital programmes.

4.7.2   "Right to Buy" receipts from sales of council housing have amounted to £5.4m received in year.

5. Detailed report
N/A

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

This report is solely concerned with financial issues.

Alison Greenhill, Director of Finance, 37 4001

6.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

Emma Jackman, Head of Law (Commercial, Property and Planning), 0116 454 1426

6.3 Equalities implications

No Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out as this is not applicable to a budget monitoring report.

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

This report is solely concerned with financial issues.

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

No other implications are noted as this is a budget monitoring report, and therefore no policy changes are proposed.

7. Background information and other papers:

Capital Programme 2020/21 presented to Council on 19th February 2020.

Housing Revenue Account Budget (including Capital Programme) 2020/21 presented to Council on 19th February 2020.

2019/20 Capital Monitoring Outturn Report presented to OSC on 29th July 2020.

2020/21 Capital Monitoring P4 Report presented to OSC on 24th September 2020.

8. Summary of appendices:

- Appendix A – Projects
- Appendix B – Work Programmes
- Appendix C – Provisions
- Appendix D – Projects Substantially Complete

- Appendix E – Policy Provisions

9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No.

10. Is this a "key decision"? If so, why?

Yes. Expenditure exceeding £1m is proposed which has not been specifically approved by Council.

PROJECTS

1. Summary

1.1 As stated in the cover report, the focus of monitoring projects is physical delivery, i.e. whether they are being delivered on time, on budget and to the original specification. This appendix summarises progress on projects. Project summaries provided by departments/divisions are shown on pages 11-22 within this Appendix.

Department / Division	Total Budget £000	2020/21 Spend to Date £000
Corporate Resources	1,516	575
Smart Cities	200	0
Adult Social Care	2,510	0
Planning, Development & Transportation	97,874	11,893
Tourism, Culture & Inward Investment	22,931	267
Neighbourhood & Environmental Services	2,123	0
Estates & Building Services	6,709	2,238
Children's Services	24,446	1,784
Public Health	1,985	892
Housing Revenue Account	10,171	2,940
Total	**170,465**	**20,589**

1.2 A list of the individual projects is shown in the table on pages 9-10 of this report. This also summarises the progress of each project. Attention is drawn to expected completion dates and any project issues that have arisen.

1.3 A colour-coded rating of progress of each project has been determined, based on whether the project is progressing as expected, and whether it is still expected to complete within budget.

1.4 The ratings used are:

(a) **Green** Successful delivery of the project on time, within budget, to specification and in line with original objectives seems very likely. There are no major issues that appear to threaten delivery significantly.

(b) **Amber** Successful delivery of the project on time, within budget, to specification and in line with original objectives appears probable. However, some risks exist and close attention will be required to ensure these risks do not materialise into major issues threatening delivery. Alternatively, a project is classed as amber if some insubstantial slippage or minor overspend is probable.

229

(c) **Red** Successful delivery of the project on time, within budget, to specification and in line with original objectives appears to be unachievable. The project is expected to require redefining, significant additional time or additional budget.

(d) **Blue** The project is complete.

(e) **Purple** The project is on hold, for reasons which have nothing to do with management of the capital programme. Examples include reconsideration of whether the project is still needed as originally proposed, or withdrawal of a funder.

2. Summary of Individual Projects

Dept/ Division	Project	Total Budget (£000)	2020/21 Spend (£000)	Forecast O/(U)spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	Previous Reported RAG Rating	Project RAG Rating @ P6
CRS	Cash Income Management System	566	0	0	Jan-20	Dec-20	Purple	Purple
CRS	Corporate LAN/WAN Network Cisco Infrastructure Replacement	600	296	0	Dec-21	Dec-21	Green	Green
CRS	Corporate Storage Area Network (SAN) Replacement	350	279	0	Jun-21	Oct-20	Green	Blue
SC	Smart Cities Pilot Projects	200	0	0	Dec-20	Mar-21	Amber	Green
ASC	Extra Care Schemes	2,510	0	0	Aug-20	Aug-22	Amber	Green
CDN (PDT)	Leicester North West Major Transport Scheme	5,778	2,934	0	Mar-20	Mar-21	Green	Green
CDN (PDT)	Connecting Leicester	64,185	4,380	0	Nov-20	Mar-23	Green	Green
CDN (PDT)	Waterside Strategic Regeneration Area	9,892	1,424	0	Mar-23	Mar-23	Green	Green
CDN (PDT)	St George's Churchyard	812	0	0	Aug-18	Mar-22	Amber	Amber
CDN (PDT)	Ashton Green	625	140	0	Mar-21	Mar-21	Green	Green
CDN (PDT)	Pioneer Park	2,466	180	0	Jan-21	May-21	Green	Green
CDN (PDT)	Pioneer Park Commercial Workspace (formerly Dock 2)	4,832	1,987	0	Spring 18	May-21	Green	Green
CDN (PDT)	Ashton Green Highways Infrastructure	8,584	848	0	Mar-21	Nov-21	Amber	Amber
CDN (PDT)	City-wide Parkmap TRO review, signs and lines upgrades	200	0	0	Mar-21	Jun-21	Amber	Green
CDN (PDT)	North West Leicester Regeneration Area	500	0	0	Mar-22	Mar-22	Green	Green
CDN (TCI)	Jewry Wall Museum Improvements	14,235	26	0	Mar-23	Mar-23	Green	Green
CDN (TCI)	Leicester Market Redevelopment	2,916	138	0	Dec-21	Jun-22	Amber	Green
CDN (TCI)	Abbey Pumping Station	246	0	0	Mar-19	TBC	Purple	Purple
CDN (TCI)	Gresham Business Workspace	250	0	0	Mar-21	Sep-21	Green	Amber
CDN (TCI)	Onsite Construction Skills Hub	1,000	0	0	Dec-22	Dec-22	Green	Green
CDN (TCI)	New Walk Museum Phase 1	2,439	0	0	Mar-22	Mar-22	Green	Green
CDN (TCI)	Museums Security Programme	125	0	0	Nov-21	Nov-21	Green	Green
CDN (TCI)	Visit Leicester Relocation	320	28	0	Nov-21	Nov-21	Green	Green
CDN (TCI)	Growth Hub	1,400	75	0	Jun-23	Jun-23	Green	Green
Total		**125,031**	**12,732**	**0**				

Dept/ Division	Project	Total Budget (£000)	2020/21 Spend (£000)	Forecast O/(U)spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	Previous Reported RAG Rating	Project RAG Rating @ P6
CDN (NES)	St Mary's Allotments	507	0	0	Jul-19	Mar-21	Green	Green
CDN (NES)	Abbey Park Precinct Wall	546	0	0	Mar-22	Mar-22	Green	Green
CDN (NES)	Library RFID Self-Service System	330	0	0	Mar-21	Mar-21	Green	Green
CDN (NES)	Library Improved Self-Access Pilot	210	0	0	Mar-21	Jun-21	Amber	Green
CDN (NES)	Reuse Shop Expansion	530	0	0	Jul-20	Nov-21	Amber	Green
CDN (EBS)	Haymarket House, Car Parks & Lifts	3,797	2,210	0	Mid-20	Nov-20	Green	Green
CDN (EBS)	Demolition of Former Anchor Recovery Centre	49	2	0	Jun-20	Nov-20	Amber	Green
CDN (EBS)	Housing Estate Shops	905	0	0	Mar-22	Mar-22	Green	Green
CDN (EBS)	Touchdown Project	50	0	0	Mar-21	Mar-22	Green	Amber
CDN (EBS)	Haymarket Theatre - Internal Completion Works	574	17	0	Mar-21	Oct-21	Amber	Amber
CDN (EBS)	Haymarket Bus Station - Toilet Expansion and Refurbishments	446	9	0	Dec-20	Mar-21	Amber	Green
CDN (EBS)	Climate Emergency - Carbon Reduction Fund	888	0	0	Mar-22	Mar-22	N/A	Green
ECS	Additional SEND Places (including Pupil Referral Units)	15,310	1,125	0	Dec-19	Mar-22	Green	Green
ECS	Overdale Infant and Juniors School Expansion	3,534	54	0	Nov-21	Mar-22	Amber	Green
ECS	Expansion of Oaklands Special School	4,675	0	0	Mar-22	Sep-22	Amber	Green
ECS	Children's Residential Homes	879	605	0	Aug-20	Nov-20	Amber	Blue
ECS	New Parks House	48	0	0	Jan-21	Jan-21	Green	Green
PH	Leisure Centre Improvement Programme	2,656	892	0	Mar-20	Jun-21	Amber	Green
PH	Leisure Centre Air Handling Units	400	0	0	Mar-20	Jul-21	Amber	Amber
Total (excluding HRA)		**161,365**	**17,646**	**0**				
CDN (HRA)	St Leonard's Tower Block - Lift	528	17	0	Mar-18	Sep-21	Amber	Green
CDN (HRA)	Goscote House Demolition	2,844	183	0	Jan-20	Jan-22	Amber	Green
CDN (HRA)	New House Build Council Housing	4,746	2,688	(1,411)	Apr-20	Nov-20	Green	Green
CDN (HRA)	Tower Block Sprinkler Systems	1,322	23	0	Apr-22	Apr-22	Green	Green
CDN (HRA)	Property Conversions	481	29	0	Mar-22	Mar-22	Green	Green
CDN (HRA)	Feasibility Study for Sheltered Housing	250	0	0	Apr-22	Apr-22	Green	Green
Total HRA		**10,171**	**2,940**	**(1,411)**				
Total (including HRA)		**171,536**	**20,586**	**(1,411)**				

Commentary on Specific Projects

3.1 Explanatory commentary for projects that are not currently progressing as planned, or for which issues have been identified, is provided in the next pages. This has been defined as any scheme that has a RAG Rating other than "green" or "blue".

Capital Programme Project Monitoring 2020/21 Period 6

Corporate Resources

1. **Projects Summary**

Project Name	Approval 2020/21 (£000)	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	RAG Rating
Cash Income Management System	566	0	Jan 2020	Dec 2020	P
Corporate LAN/WAN Network Cisco Infrastructure Replacement	600	0	Dec 2021	Dec 2021	G
Corporate Storage Area Network (SAN) Replacement	350	0	June 2021	Oct 2020	B
Total	**1,516**	**0**			

2. **Projects Commentary** (for **all** projects rated Amber, Red or Purple).

   2.1 Cash Income Management System - This project has been paused to enable the resources to focus on the COVID-19 pandemic work.

Capital Programme Project Monitoring 2020/21 Period 6

Smart Cities

1. **Projects Summary**

Project Name	Approval 2020/21 (£000)	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	RAG Rating
Smart Cities Pilot Projects	200	0	Dec 2020	March 2021	G
Total	**200**	**0**			

2. **Projects Commentary** (for **all** projects rated Amber, Red or Purple).

Capital Programme Project Monitoring 2020/21 Period 6

Adults

1. **Projects Summary**

Project Name	Approval 2020/21 (£000)	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	RAG Rating
Extra Care – Two Schemes	2,510	0	Aug 2020	Aug 2022	G
Total	**2,510**	**0**			

2. **Projects Commentary** (for **all** projects rated Amber, Red or Purple).

Capital Programme Project Monitoring 2020/21 Period 6

Planning, Development & Transportation

1. Projects Summary

Project Name	Approval 2020/21 (£000)	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	RAG Rating
Leicester North West Transport Scheme	5,778	0	March 2020	March 2021	G
Connecting Leicester	64,185	0	Nov 2020	March 2023	G
Waterside	9,892	0	March 2023	March 2023	G
St George's Churchyard	812	0	Aug 2018	March 2022	A
Ashton Green	625	0	March 2021	March 2021	G
Pioneer Park	2,466	0	Jan 2021	May 2021	G
Pioneer Park Commercial Workspace	4,832	0	Spring 2018	May 2021	G
Ashton Green Highways Infrastructure	8,584	0	March 2021	Nov 2021	A
City-wide Parkmap TRO review, signs and lines upgrades	200	0	March 2021	June 2021	G
North West Leicester Regeneration Area	500	0	March 2022	March 2022	G
Total	**97,874**	**0**			

2. Projects Commentary (for **all** projects rated Amber, Red or Purple).

2.1 The council received £349k of Emergency active travel fund grant, which was added to the Highways Maintenance budget. However, the spend is more suited to the Connecting Leicester programme, as it is focussed on walking and cycling schemes. Approval is sought to reallocate this grant to the Connecting Leicester budget.

2.2 The Legacy Routes Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) is a four year heritage led regeneration programme, from April 2020 to April 2024, funded by Historic England. This will focus on the Granby Street and Church Gate areas of the city. The programme will include grants for building repair and restoration of historic features, bringing buildings and upper floors back into use, community engagement, training,

promotion and public realm improvements. Approval is sought to add this to the capital programme.

2.3 **St George's Churchyard -** A reduced-scale project is now expected to be delivered, including churchyard environmental improvements (including tree management, establishing a useable open space and path improvements), together with related street art and signage in the Cultural Quarter.

2.4 **Ashton Green Highways Infrastructure** - The project forecast completion date has been extended in line with funding extensions from Homes England. This project has been funded from £10m of government grant, and any additional costs will be funded from prudential borrowing and later repaid with capital receipts. A decision to increase the budget will be sought at the time should any additional costs be realised as a result of delivery risks, COVID-19 or additions to scope.

238

Capital Programme Project Monitoring 2020/21 Period 6

Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment

1. Projects Summary

Project Name	Approval 2020/21 (£000)	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	RAG Rating
Jewry Wall Museum Improvements	14,235	0	March 2023	March 2023	G
Leicester Market Redevelopment	2,916	0	Dec 2021	June 2022	G
Abbey Pumping Station	246	0	March 2019	TBC	P
Gresham Business Workspace	250	0	March 2021	Sep 2021	A
Onsite Construction Skills Hub	1,000	0	Dec 2022	Dec 2022	G
New Walk Museum Phase 1	2,439	0	March 2022	March 2022	G
Museums Security Programme	125	0	Nov 2021	Nov 2021	G
Visit Leicester Relocation	320	0	Nov 2021	Nov 2021	G
Growth Hub	1,400	0	June 2023	June 2023	G
Total	**22,931**	**0**			

2. Projects Commentary (for **all** projects rated Amber, Red or Purple).

2.1 Jewry Wall Museum Improvements – It is proposed to increase the scheme budget by £2.5m, to be funded from business rates pool monies.

2.2 Abbey Pumping Station - RIBA phase 3 design work has been put on hold pending a review of options to allow greater visitor numbers, that are currently limited.

2.3 Gresham Business Workspace - The project forecast completion date has been extended due to delays caused by COVID-19.

Capital Programme Project Monitoring 2020/21 Period 6

Neighbourhood and Environmental Services

1. **Projects Summary**

Project Name	Approval 2020/21 (£000)	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	RAG Rating
St Mary's Allotments	507	0	July 2019	March 2021	G
Abbey Park Precinct Wall	546	0	March 2022	March 2022	G
Library RFID Self-Service System	330	0	March 2021	March 2021	G
Library Improved Self-Access Pilot	210	0	March 2021	June 2021	G
Reuse Shop Expansion	530	0	July 2020	Nov 2021	G
Total	**2,123**	**0**			

2. **Projects Commentary** (for **all** projects rated Amber, Red or Purple).

.

Capital Programme Project Monitoring 2020/21 Period 6

Estates and Building Services

1. **Projects Summary**

Project Name	Approval 2020/21 (£000)	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	RAG Rating
Haymarket House, Car Park and Lifts	3,797	0	Mid 2020	Nov 2020	G
Demolition of Former Anchor Recovery Centre	49	0	June 2020	Nov 2020	G
Housing Estate Shops	905	0	March 2022	March 2022	G
Touchdown Project	50	0	March 2021	March 2022	A
Haymarket Theatre - Internal Completion Works	574	0	March 2021	Oct 2021	A
Haymarket Bus Station - Toilet Expansion and Refurbishments	446	0	Dec 2020	March 2021	G
Climate Emergency – Carbon Reduction Fund	888	0	March 2022	March 2022	G
Total	**6,709**	**0**			

2. **Projects Commentary** (for **all** projects rated Amber, Red or Purple).

2.1 **Touchdown Project** - The project has been delayed due to COVID-19.

2.2 **Haymarket Theatre – Internal Completion Works** - The project has been delayed due to a change of scope and the theatre operating company going into liquidation.

Capital Programme Project Monitoring 2020/21 Period 6

Children's Services

1. ## Projects Summary

Project Name	Approval 2020/21 (£000)	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	RAG Rating
Additional SEND Places (including Primary Pupil Referral Unit)	15,310	0	Dec 2019	March 2022	G
Overdale Infant and Juniors School Expansion	3,534	0	Nov 2021	March 2022	G
Expansion of Oaklands Special School	4,675	0	March 2022	Sept 2022	G
Children's Residential Homes	879	0	Aug 2020	Nov 2020	B
New Parks House	48	0	Jan 2021	Jan 2021	G
Total	**24,446**	**0**			

2. **Projects Commentary** (for **all** projects rated Amber, Red or Purple).

Capital Programme Project Monitoring 2020/21 Period 6

Public Health

1. **Projects Summary**

Project Name	Approval 2020/21 (£000)	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	RAG Rating
Leisure Centre Improvement Programme	2,656	0	March 2020	June 2021	G
Leisure Centre Air Handling Units	400	0	March 2020	July 2021	A
Total	**3,056**	**0**			

2. **Projects Commentary** (for **all** projects rated Amber, Red or Purple).

   2.1 **Leisure Centre Air Handling Units** – This project has been delayed due to COVID-19. The bulk of this funding is to be spent at Evington Leisure Centre, with works expected to start by March 2021, to be completed by July 2021.

Capital Programme Project Monitoring 2020/21 Period 6

Housing

1. Projects Summary

Project Name	Approval 2020/21 (£000)	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend (£000)	Original Completion Date	Forecast Completion Date	RAG Rating
St Leonard's Tower Block - Lift	528	0	March 2018	Sept 2021	G
Goscote House Demolition	2,844	0	Jan 2020	Jan 2022	G
New Build Council Housing	4,746	(1,411)	April 2020	Nov 2020	G
Tower Block Sprinklers	1,322	0	April 2022	April 2022	G
Property Conversions	481	0	March 2022	March 2022	G
Feasibility Study for Sheltered Housing	250	0	April 2022	April 2022	G
Total	**10,171**	**(1,411)**			

2. Projects Commentary (for all projects rated Amber, Red or Purple).

2.1 **New Build Council Housing** - The original approval for Phase 1 had a budget of £6.2m. The site layouts have since been amended, reducing the cost, with the forecast underspend due to be used towards new affordable housing on Phase 2 sites.

WORK PROGRAMMES

1. Summary

1.1 As stated in the cover report, work programmes are minor works or similar on-going schemes where there is an allocation of money to be spent during a particular year. Monitoring of work programmes focusses on whether the money is spent in a timely fashion.

Department /Division	Approved to spend in 20/21 £000	2020/21 Spend to Date £000	Forecast Slippage £000	Forecast Over/(under) Spend £000
Adult Social Care	21	0	0	0
City, Development & Neighbourhoods	780	55	0	0
Planning, Development & Transportation	26,760	3,339	9,370	0
Tourism, Culture & Inward Investment	1,390	47	508	0
Neighbourhood & Environmental Services	1,143	170	0	0
Estates & Building Services	4,099	221	0	0
Housing General Fund	10,035	1,372	5,010	0
Children's Services	8,060	643	4,442	0
Total (excluding HRA)	**52,288**	**5,847**	**19,330**	**0**
Housing Revenue Account	49,657	14,290	6,444	(575)
Total (including HRA)	**101,945**	**20,137**	**25,774**	**(575)**

2. Summary of Individual Work Programmes

Work Programme	Dept/ Division	Approved £000	2020/21 Spend to Date £000	Forecast Slippage £000	Forecast Over/(under) Spend £000
Dementia Friendly Buildings Initiative	ASC	21	0	0	0
Feasibility Studies	CDN	780	55	0	0
Transport Improvement Works	CDN (PDT)	9,912	1,265	5,910	0
Bus Engine Retrofitting (DFT funded)	CDN (PDT)	467	0	0	0
Air Quality Action Plan	CDN (PDT)	463	154	0	0
Highways Maintenance	CDN (PDT)	7,807	1,183	1,850	0
Townscape Heritage Initiative - Business Grants	CDN (PDT)	284	97	0	0
Flood Strategy	CDN (PDT)	312	119	0	0
Festive Decorations	CDN (PDT)	49	0	0	0
Local Environmental Works	CDN (PDT)	341	75	50	0
Legible Leicester	CDN (PDT)	201	9	100	0
Parking Strategy Development	CDN (PDT)	274	77	100	0
Leicester Strategic Flood Risk Management Strategy	CDN (PDT)	2,835	204	750	0
Potential Strategic Development Sites Assessment	CDN (PDT)	40	78	0	0
Architectural & Feature Lighting	CDN (PDT)	200	0	160	0
Front Wall Enveloping	CDN (PDT)	225	51	100	0
Replacement Doors & Windows St Saviours Rd	CDN (PDT)	50	0	0	0
Transforming Cities Work Programmes	CDN (PDT)	2,855	2	250	0
Campbell Street Feasibility Study	CDN (PDT)	200	0	0	0
Conservation Building Grants	CDN (PDT)	50	0	0	0
Street Nameplates City Branding Programme	CDN (PDT)	100	0	25	0
On-Street Charging	CDN (PDT)	95	25	75	0
Heritage Interpretation Panels	CDN (TCI)	288	12	188	0
Retail Gateways	CDN (TCI)	276	13	0	0
Arts & Museum Security Improvements	CDN (TCI)	40	0	0	0
Leicester Museum and Art Gallery	CDN (TCI)	350	3	320	0
Cank St Feasibility	CDN (TCI)	236	0	0	0
Local Shopping Centres Reopening & Improvement Programme	CDN (TCI)	200	19	0	0
Parks Plant and Equipment	CDN (NES)	150	0	0	0
Beaumont Park Depot Rd & Related works	CDN (NES)	99	0	0	0
Cossington Recreation Ground Access Improvements	CDN (NES)	170	170	0	0
Parks and Open Spaces	CDN (NES)	724	0	0	0
Euston Street Store	CDN (EBS)	157	0	0	0
Property Maintenance	CDN (EBS)	1,842	205	0	0
Operational Estate Capital Maintenance Programme	CDN (EBS)	1,450	16	0	0
Pilot House	CDN (EBS)	250	0	0	0
Phoenix 2020	CDN (EBS)	400	0	0	0
Private Sector Disabled Facilities Grant	CDN (HGF)	3,213	492	1,213	0
Repayable Home Repair Loans	CDN (HGF)	300	3	130	0
Vehicle Fleet Replacement Programme	CDN (HGF)	6,522	877	3,667	0
School Capital Maintenance	ECS	7,810	643	4,277	0
Foster Care Capital Contribution Scheme	ECS	250	0	165	0
Total (excluding HRA)		**52,288**	**5,847**	**19,330**	**0**

Council Housing - New Kitchens and Bathrooms	CDN (HRA)	4,115	1,084	1,715	0
Council Housing - Boiler Replacements	CDN (HRA)	3,456	658	1,156	0
Council Housing - Rewiring	CDN (HRA)	1,884	424	934	0
Council Housing - Disabled Adaptations & Improvements	CDN (HRA)	1,300	279	0	(575)
Council Housing - Insulation Works	CDN (HRA)	100	10	50	0
Council Housing - External Property Works	CDN (HRA)	1,656	327	223	0
Council Housing - Fire and Safety Works	CDN (HRA)	1,538	193	938	0
Community & Environmental Works	CDN (HRA)	2,385	336	615	0
Affordable Housing - Acquisitions	CDN (HRA)	30,606	10,358	0	0
Affordable Housing - RPs & Others	CDN (HRA)	854	342	354	0
Public Realm Works	CDN (HRA)	1,200	1	450	0
Business Systems	CDN (HRA)	563	278	9	0
Total HRA		**49,657**	**14,290**	**6,444**	**(575)**
Total (including HRA)		**101,945**	**20,137**	**25,774**	**(575)**

247

3. Commentary on Specific Work Programmes

3.1 Explanatory commentary for work programmes not currently progressing as planned, or for which issues have been identified is provided below. For monitoring purposes this has been defined as any scheme where budgets have significantly changed, where spend is low or where material slippage is forecast.

3.2 The Council is to receive £1.25m from Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy grant. The grant is to be used to assist people make their homes warmer and their energy bills cheaper, whilst helping reduce carbon emissions. The city council will work with E-ON Energy Services to deliver the scheme. Approval is sought to add this as a work programme to the capital programme.

3.3 **Transport Improvement Works** – As previously reported the main area of work under this work programme is on Putney Road. Most of the expenditure in 2020/21 is in relation to utilities diversion. This project has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the relevant utilities staff and suppliers being unavailable. Utilities diversions commenced in October 2020 and will be complete by March 2021. The forecast slippage of £5.9m relates to the main construction due to take place in 2021/22.

3.4 **Highways Maintenance** - Large resurfacing schemes have already been completed on Krefeld Way and Netherhall Road. The first stage of the Welford Road maintenance works (Chapel Lane and part of Welford Road) started in October. Bradgate Street, Tennis Court Drive and the next phase of Netherhall Road will be starting in November. Further schemes planned for this year include Liberty Road maintenance and a programme of repair works in local neighbourhoods. The carriageway resurfacing element of the works will take place next Spring hence slippage of £1.9m is requested into 2021/22.

3.5 **Leicester Strategic Flood Risk Management Strategy** - All the Local Growth Fund allocation is committed to schemes being delivered either by the Council or the Canal & River Trust. These are going on site within the next two months and will complete by March 2021. The £750k allocated to the Watermead bridge, to be delivered with Leicestershire County Council, has been delayed due to third party land ownership issues, and a requirement to recommence feasibility work to assess a new location.

3.6 **Architectural & Feature Lighting** - There are two schemes which have been approved and are to be implemented by third parties. Both have a delayed start date due to COVID-19 but are expected to be completed this financial year. Subject to approval at outturn, the balance of funding will be carried forward to 2021/22, as no new applications will be processed before the end of the financial year.

3.7 **Front Wall Enveloping** - The Green Lane Road scheme will be on site in February 2021. The second gateway scheme on Narborough Road, which is being developed jointly with the Housing Division, is expected to go out to tender in November.

3.8 **Transforming Cities Work Programmes -** There is £250k of slippage on Transforming Cities due to delays in the secure parking scheme due to COVID 19 impacting on the contractors ability to deliver the scheme as per original timetable

3.9 **Leicester Museum and Art Gallery -** Slippage of £320k has been identified on Leicester Museum and Art Gallery as a result of COVID 19 impacting on not being able to carry out consultation and community engagement, this scheme will now be delivered in 21/22.

3.10 **Disabled Facilities Grants** – Given the vulnerability of many people in receipt of these grants, there have been delays to the works on a number of properties. This will result in forecast slippage of £1.2m.

3.11 **Repayable Home Repairs Loans** – As a demand-led service, there are variations in the number of requests for loans, and this has been under-subscribed this year. This has resulted in slippage of £130k.

3.12 **Fleet Replacement** – By the end of the year, orders for vehicles will have been placed to the full extent of the budget. However, the time-lag between placing orders and their delivery will result in slippage, exacerbated by the increases in manufacturing and delivery times caused by COVID-19.

3.13 **School Capital Maintenance** – COVID-19 has slipped the completion of the programme into Summer 2021, in agreement with Children's Services and individual schools' accesses. There are no resulting budget implications to this at present.

3.14 **Kitchens & Bathrooms** – Limited access to tenants' properties due to COVID-19 has resulted in forecast slippage of £1.7m on this work programme. This is a significant improvement on the position as at period 4 and reflects the current capacity of the contractor.

3.15 **Boiler Replacements** – Whilst boiler replacements have been limited due to COVID-19, an improved position is now being forecast compared with period 4, as contractors catch up with planned work.

3.16 **Re-Wiring** – Re-wiring is still currently being limited to void properties, and this is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. This is expected to result in slippage of £0.9m into 21/22.

3.17 **Disabled Adaptations** – An increased underspend of nearly £0.6m is expected to arise on this demand-led work programme. Requests are allocated as and when they come in, but there are fewer requests for support coming in.

3.18 **External Property Works** – As reported at period 4, balcony improvement work on Aikman Avenue is expected to slip into 21/22. The re-roofing and soffits/facia work has been largely unaffected by COVID-19 and the programme of work will be fully delivered.

3.19 **Fire & Safety Works** – There is currently a national delay in the process for manufacturers of fire doors gaining accredited approval for their use from government. This has led to a limited number of suppliers being able to fulfil the Council's requirements and stalling the current procurement process. Existing doors are being monitored to ensure they remain safe, but alternative routes are being explored to source replacement doors.

3.20 **Communal & Environmental Works** – Slippage is forecast on environmental work, as staff in frontline service areas (Repairs, Highways and Parks) focus on providing core services as they come out of lockdown and catching up with the backlog of work accumulated during lockdown. In addition, large-scale planned works on the district heating network have been delayed because of the desire to avoid shutdowns during lockdown.

3.21 **Affordable Housing – Acquisitions** – Whilst COVID-19 has had an impact on the number of properties available for purchase, the impact has not been as significant as was anticipated at period 4. A continued pipeline of properties has been maintained, with plans for some larger acquisitions alongside single property purchases.

3.22 **Public Realm Works** – To protect staff and residents, some of the improvement schemes to internal areas of blocks are being pushed back until it is safer to carry out work in public areas.

PROVISIONS

1.   Summary

1.1 As stated in the cover report, provisions are sums of money set aside in case they are needed, where low spend is a favourable outcome rather than indicative of a problem.

1.2 As at the end of Period 6, £10k of the budgets for capital provisions had been spent.

1.3 Normally provisions are there if needed. The sums below are for the 2020/21 financial year.

Provision	Dept/ Division	Approved £000	2020/21 Spend to Date £000	2020/21 Total £000	Remaining Budget £000
Empty Homes Purchase	CDN (HGF)	50	0	0	50
Early Years - Two Year Olds	ECS	152	10	10	142
Total		**202**	**10**	**10**	**192**

PROJECTS SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETE

1. **Summary**

1.1 As at the end of Period 6, the following schemes were nearing completion. The budgets are the unspent amounts from previous years' capital programmes, mainly as a result of slippage.

Project	Dept/ Division	Approved £000	2020/21 Spend to Date £000	Forecast Over/(Under) Spend £000
ICT Investment - Phase 2 - Liquidlogic	ASC	64	0	0
Great Central Street / Vaughan Way	CDN (PDT)	262	18	0
Newarke Street Car Park Improvements	CDN (PDT)	0	1	0
11-15 Horsefair Street	CDN (EBS)	145	19	0
Additional Primary School Places	ECS	189	0	(11)
Additional Secondary School Places	ECS	22,757	16,092	0
Waterside Primary School	ECS	20	0	0
St Paul's Temporary Modular Buildings	ECS	7	0	0
Relocation of Sexual Health Clinic	PH	113	41	0
Total (excluding HRA)		**23,557**	**16,171**	**(11)**
Tower Block Redevelopment	CDN (HRA)	0	8	8
Total (including HRA)		**23,557**	**16,179**	**(3)**

POLICY PROVISIONS

1. **Summary**

1.1 As at Period 6, the following policy provisions were still awaiting formal approval for allocation to specific schemes.

Department/ Division	Policy Provision	Amount £000
CDN (PDT)	Economic Action Plan	4,432
CDN (PDT)	Ashton Green Infrastructure	400
CDN (PDT)	Strategic Acquisitions	4,000
CDN (EBS)	Commercial Property Acquisitions	1,933
CDN (TCII)	Tourism & Culture	550
CDN (TCII)	Highways, Transport & Infrastructure	3,364
CDN (Various)	People & Neighbourhoods	1,930
ECS	New School Places	14,569
ASC	Extra Care Schemes	6,700
Total (excluding HRA)		**37,878**
CDN (HRA)	Other HRA Schemes	1,000
Total HRA		**1,000**
Total (including HRA)		**38,878**

1.2 Releases from policy provisions since Outturn (reflected in the tables above) are listed below:

- £170k policy provision for Cossington Recreation Ground Access Improvements released 29/04/20.
- £500k policy provision for North West Leicester Regeneration Area released 10/06/20.
- £236k policy provision for Cank St Feasibility released 23/06/20.
- £250k policy provision for Pilot House released 29/06/2020.
- £10,030k policy provision for Additional Secondary School Places released 10/07/20.
- £8,122k policy provision for Additional SEND Places (including Pupil Referral Units) released 17/07/20.
- £920k policy provision for Additional SEND Places (including Pupil Referral Units) released 29/07/20.
- £500k policy provision for Local Shopping Centres Reopening & Improvement Programme released 29/07/20.

1.3 The Economic Action Plan Policy Provision includes £1,000k that has been committed for the Cultural Investment Programme, as per an executive decision taken on 23rd October 2018. This money will not be formally committed until all of the other funding for the scheme is in place.

Income Collection April 2020 – September 2020

For consideration by: Overview Select Committee

on: 3rd December 2020

Lead director/officer: Director of Finance

1. Summary

This report details progress made in collecting debts raised by the Council during the first six months of 2020-21, together with debts outstanding and brought forward from the previous year. It also sets out details of debts written off under delegated authority that it has not been possible to collect after reasonable effort and expense.

This is a routine report made to members twice each year. Performance has been substantially affected by the pandemic, with most areas responsible for collection having to do more to support those struggling to pay.

Figures included in this report need to be seen in the context of the total amount of income collected by the Council from the public each year, which amounts to over £400m. Whilst some debt is difficult to collect, and some people find it difficult to pay, ultimately we collect nearly all of the money due to us. It is currently estimated less than 2% is eventually written off, although this is likely to be different this year.

Income collected by the organisation dropped off towards the end of 2019/20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has continued into 2020/21: the committee will be updated on this regularly through the usual budget monitoring reports.

During the first six months of the year the Council had to write of £664k of debt to the Haymarket Consortium, included in the Other Income figures.

2. Recommended actions/decision

2.1 The OSC is recommended to:

- Consider the overall position presented within this report and make any observations it sees fit.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

N/A

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

Appendix A is a summary of all debt and a three year moving average of debt.

Appendix B provides more detailed information and narrative for each main category of debt.

Appendix C provides a summary of all the write-offs during the period.

5. Detailed report
See appendices

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

The report details the Council's performance in collecting debts, and amounts which have had to be written off

Alison Greenhill, Director of Finance, 0116 454 4001

6.2 Legal implications

Where appropriate debts are the subject of legal action through the courts.

Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer (Litigation), 0116 454 1435

6.3 Equalities implications

The Council has to make every effort to collect its due debts. The Council adopted a debt policy in June 2016. The policy aims at ensuring that the Council collects debt in a fair, proportionate and respectful manner.

Copies of the policy are available on the Council's website
https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/how-we-work/debt-enforcement/if-you-are-struggling-to-pay

Recovery action needs to strike a fair balance between sensitivity to debtors who are struggling to pay and the interests of the public as a whole (the income expected is part of our budget). Significant efforts have been made to be fair during the pandemic.

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

No climate change implications.

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

No other implications are noted as this is an Income Collection report, and therefore no policy changes are proposed.

7. Background information and other papers:

Finance Procedure Rules

Debt Policy

8. Summary of appendices:

Appendix A is a summary of all debt and a three year moving average of debt;

Appendix B provides more detailed information and narrative for each main category of debt;

Appendix C is a summary of all write offs;

9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

10. Is this a "key decision"? If so, why?

No

Summary of all Debt

Income Type	Debts brought forward @ 1/4/2020 £m	Amounts raised 2020-21 £m	Amounts collected 2020-21 £m	Amounts written off/back 2020-21 £m	Debts outstanding @ 30/09/2020 £m
Non Domestic Rates (including Costs)	12.07	68.18	(33.78)	0	46.47
Council Tax (including Costs)	18.52	142.34	(71.19)	(0.03)	89.64
Housing Benefit Overpayments	13.11	2.53	(1.73)	(0.17)	13.74
Council House Rents	3.62	40.19	(39.64)	(0.15)	4.02
On and Off-Street Car Parking fines	1.97	0.56	(0.26)	(0.33)	1.94
Bus Lane Enforcement	0.91	0.52	(0.34)	(0.12)	0.97
Other Income	17.31	42.52	(42.37)	(0.03)	17.43
Totals	**67.51**	**296.84**	**(189.31)**	**(0.83)**	**174.21**

Debt - Three Year Moving Average

Legend:
- Written off (green)
- Carried forward (red)
- Collected in year (blue)

Y-axis: £ million (0 to 600)

X-axis: 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19
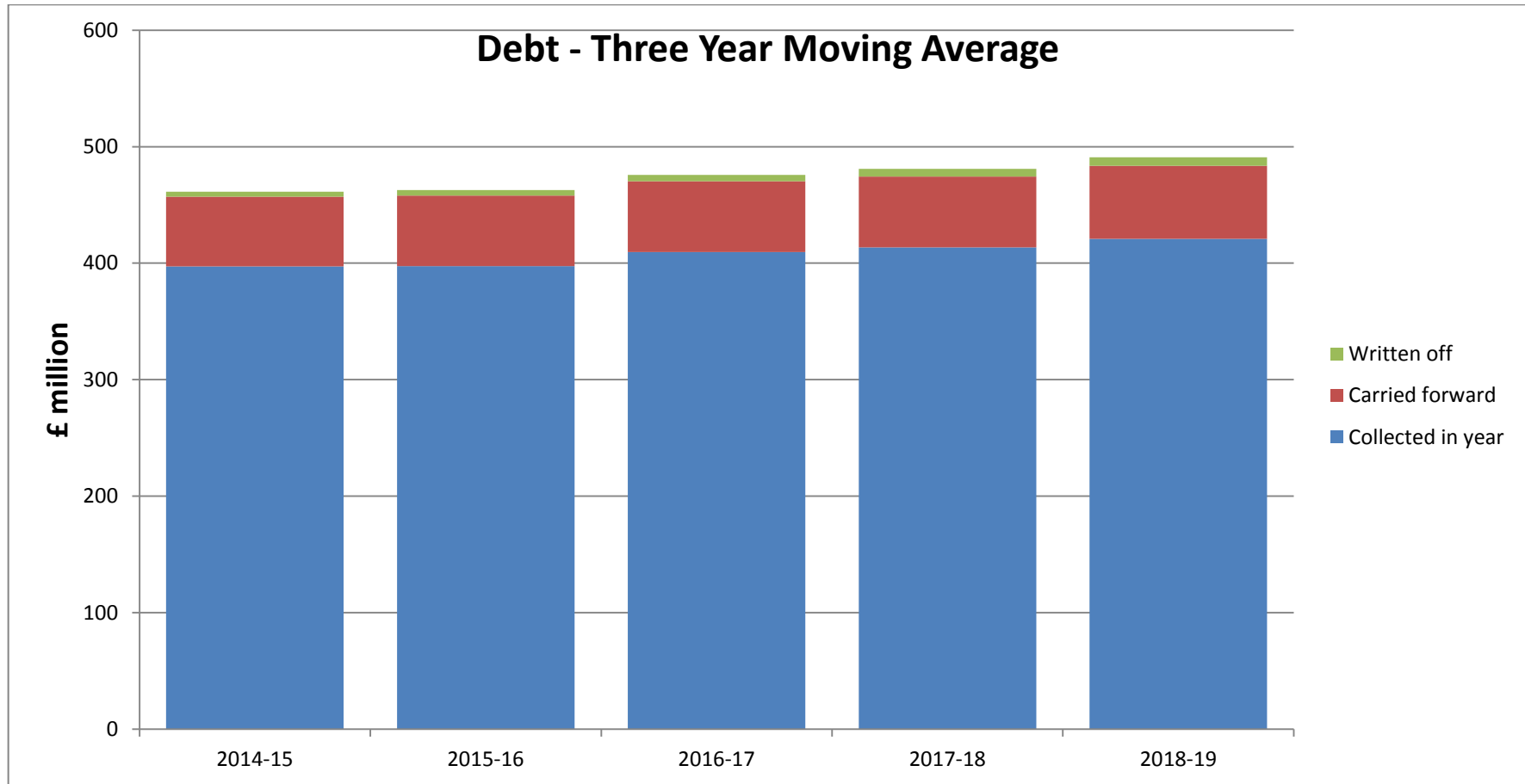
Note: This chart is a moving average (e.g. 2015/16 is the average of 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17). This treatment smooths anomalies in individual years and highlights trends. Consequently, 2018/19 is the latest year we can report.

1. Business Rates

1.1 Headline Figures for period under review including costs

Uncollected debt b/f £m	Debt raised £m	Debt collected £m	Debt written off £m	Uncollected debt c/f £m
12.07	68.18	(33.78)	0	46.47

1.2 Background and comparator information

Background Information

Business Rates are a national tax normally paid by approximately 12,700 businesses in Leicester.

Comparator Information

Debt collection has been affected by the pandemic. The table shows the effect on collection of the current year's debt:

- Collection to 30th September 2019 – 55.30%
- Collection to 30th September 2020 – 50.40%

It should be noted that unpaid debt on 31st March continues to be collected in the following year, but in these exceptional circumstances it is very unlikely we will completely catch up.

Other authorities, of course, share our predicament. As at 30th September 2020, our collection performance places us 7th out of 14 authorities with comparable populations.

1.3 Debt write-off

The amounts written off for business rates this year were minimal due to other work priorities.

1.4 Volume/policy/statutory changes that have occurred during the period and their impact

Changes

For 2020/21 the Government introduced 100% business rate relief for retail, hospitality and leisure properties, as part of the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council is compensated for this loss of income through government grants.

Whilst collection performance has suffered due to the pandemic, around 40% of our usual collectible rates has been paid by the Government. This means the effect of slow collection is considerably diluted,

1.5 Summary of measures taken to recover debt

Debt recovery measures

Due to the pandemic, recovery action was paused in April 2020. Due to the local lockdown this was not restarted until September 2020 with the issue of non-statutory prompts in order to re-engage with ratepayers.

Our normal recovery process is:
- A reminder will be sent if an instalment is missed;
- If the instalment is paid within 7 days of the reminder, the right to pay by instalments is maintained; if a subsequent instalment is missed a final notice will be issued stating that the right to pay by instalments has been lost and the full charge has become payable;
- If the instalment is not paid within 7 days of the reminder, the full charge becomes payable.
- If the full charge becomes payable and is not paid within 7 days, a summons will be issued and a liability order sought at the Magistrates' Court. Costs become payable at this stage.

Understandably the delay in starting recovery action has had an impact on this year's collection and as at end of September it was 4.9% below that for last year and in cash terms we are expecting to be £3.5m short of our budgeted income by the end of the financial year. The extended retail discount scheme has softened the impact but nevertheless the pressure on our collection rate and the bad debt provision remains.

This will impact our budget for 2021/22 (although 50% of rates are paid to the Government who will therefore bear non-collection losses).

2. Council Tax

2.1 Headline Figures for period under review including costs

Uncollected debt b/f £m	Debt raised £m	Debt collected £m	Debt written off £m	Uncollected debt c/f £m
18.52	142.34	(71.19)	0.03	89.64

2.2 Background and comparator information

Background information

Council tax is a national tax, charged to 141,000 properties in Leicester. The amount we collect includes sums charged by the fire authority and police commissioner.

Comparator information

Like rates, collection has been affected by the pandemic. Percentage of debt collected in the year it is raised: -

- Collection to 30th September 2019 – 53.28%
- Collection to 30th September 2020 – 49.85%

It should be noted that unpaid debt on 31st March continues to be collected in the following year. As with rates, we will inevitably end up writing off more than usual however.

As at 30th September 2020, we are 12th out of 14 authorities with comparable populations. However, we have been in lockdown longer than anyone else.

2.3 Debt write-off

Reason for Write Off ↓	No.	Value £000
Unable to Trace	2	1
Deceased – No Assets	0	0
Insolvent / Bankrupt/ Liquidated	38	24
All recovery options exhausted / irrecoverable at reasonable expense, including adjustments for costs and write ons	47	4
Totals	**87**	**29**

2.4 Volume/policy/statutory changes that have occurred during the period and their impact

Changes

This year due to COVID-19 pandemic, council tax support claims have increased more than in any year since its introduction. The total number of live claims at 4/10/2020 were 30,135, (£25.4m paid), this compares to 27,730 (£24.7m paid) claims at 1/4/2020.

Additional support has also been provided by the government for council tax claimants in the form of the Council Tax Support Hardship Fund, which has provided an additional £150 for CTS recipients. We were given £3.7m by the government and as at 4/10/20, and £2.95m has been paid (or, more correctly, set off against tax bills).

2.5 Summary of measures taken to recover debt

<u>Debt recovery measures</u>

As with rates, recovery action was paused in April 2020. Due to the local lockdown this was not restarted until September 2020 with the issue of non-statutory reminders, in order to re-engage with council tax payers.

The usual process after a reminder instalment has been missed is:
- if the instalment <u>is</u> paid within 7 days of the reminder, the right to pay by instalments is maintained; if a further instalment is missed, another reminder can be issued; if a third instalment is missed, a final notice will be issued stating that the right to pay by instalments is lost and the full balance becomes payable;
- If the instalment is <u>not</u> paid within 7 days of the first /second reminder, the right to pay by instalments is lost and the full balance becomes payable;
- if the full balance becomes payable and is not paid within 7 days, a summons will be issued and a liability order sought at the Magistrates Court.

At every stage of the recovery process, the council tax payer is offered a formal payment arrangement. Within the recovery process, safeguards have been put in to protect the most vulnerable.

Understandably the delay in starting recovery action has had an impact on this year's collection performance and as at end of September it was 3.4% below that for last year and in cash terms we are expecting to be £9.4m short of our budgeted income by the end of the financial year. The Council Tax Support Hardship fund has softened the impact for customers receiving council tax support, but nevertheless the pressure on our collection rate and the provision for bad debt remains. This will impact our budget for 2021/22.

3. Overpaid Housing Benefit

3.1 Headline Figures for period under review including costs

Uncollected debt b/f £m	Debt raised £m	Debt collected £m	Debt written off £m	Uncollected debt c/f £m
13.11	2.53	(1.73)	(0.17)	13.74

3.2 Background and comparator information

Background information

The main cause of housing benefit overpayments is delays in recipients telling the Council of changes in their circumstances, resulting in too much benefit being paid. By its nature overpaid housing benefit is difficult to collect. Of the £13.74m, we have outstanding, there are processes in place to recover debt wherever possible. Overall, housing benefit debt continues to reduce, from £14.86m at 30/09/2019 to £13.74m as at 30/09/2020:

- 30/09/2018 £16.79m
- 30/09/2019 £14.86m
- 30/09/2020 £13.74m

Comparator information

There is no like for like comparator information available

3.3 Debt write-off

Reason for Write Off ↓	No.	Value £000
Unable to Trace	37	40
Deceased – No Assets	3	2
Insolvent / Bankrupt/ Liquidated	59	17
All recovery options exhausted / irrecoverable at reasonable expense, including adjustments for costs and write ons	481	109
Totals	**580**	**168**

3.4 Volume/policy/statutory changes that have occurred during the period and their impact

Changes

The migration to Universal Credit continues to impact on our ability to collect debt from ongoing benefit. Any claimant moving onto UC is notified of any outstanding balance immediately and given a range of options to make repayment.

3.5 Summary of measures taken to recover debt

Debt recovery measures

Debt is collected by means of deduction from ongoing benefit payments, if there is current entitlement;

- If there is no current housing benefit entitlement, payment is requested from the customer in the first instance before it is referred to the Business Services Centre and an invoice raised.

- Legislation permits us to deduct overpayments from other state benefits. DWP temporarily paused Council's collecting payments via this method due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These deductions recommenced on the 6th July 2020.

Where no benefits are in payment, but the debtor is in employment, we seek to obtain a Direct Earnings Attachment.

The Council continues to work with those struggling to pay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, on a case by case basis, offering moratoriums on payment and payment arrangements.

---

4. Housing Rent

4.1. Headline Figures for period under review

Uncollected debt b/f £m	Debt raised £m	Debt collected £m	Debt written off £m	Uncollected debt c/f £m
3.62	40.19	(39.64)	(0.15)	4.02

4.2 Background and comparator information

Background information
The authority currently collects rent from approximately 19,900 tenancies across the City. 8,400 of our tenants (42%) are on full or partial Housing Benefit and 4,700 (24%) on Universal Credit. The debt raised & collected includes the element paid by Housing Benefit.

4.3. Debt write-off

Reason for Write Off ⬇	No.	Value £000
Unable to Trace	0	0
Deceased – No Assets	0	0
Insolvent / Bankrupt/ Liquidated	0	0
All recovery options exhausted / irrecoverable at reasonable expense, including adjustments for costs and write ons	392	150
Totals	**392**	**150**

4.4. Volume/policy/statutory changes that have occurred during the period and their impact

Changes

The pandemic has affected our ability to collect rents – we estimate that arrears will be around £0.8m higher than usual by the end of the year.

It is now over 2 years since the implementation of Universal Credit (UC) and it is anticipated that the full UC migration will be completed by 2024.

Tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit can have it paid directly into their rent account. However, under UC money is paid directly to the claimant rather than the Council. Vulnerable tenants and those with a history of rent arrears or homelessness may be able to have their rent paid directly to the Council, as landlord, by applying for an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA).

Some tenants in employment will be receiving reduced pay under the furlough scheme, affecting their ability to pay rent. There is also an increased risk for individuals in this group being made redundant. There has already been a 145% increase in Leicester City's residents claiming unemployment related benefit compared to the same time last year.

The government placed a ban on all rental possession and eviction cases since the first national lockdown in March 2020. This came to an end in September 2020. LCC are now engaging with tenants to recover any outstanding rent.

4.5 Summary of measures taken to recover debt

Debt recovery measures

The Income Management Team are working collaboratively with the DWP and work coaches from the local Job Centre Plus to minimise any impact of UC roll out. Tenants continue to be supported with income maximisation and claims for HB and UC, which can assist with rent payments. The team also provide support to claim Discretionary Housing funds.

An increase in the number of Rent Management Advisors (RMA) was approved in the summer to deal with potential surges in UC claims; these are now in post and have started to support our tenants.

The ultimate sanction for rent arrears is eviction as option of last choice, however the team works with tenants to prevent this.

5. **Parking Fines (Penalty Charge Notice)**

5.1 Headline Figures for period under review

Uncollected debt b/f £m	Debt raised £m	Debt collected £m	Debt written off £m	Uncollected debt c/f £m
1.97	0.56	(0.26)	(0.33)	1.94

5.2 Background and comparator information

Background information

The Council issues penalty notices for both on-street and off-street parking charge evasion, as well as illegal parking. There are two nationally set rates based on the seriousness of the offence, details below;

(a) £25 or £35 if paid with 14 days;
£50 or £70 if paid after 14 days.

Comparator information

The percentage of tickets issued during the year, paid at 30th September

- 2019/20 – 69%
- 2020/21 – 51%

5.3. **Debt write-off**

Reason for Write Off ⬇	No.	Value £000
Unable to Trace	1,451	156
Deceased – No Assets	0	0
Insolvent / Bankrupt/ Liquidated	26	3
All recovery options exhausted / irrecoverable at reasonable expense, including adjustments for costs and write ons	1,892	173
Totals	**3,369**	**332**

5.4 Volume/policy/statutory changes that have occurred during the period and their impact

Changes

Parking enforcement was suspended in Leicester from 24th March 2020. However, tickets continued to be issued if a vehicle was considered to be dangerously parked or contravening disabled bay requirements. A resumption of on- and off-street parking enforcement commenced on Monday 1st June 2020 issuing warning tickets for the first few weeks.

Tickets issued over the period compared with the same period last year are significantly down: 9,000 rather than 38,000. However, in the month of September, we have seen a reduction of only 20% compared with September last year.

NHS and Care Workers

Like most local authorities we have continued to provide free parking (both on street and off street) for NHS staff and care workers.

5.5. Summary of measures taken to recover debt

Usual Debt recovery measures

- Reminder letters
- Legal action

6. Bus Lane Enforcement Fines

6.1 Headline Figures for period under review

Uncollected debt b/f £m	Debt raised £m	Debt collected £m	Debt written off £m	Uncollected debt c/f £m
0.91	0.52	(0.34)	(0.12)	0.97

6.2 Background and comparator information

Background information

The Council issues fines for driving in bus lanes with enforcement schemes. Fines are levied at the rate of £60, which is discounted to £30 if paid within 14 days.

The clearways outside London Road Train Station are levied at the rate of £75, which is discounted to £35 if paid within 14 days.

The debt collection for bus lane enforcement debt is collected on our behalf by Nottingham City Council.

Comparator information

The percentage of tickets issued during the year, paid at September 30th.

- 2019/20 – 55%
- 2020/21 – 60%

6.3 Debt write-off

Reason for Write Off ⬇	No.	Value £000
Unable to Trace	806	29
Deceased – No Assets	0	0
Insolvent / Bankrupt/ Liquidated	5	1
All recovery options exhausted / irrecoverable at reasonable expense, including adjustments for costs and write ons	1,251	93
Totals	**2,062**	**123**

6.4 Volume/policy/statutory changes that have occurred during the period and their impact

Changes

Since the lockdown announcement on March 23rd 2020, LCC switched off all 16 cameras. This was due to traffic levels being low due to the national lockdown and also due to less use of public transport. Further to this, guidelines provided by the British Parking Association stated that it would be best practice to stop all traffic enforcement due to the pandemic and it would not be in the public interest to carry out traffic enforcement due to the reduction of traffic on the roads.

LCC resumed CCTV enforcement on 1 June. Over the last four months the Council issued 12,788 PCNs.

A number of tickets (394) relating to the weeks prior to the lockdown were written off. This is due to us not being able to issue the ticket within 14days of the DVLA supplying us with the registered keeper details.

We are currently offering an early payment discount if people are struggling financially, especially if they have more than one fine. We continue to review each case on its own merits and to work with the clients.

6.5 Summary of measures taken to recover debt

Usual Debt recovery measures

•   Reminder letters
•   Legal action

7. Other Income

7.1 Headline Figures for period under review including costs*

Uncollected debt b/f £m	Debt raised £m	Debt collected £m	Debt written off/back £m	Uncollected debt c/f £m
17.31	42.52	(42.37)	(0.03)	17.43

7.2 Background and comparator information

Background information

"Other Income" includes all income other than the sources described above and is collected by the Business Service Centre. It covers a wide variety of income from various individuals and organisations. Examples include commercial rent, adult social care costs relating to residential and non-residential care, and repairs & maintenance charges relating to council property.

Unlike other sources of debt, we are never too concerned about the actual amount outstanding, this is because debt can be raised at any time of the year. Consequently, we focus on aged debt as the main measure of performance.

Comparator information

Debt over 12 months old (aged debt) has increased for the first time in 5 years. Increasing from £3.28m in September 2019 to £4.08m in September 2020. Which is a £0.8m increase.

- 30/09/2017 £4.42m
- 30/09/2018 £3.68m
- 30/09/2019 £3.28m
- 30/09/2020 £4.08m

The level of debt over 12months old is believed to have increased due to the Council suspending its debt recovery processes. The Council is now actively engaging to collect this outstanding debt.

7.3 Debt write-off

Reason for Write Off ↓	No.	Value £000
Unable to Trace	89	5
Deceased – No Assets	91	17
Insolvent / Bankrupt/ Liquidated	25	5
All recovery options exhausted / irrecoverable at reasonable expense, including adjustments for costs and write ons	467	6
Totals	**672**	**33**

7.4 Volume/policy/statutory changes that have occurred during the period and their impact

Changes

Policy changes in non-residential care resulted in a review of all service users' contributions, and an increase in the level of invoiced charges. In March 2020 central government introduced emergency changes to the charging regulations, due to the pandemic, and for those being discharged from hospital, care has been provided for free locally for approx. 700 service users. This temporary change has now ceased.

Locally, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to support business and individuals affected, on a case by case basis we have offered support to those struggling to pay;

- pausing the need to make payments or
- agreeing instalment arrangements, or
- suspending debt enforcement.

7.5 Summary of measures taken to recover debt

<u>Debt recovery measures</u>

The debt recovery measures detailed below are part of our normal process, but the Council continues during 2020-2021 to offer support where required for those suffering financial hardship.

Normally:
A first reminder is issued at 14 days; when an invoice remains unpaid. Seven days later a second reminder is issued.

A letter before action, known as a letter of claim, follows if the case is suitable for enforcement in the county court. If the Council obtains a judgment or an order for recovery of an award and if payment is still not forthcoming the next actions, we can take include;
- Referral to an enforcement agent
- Third party debt order
- Attachment to earnings
- Charging Order

Cases not suitable for enforcement through county court procedures are referred to enforcement agents for collection.

Summary of all Write Offs

The table below provides detail on the reasons why debt is written off during the year.

Income Type	Unable to trace £000	Deceased - no assets £000	Insolvent/ Bankrupt/ Liquidated £000	Irrecoverable at reasonable expense £000	Total Write Offs @ 30/09/2020 £000
Non Domestic Rates (including Costs)	0	0	0	0	**0**
Council Tax (including Costs)	1	0	24	4	**29**
Housing Benefit Overpayments	40	2	17	109	**168**
Council House Rents	0	0	0	150	**150**
On and Off-Street Car Parking fines	156	0	3	173	**332**
Bus Lane Enforcement	29	0	1	93	**123**
Other Income	5	17	5	6	**33**
Haymarket Consortium	0	0	664	0	**664**
Totals	**231**	**19**	**714**	**535**	**1,499**

Mid-Year Review of Treasury Management Activities 2020/21

Overview Select Committee

Date of meeting: 3rd December 2020

Lead director: Alison Greenhill, Director of Finance

1.   **Purpose of Report**

1.1   This report reviews how the Council conducted its borrowing and investments during the first six months of 2020/21.

2.   **Summary**

2.1   Treasury management is the process by which our borrowing is managed, and our cash balances are invested. Whilst there are links to the budget, the sums in this report do not form part of the budget. Cash balances reported here cannot be spent, except to the extent already shown in the budget report and accounts.

2.2   The Council has incurred debt to pay for past capital expenditure

2.3   The Council also has cash balances. These are needed for day to day expenditure (e.g. to pay wages when they are due). A substantial proportion can only be used to repay debt but (because of Government rules) we have been unable to use them to repay debt. Thus, they are held in investments.

2.4   The report commences with an overview of treasury management, including loans and investments at key dates. It then reviews the credit worthiness of investments and implementation of our strategy, provides outcomes on key performance measures and concludes by reviewing compliance against limits set by the Council.

2.5   2020/21 has seen unprecedented upheaval and a severe downturn in the economy due to the Covid crisis with a 20% reduction in GDP in April which was the worst performance since records began. The Bank of England responded by reducing base rate rates to just 0.1% and undertaking more quantitative easing. There has also been open speculation by the Bank of England that it is considering the use of negative interest rates in the future. Whilst the covid crisis continues, the outlook for the economy can be described as extremely uncertain.

2.6   We continue to monitor the impact of the "bail in" requirements whereby major depositors could be forced to inject funds into banks which are running into trouble, introduced earlier in the year. This is further discussed below.

2.7   To protect against possible problems arising from a "no deal" Brexit, we have increased the level of investments with money market funds domiciled in the UK. This is not because we are concerned about credit-worthiness, but ensures we can access funds if there are problems with settlement systems immediately after Brexit.

2.8   As a result of falling interest rates and concerns about the economy (even before the covid crisis occurred) we took advantage of favourable 2 year loan rates with other local authorities offered at the end of the last financial year, and lent £65 million at rates of between 1.5% and 1.7%. This will generate just over £1 million p.a. for 2 years and should secure the treasury interest budget position for the current year and most of next year despite the significant fall in interest rates due to covid. If rates do not improve by 2022 though, it could make the 2022/23 budget challenging.

2.9   At the start of the covid crisis we also took the decision to give notice on all our bank deposits. Although UK bank balance sheets have actually held up well under the crisis (unlike the previous financial crisis a decade ago), deposit rates were poor and were not deemed to be worth the risk at the time.

3.   **Recommendations**

3.1   Members of the Overview Select Committee are recommended to note the report and make comments to the Director of Finance and the Executive as they wish.

4.   **Overview of Treasury Management**

Main elements of Treasury Management

4.1   There are two main elements to treasury management. The first is managing our borrowings which have been taken out to finance capital expenditure. Most capital schemes are now financed by grant, and only a limited number of schemes are financed by borrowing (generally those which pay for themselves). In the past the Government expected us to borrow but allowed for the cost of borrowing in our grant settlement, and we still have a lot of debt which was taken to meet this capital expenditure.

4.2   Historic debt can sometimes be restructured to save money, i.e. repaying one loan and replacing it with another and this is always given active consideration. In recent years, Government rule changes have normally made it prohibitively expensive to repay loans borrowed from the Public Works Loans Board.

4.3   Changes were recently announced increasing the interest rates charged on PWLB loans by an effective rate of 1.8% above gilt rates for most borrowings, partly as a response to high levels of borrowing by authorities funding commercial acquisitions. Nationally, this is having a significant impact on the investment plans of many local authorities. However, the Council has no plans to borrow from the PWLB in 2020/21 and it is unlikely that the Council will need to borrow over the medium term except perhaps over a very short period to manage cashflow.

4.4   The revenue budget approved by the Council for each financial year includes provision for the interest payable on this borrowing. It also includes a provision for repaying the borrowing over a number of years (broadly speaking over the economic life of the assets acquired).

4.5   The second element is <u>cash management</u> which involves managing the Council's investments to ensure the optimum amount of money is in the bank account on a day-to-day basis – so that there is enough money in the account to cover the payments made on the day, but no more (cash held in the bank account earns negligible interest).

4.6   The Council has substantial investments but this is not "spare cash". There are three reasons for the level of investments:-

(a)   Whilst the Government no longer supports capital spending with borrowing allocations, we are still required to raise money in the budget each year to repay debt. Because of the punitive rules described above, we are not usually able to repay any debt, and therefore have to invest the cash;

(b)   We have working balances arising from our day to day business (e.g. council tax received before we have to pay wages, and capital grants received in advance of capital spending);

(c)   We have reserves, which are held in cash until we need to spend them. We expect reserves to fall over the next few years. The reserves position was described in the budget report, but decline may be accelerated by the pandemic.

<u>Treasury Management Policy and Monitoring</u>

4.7   The activities to which this report relates are governed by the Treasury Strategy for 2020/21 which was approved by the Council on 19th February 2020. This establishes an outline plan for borrowing and investment. The strategy was drawn up in the light of the Council's expected borrowing requirements, its expected cash balances, the outlook for interest rates and the credit worthiness of the banks with whom the Council might invest its cash balances.

4.8   A twice-yearly report is submitted to your Committee reviewing the treasury activity undertaken in the year. This report is the mid-year report for 2020/21.

<u>Loans and Investments at Key Dates</u>

4.9   Table 1 below shows the loans (money borrowed by the Council) and investments (money invested by the Council) as at 31/03/2020 and 01/10/2020. The rates shown are the averages paid and received during 2020/21.

4.10   No new loans have been borrowed and no debt restructuring has taken place, though a short-term loan of £20m has been repaid as anticipated.

4.11   Investments have increased by £51m from £281m to £332m. It is normal for cashflow to be positive in the early part of the year with cash flow out of the authority tending to be weighted to the second half of the year, but this year with various grants related to the coronavirus pandemic being received but costs increased, this is expected to be more pronounced.

Table 1- Loans & Investments

	Position at 31/03/2020 Principal £M	Position at 01/10/2020 Principal £M	Average Rate
Long Term Fixed Rate Loans Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) Market	134 25	134 25	4.2% 4.4%
Variable Rate Loans Bank Loans	20	20	4.1%
Short Term (less than 6 months) Loans Local Authority Loans	20	Nil	1.0%
Gross Debt	**199**	**179**	**4.2%**
Treasury Investments Banks and Build Soc Other Local Authorities Government Debt Management Office Money Market Funds Property Funds	30 200 0 43 8	0 200 0 124 8	
Total Treasury Investments	**281**	**332**	**0.8%**
NET INVESTMENTS	**82**	**153**	

4.12 The investments include £8m in property unit trusts. These are unit trusts which invest in property (as opposed to more traditional unit trusts that invest in shares). The returns included in the table above do not include any movements in the value of these investments. This is because these investments are bought and sold in secondary markets but transactions are infrequent and so there is no firm quoted price for these investments. The 2019-20 final accounts reflect an estimated reduction of £0.7m from £8.3m to £7.6m of the capital value of the property funds though this reduction in capital value will not affect our revenue budget. Our strategy for property funds as well as providing an element of diversification is to hold them for the long-term so that short-term fluctuations in capital value become less important.

4.13 The Council's (Non-Treasury) Investment Strategy also allows the authority to spend capital or make loans to a third party where it is intended to (at least partly) achieve a return. The Council has made no new investments since 31st March 2020 though it has continued to spend on the construction of the Haymarket Shopping Centre and Pioneer Park. A summary of loans and investments made under the Investment Strategy is shown in table 2 below.

Table 2- Loans & Investments under the Investment Strategy

Investment	Total Capital Expenditure or loans outstanding £m	Percentage Return 2019/2020
Loans		
Ethically Sourced Products	£1.4m	4%
Leicestershire County Cricket Club	£2.45m	5%
Haymarket Consortium	£0.6m	-100%
Other Investments		
Haymarket Centre Redevelopment	£8.4m	0%
Pioneer Park	£1.7m	0%
Total All Loans & Investments	£14.55m	-2.9%

4.14 The Haymarket Centre Redevelopment and Pioneer Park are still under construction so wouldn't be expected to make any return yet. The repayment of the loan to Leicestershire County Cricket Club is up to date, and payments from Ethically Sourced Products have now resumed after an agreed pause of 5 months. However, in the light of the covid crisis it is no longer expected that the loan to the Haymarket Consortium will be repaid.

5. **Credit Worthiness of Investments & Interest Rate Outlook**

5.1 2019/20 showed a weaker economic environment within the world economy due, in part, to tensions between the USA and its trading partners. Within the Eurozone many of the economic and financial tensions that followed the crisis of 2008 have eased but significant underlying issues remain. Tensions between the USA and trading partners remain a source of uncertainty. The full impact of the UK's exit from the EU on the economy remains to be seen.

5.2 The core expectation of the Council's treasury advisors, Arlingclose, is for the Bank Rate to remain at its current level of 0.1% until at least 2023. There is also the real possibility of the Bank of England introducing negative interest rates like Switzerland, though that is not Arlingclose's central estimate. It is possible that inflationary pressures, possibly following future devaluations in the value of the pound, could carry the risk of higher interest rates though given the impact of Covid on the economy that seems unlikely.

5.3 The governments of the largest world economies, including the UK, have implemented measures to make banks less likely to fail but also to reduce the impact on the financial system and on tax payers if they do fail. The measures for dealing with a failing bank see investors who have lent or deposited money (which includes

us) taking significant losses before there is any tax payer support ("bail in"). Our assessment of risk is based both on the risk that banks fail (as measured by credit ratings) and also on the level of losses that we might face should the banks require capital support to prevent failure. The view of Fitch, the credit rating agency, is that major UK banks are well positioned to deal with any pressures that might emerge from Brexit.

5.4 Apart from Covid, these developments were reflected in the Council's approach to managing credit risk in its Treasury Strategy for 2020/21. It has adopted a cautious stance over the whole period covered by this report and has only directly lent to strong UK banks, other local authorities and the UK Government. Other lending has been part of pooled funds (see 5.5 below).

5.5 The Council has an indirect exposure to non-UK banks through its investment in money market funds. Money market funds are like "unit trusts" but rather than investing in company shares these funds invest in interest bearing investments such as bank deposits. When we open such funds, they are vetted to ensure that they have strong investment and risk management processes to ensure a high level of credit worthiness in the underlying investments, and we receive advice from our treasury advisor, Arlingclose. Investing in this way helps manage credit risk by having a high level of diversification amongst the underlying banks and institutions to whom money is lent. Interest rates on these funds are low, because we have immediate access to the funds. Some of our money needs to be immediate access (like individuals will usually keep some money in a current account). Rates are, however, better than alternatives such as the Government's Debt Management Office. In the short term, we are increasing the proportion held in UK based funds to ensure we can access funds if there are technical problems immediately after Brexit.

5.6 The Council has an investment strategy which permits investment in local commercial opportunities. These investments are managed within the Council's framework for managing capital expenditure and are not considered in detail within this report. However, these investments are included at table 2 below, because the strategy puts to work cash balances which would otherwise be invested in low interest paying deposits.

5.7 The Treasury Strategy 2020/21 permits investment in property funds. Investments of £8m have previously been made in two funds, the Lothbury Property Trust and the Threadneedle Property Unit Trust. No further investments in property funds have been made to date in 2020/21.

6. **Implementation of Borrowing & Investment Strategy**

6.1 The strategy approved by Council for 2020/21 envisaged using cash balances instead of borrowing, and this strategy has been adhered to.

6.2 Given that the Council continues to have a high level of investments, active consideration is given to the possible early redemption of a limited amount of debt. This, however, is not straightforward as debt repayment usually involves the payment of a premium. The level of such premia payable is generally high and premature debt redemption is usually not financially viable.

6.3 We hold £20m of debt which is described as variable rate loans in table 1. These are technically "LOBOs" which are fixed rate but on which the lender may ask for a rate rise. We have the option to repay if they do. Members may be aware of some criticism of LOBOs nationally, principally in respect of authorities which have complex mechanisms for calculating interest rates. We do not: we would be pleased to receive a request for a rate rise as we would then take the opportunity to repay. To all intents and purposes, they are simply fixed rate loans. We will explore any viable options to repay these which present themselves

7. **Key Performance Measures**

7.1 The most important performance measures are the rate of interest on the Council's borrowings, the timing of borrowing decisions, the timing of decisions to prematurely repay debt and the return on investments. No new loans have been borrowed and no loans have been repaid.

7.2 The Council benchmarks its investments and the latest data for the investment portfolio is as at 30th September 2020.

7.3 Treasury investments comprise internally managed investments, and longer maturity externally managed funds.

7.4 The following table compares our performance against that of participating authorities. This information is available for internally managed investments (including money market funds) and externally managed funds. It is a "snapshot" of investments held at 30th September 2020. No comparative data is held for the local investment fund.

Table 2 – Key Performance Data

Investment	Leicester City Council Revenue return	All Authorities' Revenue return
Internally managed	0.78%	0.27%
External Longer-term investments income only	2.01%	3.45%
External longer-term investments total return	(5.70%)	(3.32%)
Total return	**0.46%**	**(0.62%)**

7.5 The average rate of interest on internally managed investments for participating authorities at 30th September is 0.27% whilst the Council's own rate is higher: 0.78%. This reflects the longer term loans to other local authorities that we managed to secure during the end of last financial year which has insulated the Council at least partly from the fall in interest rates.

7.6 The average rate of return on longer term investments (excluding capital gains and losses) is 3.45% for participating authorities at 30th September whilst the Council's own rate is 2%. Including capital losses, the Council and other authorities are showing a loss (in our case, due to reductions in property value). This category will cover a wide range of investments and there an unavoidable element of "comparing

apples with pears". As at 30th September the Council's own investments comprised only £8m of units in property unit trusts. These carry less risk than some other investment types and the lower risk sometimes equates to a lower investment return compared to more adventurous funds. Our internally managed investments considerable exceed the value of these investments.

7.7   Higher investment returns are always available if higher credit risk is accepted. However, the trade-off between risk and reward was considered when investment strategies were set for 2020/21 and in the current economic climate continues to be a most important consideration. The "return of the principal" is more important than the "return on the principal": our primary concern is to ensure that the funds invested will be repaid on time and in full. This remains our approach during the current financial year.

7.8   The benchmarking data also indicated that other authorities, on average, held more longer-term investments which resulted in negative overall returns for the average authority. The Council was able to make a positive net return, even after capital losses due to our higher proportion from internally managed investments.

8.   <u>Use of Treasury Advisors</u>

8.1   The Council are advised by Arlingclose Ltd. They advise on all aspects of treasury management but their main focus is on providing advice on the following matters:

- the creditworthiness of banks
- the most cost effective ways of borrowing
- appropriate responses to Government initiatives
- technical and accounting matters.

9.   <u>Compliance with the Council's Treasury Strategy</u>

9.1   As required by the statutory borrowing framework, the Council is required to set a number of prudential limits and indicators. These limits are set annually and can be found within the budget and Treasury Strategy.

9.2   For the operational implementation of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy the most important limits and indicators that need to be monitored throughout the year are:

- The authorised limit – the maximum amount of borrowing that the Council permits itself to have outstanding at any one time
- The operational limit – a lower limit to trigger management action if borrowing is higher than expected.
- The maximum proportion of debt that is fixed rate.
- The maximum proportion of debt that is variable rate.
- Limits on the proportion of debt maturing in a number of specified time bands
- Limits on sums to be invested for more than 364 days

9.3   These limits are monitored and have been complied with.

10.   Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

10.1   Financial Implications

This report is solely concerned with financial issues.

10.2   Legal implications

Kamal Adatia, Legal Services, has been consulted as Legal Advisor and there are no legal issues.

10.3   Equalities implications

None

10.4   Climate Emergency implications

n/a

10.5   Other implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	No	
Policy	No	
Sustainable and Environmental	No	
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	
Corporate Parenting	No	
Health Inequalities Impact	No	

11.   Background Papers

11.1   The Council's Treasury Management Strategy - "Treasury Strategy 2020/21" (Council 19th February 2020). The Council's Treasury Policy Document – "Framework for Treasury Decisions" – Council 19th February 2020.

12.   Consultation

12.1   Arlingclose Ltd (the Council's Treasury Management advisers).

13.   Author

13.1   The author of this report is Nick Booth, Treasury Manager, on 0116 454 4063.

Alison Greenhill, Director of Finance

Leicester City Council
Scrutiny Review

The Viability and Appropriateness of a Community Lottery

A Review Report of the
Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission

Neighbourhoods Services SC - 28th September 2020
Overview Select Committee – 3rd December 2020

Contents

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission

Commission Members Task Group

Late Councillor Jean Khote (Chair)
Councillor Aminur Thalukdar (Vice Chair)
Councillor Hanif Aqbany
Councillor Rashmikant Joshi
Councillor Ratilal Govind
Councillor Nita Solanki
Councillor Ruma Ali

Evidence to the Commission was provided by

Allison Greenhill: Leicester City Council
Marc Clawson: Leicester City Council
Andrew Shilliam: Leicester City Council
Georgia Humby: Leicester City Council
George Ballentyne: Leicester City Council
Hannah Watkins: Leicester City Council
Nicola Bassindale: Leicester City Council

Cath Lewis, STAR Service Manager

Information was provided on lottery consideration in the following local authorities:

Cambridgeshire County Council
Harrow MB Council
Aylesbury Vale BC
Shropshire County Council
South Staffordshire Council

FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to present this report on behalf of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission, but I would first of all ask us to reflect on a sad loss to the Commission, the council and the wider community. The review was instigated and was being progressed by Cllr Jean Khote as chair of this scrutiny commission.

Unfortunately, and sadly, Cllr Khote fell ill and died in February of this year. She was a dedicated and popular councillor and the work of this task group has progressed in her shadow and in her memory.

The disastrous development of the coronavirus pandemic also cast a heavy shadow over the city, its communities and the work of the authority. We did not take any specific evidence about how this event might affect our considerations.

We took evidence from a wide range of organisations and individuals and looked at how a community lottery might operate in Leicester and how similar schemes have operated within other communities.

We are grateful in particular to the comprehensive briefing provided by City Council officers which we found informative and well-balanced. It was important in helping us as members navigate our way around the key issues relating to the setting up and running of a local lottery.

There were two key issues within our final considerations. One was: Who stands to gain? The other was: Who might lose?

The second question was perhaps easier to answer. The council could in some circumstances, particularly if the community lottery was not to be successful, could suffer financial and reputational damage. But perhaps more importantly, over time this commission has received important evidence about how damaging the effects of gambling can be.

Evidence to the Commission's review of the impact of fixed odds betting terminals showed that gambling can extract a terrible toll even at low levels of spending. Inevitably this had the most significant impact on the poorest members of our communities.

A range of local organisations and community groups might stand to gain, in financial terms, from the proceeds of a community lottery, but to what extent is not clear. It was our view that this community gain would also come at a community cost. In the light of the wider issues of poverty within or communities the commission felt the right thing to do was to reject the proposal of a community lottery at this time.

Councillor Aminur Thalukdar

Acting Chair of Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1   Background to the Review and Key Findings

1.1.1.   The purpose of this review is to highlight the potential risks, benefits, and the impacts involved for Leicester City Council in considering the option of setting up and running a local community lottery.

1.1.2.   As budget pressures continue to grow on all aspects of the council's work, there will continue to be an impact on the funding available for the voluntary and community sector in Leicester.

1.1.3.   New funding and income generation options need to be considered. Many councils are now operating or considering a local Community Lottery as a means of accessing new funding to support local causes.

1.1.4.   However the Commission also considered whether, however profitable a local lottery might be, it would be appropriate for the Council to set up such a fund-raising system within the city.

1.1.5.   The Commission considered evidence from a range of authorities on why and how they had set up a local lottery. There was also information on why councils had decided against setting up a local lottery.

1.1.6.   The Commission also considered the impact of gambling in a previous Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement report on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals which found that even comparatively low levels of gambling could have a seriously disruptive impact on households struggling with debt.

1.1.7.   The impact of gambling will have been amplified in successive years because of a range of measures limiting housing and other benefits, and by the introduction of Universal Credit, which has typically caused extreme, if short-term, income crises.

1.1.8.   Members considered that in the light of local and national evidence to the Commission, and the existing range of gambling options, the Task Group would recommend that the council should not introduce a local lottery.

RECOMMENDATION

1.1.9.   **The Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission considers that the setting up of a local lottery in Leicester should not be pursued at this point. The scheme would have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable individuals, households and communities in Leicester and would not be consistent with the aims and objectives of the city council's developing Anti-Poverty strategy.**

REPORT

1.1.10. **Background**

1.1.11. Local Authorities have been receiving less and less Central Government money over the years to deliver and improve local services, so other options for accessing funds need to be considered.

1.1.12. In September 2019 the Neighbourhood Services Commission was asked to explore the viability of a community lottery and drew up a scoping document to review the possibility, viability and desirability of setting up a locally based lottery within Leicester.

1.1.13. A copy of the scoping document can be found at Appendix A.

1.1.14. A task group meeting took place in October 2019. However, it was not possible to set up further meetings due to a combination of circumstances, including General Election campaign, the Covid-19 crisis and the unfortunate illness of the Chair of the Commission.

1.1.15. The task group members and officers commend Late Councillor Jean Khote for her dedication and leadership.

1.1.18. A comprehensive position paper on the issues relating to a possible Community Lottery was provided by officers. This paper can be found in APPENDIX B.

1.1.19. Some local Authorities have reported facing a number of issues and potential challenges in the process of setting up local lotteries. Some areas were concerned that other lotteries, other than obvious national lotteries (The National Lottery, Euro millions, The People's Postcode Lottery etc.) were being delivered in the local area and that this could provide competition and lead to low take up to the local lottery.

1.1.20. A local authority lottery scheme does not generate income directly for the council. Charities or good causes generally receive up to 60% per £1 ticket sold, with 20% distributed as prize money and 20% retained for administration.

1.1.21. A number of local authorities have now created local lotteries. These tend to be done through specialist operators. Gatherwell is one of the leading companies involved in this market and provide lotteries for some 60 authorities. A list provided by Gatherwell of councils for which they operate a local lottery can be found in APPENDIX C.

1.1.22. In schemes operated for other authorities, tickets are sold at £1 each and draws take place weekly. Sums generated by the lottery are paid to community bodies/ charities and are not available to the City Council. A procurement exercise would be required to select an operator.

Advantages of a local lottery

- New funding for good causes
- Zero or minimal costs to the Council other than start-up costs
- Greater public exposure for local causes and additional opportunities for support which they may not otherwise receive
- Players can choose the causes they support from those who have subscribed to the scheme
- Opportunity for the Council to influence which causes are supported

Disadvantages of a local lottery

- Amount generated for good causes is tiny, and unlikely to be worth the effort (median estimate is £40,000 a year)
- The City Council could be deemed to be encouraging gambling
- Negative attention from the media is likely (as was the case with Aylesbury Vale) – **The Bucks Herald, 2015**
- A gambling license would need to be obtained
- The Council will be responsible for marketing the lottery, and therefore will have to bear the initial expense of doing so
- Leicester residents who are on low incomes may play the lottery, hoping for a win, but ending up worse off
- Prizes offered are small relative to the 1,000,000/1 chance of actually winning the jackpot (e.g. **Lyme Lottery, 2019)**
- Increased competition for charities running their own lotteries (Rainbows Hospice, LOROS, etc.)
- Potential impact on collection of council tax

THE LEICESTER CONTEXT

A local lottery: the costs to Leicester City Council

1.1.23. Costs are estimated at £10,000 in year one, falling to £3,000 to £5,000 thereafter, based on the information shared by Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council (2019). These could be recouped from the lottery proceeds, if these are sufficient. Income figures below suggest they could be after year one. Any surplus is added to the amount for good causes.

1.1.24. There is an administrative effort required to launch any scheme in year one. At **Newcastle** this involved a launch event at a theatre along with promotions including billboards, media coverage and advertising campaigns. Subsequent promotion could be done through the Council's website and social media platforms.

1.1.25. The Council would be responsible for approving applications by good causes to join the lottery. The Council would also have to authorise monthly payments and prepare a Gambling Commission lottery return.

Local lottery income

1.1.26. Annual income estimates are based on figures provided by Gatherwell, tempered by figures actually achieved at Portsmouth, whose scheme is operational. This suggests a best-case scenario of 2,000 ticket sales a week and a prudent best estimate of 1,500.

1.1.27. Income is split into percentages pre-determined by Gatherwell, as shown below. Gatherwell retains 17% of the income generated.

Annual Tickets (£1 each)				
Breakdown	Amount	39,000	78,000	104,000
Gatherwell	£ 0.17	£ 6,630.00	£ 13,260.00	£ 17,680.00
Prizes	£ 0.20	£ 7,800.00	£ 15,600.00	£ 20,800.00
Good causes	£ 0.50	£19,500.00	£ 39,000.00	£ 52,000.00
Council admin	£ 0.10	£ 3,900.00	£ 7,800.00	£ 10,400.00
VAT	£ 0.03	£ 1,170.00	£ 2,340.00	£ 3,120.00
Total	£ 1.00	£39,000.00	£ 78,000.00	£104,000.00

Leicester City Council Anti-Poverty Strategy

Leicester City Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy is being developed in the context of the city having some of the most deprived communities in the country. This deprivation is a reflection of high unemployment in some parts of the city combined with low wages Leicester's deprivation is reflected in the publication of IMD (Indices of Multiple Deprivation) data in 2019.[1]

1.1.28. The main features of the IMD data for Leicester are as follows:

- The most deprived areas of Leicester have generally remained unchanged since 2015 and social housing estates feature prominently.
- There are fewer Leicester areas amongst England's most deprived 10% of areas, falling from 46 to 39[2].
- Two areas have slipped into England's most deprived 10%; these are in Saffron and Eyres Monsell
- Six areas in the city are ranked within the most deprived 1% in England. They are: Saffron (2), New Parks (1), Braunstone (2) and Fosse (1)

---

[1] The level of Leicester deprivation within the IMD data may be understated in that (pre-Coronavirus) the city had higher levels of stated employment than other similarly deprived councils – but that the employment was mainly low wage, low productivity work, with zero-hours contracts featuring significantly.

[2] This may reflect other areas also becoming more deprived as well as improvements within Leicester.

1.1.29. Leicester is amongst the 10% most deprived of local authorities for:

- Income
- Education, Skills and Training
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children
- Income Deprivation Affecting Older People

1.1.30. Income deprivation affecting children (aged 0-15 in income-deprived families) indicates that:

- Leicester is amongst the most deprived 10% local authorities for Income Deprivation Affecting Children and reports a more deprived rank in 2019
- 16% of Leicester's 0 to 15-year-olds live in the most deprived 5% of areas nationally.
- 43% of 0 to 15-year-olds live in the most deprived 20% of areas nationally.

1.1.31. The picture among older people presented by the IMD data is that:

- Leicester is amongst the most deprived 10% local authorities for Income Deprivation Affecting Older People and reports a more deprived rank in 2019.
- 21% of Leicester's 60+ population reside in the most deprived 5% of areas nationally.
- 50% of Leicester's 60+ population year olds reside in the most deprived 20% of areas nationally.

1.1.32. Against the local picture of low-income and vulnerable evidence there is evidence at national level that gambling, including playing the National Lottery, impacts excessively on low-income households.

1.1.33. An international study[3] published in 1995 looked at the impact of the introduction of the National Lottery and concluded that:

> ***The increase in average gambling expenditure associated with the introduction of a national lottery in the United Kingdom has led to a pronounced increase in the prevalence of excessive gambling, especially in low-income households. This is likely to increase the prevalence of gambling disorders and to exacerbate social inequalities in health.***

1.1.34.   The study found that the proportion of low-income households (on less than £200 a week) that gambled more than 10% of their income increased from 0.6% to 3.2%.

---

[3] https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10946444/

GAMBLING ISSUES WITHIN LEICESTER

1.1.35. The Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission in 2016 published a review which looked at the impact of gambling on individuals and communities within Leicester.[4]

1.1.36. The report examined the specific impact of Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) but received evidence on the impact of a wide range of gambling practices across the city.

1.1.37. It concluded that:

> *"Members found there was a lack of detailed local evidence about the impact of gambling on individuals and communities. However a sample survey conducted for this review found there were sometimes devastating consequences of gambling for individuals.*
>
> *For some the spending of comparatively small sums of money appeared to have had a disruptive effect on household finances. In other cases losses for some people ran into tens of thousands of pounds"*

1.1.38. The issues relating to a local lottery clearly do not involve the precipitate and disastrous losses of large sums of money in a short period of time. However a survey was conducted on behalf of the FOBT review by members of STAR, Leicester City Council's Supporting Tenants and Residents organisation. The results of the survey can be found in APPENDIX D.

1.1.39. Almost by definition STAR staff were (and are) dealing with households in financial difficulties. And it is worth noting that the government's squeeze on housing-related benefits, as well as the introduction of Universal Credit, will have increased the strains on household budgets in the period since 2016, when the STAR survey took place.

1.1.40. Cath Lewis, the STAR service manager, summarised the survey results at an NSCI task group meeting. The minutes of the meeting say:

> *"(Her) paper reflected a sample of cases – both walk-in short-term clients and others going through a longer, more complex, relationship with STAR case workers. The 46 cases probably reflected about a third of the agency's workload for the week.*
>
> *STAR worked with 22,000 tenants and when they were referred to the agency many were in serious difficulties and often facing eviction and*

---

[4] The impact of gambling on vulnerable communities in Leicester: NSCI: April 2016

family break-up. Over the last year STAR had worked with around 3,500 clients.

She said the agency had not been collecting specific data on gambling issues but had agreed to run a pilot – and was surprised to find how significant the issue was.

Key findings were:

- *20 out of 46 clients questioned said they had some form of gambling problem.*
- *Scratch cards and lottery tickets were identified as the main source of gambling*
- *Betting shops featured in 12 of the 20 cases*
- *Thirty-five of the clients were white British.*
- *Twenty-two described themselves as single and aged between 25 and 55*
- *The gender split was 19 females and 27 males.[5]*

The responses indicated that some clients used multiple gambling outlets (the total numbers involving betting shops and lottery/scratch card users was greater than the number of clients reporting gambling issues.

1.1.41. The review report said:

> "*More than half of those polled by STAR officers (26 out of 46) stated that they did not have any issues with gambling. Eleven of those who said they did not have an issue with gambling said they bought lottery and/or scratchcards.*
>
> *Just 14 out of 46 clients interviewed said they did not gamble in any way, which implies that almost 70% of those questioned identified themselves as having a gambling habit, or at least identified that they did gamble.*
>
> *Some of the comments which clients made indicated a high level of self-awareness about the economic, social and emotional damage of gambling. What is significant is not the high levels of gambling spend, distressing and damaging as these might be – it is the fact that comparatively low levels of spending (at least for many people) can cause deep damage to individuals and their families.*
>
> *In many cases the council is a victim in that it is losing money – rent or council tax – which should be going to the*

---

[5] There was some surprise at the comparatively high number of women against expected figures; gambling is often seen as mainly a male issue.

housing revenue account. Further, the authority may have to deal with the consequences of debt – through making a family or individual homeless then providing resources to ensure they continue to have some form of shelter rather than being on the street."

1.1.42. Another aspect of gambling considered by the commission at that time was the potentially addictive nature of gambling, and its links to mental health issues.

1.1.43. The themes of addiction, mental health issues and their relationship to gambling are referred to separately in the Equalities Implications comments in section 2.3.

The Gambling Commission

1.1.44. The Gambling Commission has set out its views on local lotteries and says these are a form of gambling and as such local authorities are required to ensure children and other vulnerable people are not exploited by their lottery.

1.1.45. It says the minimum age for participation in a society or local authority lottery is 16 years of age. A person commits an offence if they invite or allow a child to enter such a lottery. Licensed societies and local authorities running lotteries must have written policies and procedures in place to help prevent and deal with cases of under-age play.

1.1.46. It advises that lotteries are a form of gambling and as such societies and local authorities are required to ensure that children and other vulnerable people are not exploited by their lottery.

1.1.47. Licence holders must take all reasonable steps to ensure information about how to gamble responsibly and how to access information and help in respect of problem gambling is readily available.

1.1.48. In other respects the Gambling Commission has a light touch approach to local lotteries, and does not see them as a serious issue in the context of other gambling issues.

CROWD-FUNDING LEICESTER

Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet.[1][2] is a form of crowdsourcing and alternative finance. In 2015, over US$34 billion was raised worldwide by crowdfunding.[3]

Although similar concepts can also be executed through mail-order subscriptions, benefit events, and other methods, the term crowdfunding refers to Internet-mediated registries.[4]

This modern crowdfunding model is generally based on three types of actors: the project initiator who proposes the idea or project to be funded, individuals or groups who support the idea, and a moderating organization (the "platform") that brings the parties together to launch the idea.[5]

Crowdfunding has been used to fund a wide range of for-profit entrepreneurial ventures such as artistic and creative projects, medical expenses, travel, and community-oriented social entrepreneurship projects

1.1.49. While some authorities have looked to local lotteries to provide support to third parties such as charities and community groups, another mechanism also provides help for such organisations in the form of crowd-funding appeals.

1.1.50. This takes the form of crowd-funding, whereby individual projects or organisations seek to raise money from the public, and is supported by a range of partners, including local Crowdfunding authorities.

1.1.51. Leicester City Council set up a crowd-funding initiative in 2017, in partnership with Spacehive, which is an agency which partners authorities in similar projects across the country.[6]

1.1.52. Supported by the City Mayor it is backed by a £100,000 fund and will offer up to £10,000 to support projects which are crowd-funding.

1.1.53. Council support comes through the Community Engagement Fund, set up to support innovative projects that address the general aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty, in particular by:

- Eliminating discrimination, victimisation and harassment;
- advancing equality of opportunity;
- fostering good relations between communities and groups[7].

1.1.54. There are also other things that are considered before funding, including the level of community interest and support, as well as

---

[6] https://www.spacehive.com/movement/crowdfundleicester
[7] https://www.spacehive.com/movement/crowdfundleicester?platform=hootsuite

overall progress towards reaching the campaign target as projects move along. Where there are good levels of interest and strong prospects that campaigns will be successful without a contribution from the Council then we will not always make a contribution from the Community Engagement Fund. This is in keeping with the notion of crowdfunding and our efforts to encourage funding and support from the widest and most appropriate range of funders as possible.

As an overview of the campaigns since our first full year i.e. 2018:

- ✓ 2018 – 4 campaigns received a total of £14,500 from the Community Engagement Fund.
- ✓ 2019 – 4 campaigns received a total of £14,250 from the Community Engagement Fund. Note: the number of campaigns supported in both years i.e. 4, and the similar funding level is coincidental and not intentional.
- ✓ 2020 to date – 3 campaigns have received a total of £11,000 from the Community Engagement Fund.

Total Leicester City Council fund (including Ward Community Meeting funds) contribution to date - £46,250

Total contributions from other backers - £359,495

Total backing for all 18 successful campaigns to date - £405,745

1.1.55. The scheme is also supported financially by the city's Business Improvement District (BID) and Highcross Leicester and has been able to work with councillors through ward community funds.

1.1.56. A range of projects has successfully raised funds through the crowd-funding mechanism, and a total of 37 schemes, either successful or in preparation, is listed on the Spacehive site. [8]

1.1.57. They include a proposed Joe Orton memorial, a Little Theatre memorial fund-raiser and community drumming for residents in Beaumont Leys.

OTHER OPTIONS

1.1.58. As the chances of winning the National Lottery jackpot are extremely slim (around 45,000,000/1), players may be willing to accept the smaller jackpot offered by the Local Authority lottery, as it is half the price to play and there is a greater chance of winning.

---

[8] https://www.spacehive.com/movement/crowdfundleicester/projects

1.1.59.   However alternative lottery options are also available. One is the Health Lottery. It is the same price to play and the jackpot offered is four times that of the Local Authority lottery. Having said that, the odds against winning are more than double that of the Local Authority lottery and the jackpot prize would be split if there were multiple winners. (**The Health Lottery, 2019**)

1.1.60.   There are also more specialised versions of the lottery that offer a better risk/reward balance for players. Online betting companies such as Betfred offer options to players that allow them to only play a certain amount of numbers from the lottery draw.

1.1.61.   As some lotteries have a "fairer" reward available, relative to their chances of winning, the Local Authority Lottery may be seen as unfair. The charitable donations offered may seem desirable to some, but many people will be playing the lottery mainly to win and will therefore look elsewhere to find greater chances of winning.

1.1.62.   Those whose main aim is to donate to charity can do so themselves with 100% of the donation going to the charity (plus Gift Aid where applicable), rather than 50% of a lottery ticket. Most authorities operating lotteries are smaller bodies, such as borough and district councils, though some London authorities and counties run such schemes. Within Leicestershire, for example, lotteries are run by **Blaby, Charnwood, Harborough** and **Melton councils**.

1.1.63.   Additionally, some members of the public are likely to take the view that operating a local lottery will be a precursor to further spending cuts on services, as was the case with locals in Aylesbury Vale[9] (**The Bucks Herald, 2015**).

---

[9] - http://www.bucksherald.co.uk/news/vale-lottery-slammed-for-promoting-gambling-in-aylesbury-1-6953502

1.1.64. **Cambridgeshire County Council**[10] considered setting up a local lottery but in February 2020 decided to abandon the effort, considering that the effort involved would be great and the benefits rising not significant enough. A report by the commercial and investment committee concluded that "whilst there may be some financial benefit for charities" the positives were outweighed by the negatives.

1.1.65. **Shropshire County Council** considered setting up a local lottery but rejected it[11] on the grounds that the scheme would not provide enough benefits to the authority.

1.1.66. **South Staffordshire Council** Community Lottery was launched in 2017 to raise funds to support the district's community and voluntary sectors. However, the community lottery that aimed to raise £100,000 to support good causes in South Staffordshire netted less than half the target amount by the end of the 2019 financial year.[12]

1.1.67. A report to the council said: "In order to support officers with marketing and public relations a new marketing consultancy has now been appointed. The South Staffordshire Community Lottery will be a key focus area."

1.1.68. **Harrow Council**, in West London, agreed in 2018 to set up a local lottery, awarding a five-year management contract to Gatherwell worth almost £175,000.[13]

1.1.69. The council is considering raising the profile of the lottery through a fresh marketing exercise; this has been put on hold due to the financial and social disruption caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

CONCLUSIONS

---

[10] https://www.cambstimes.co.uk/news/county-council-scraps-lottery-proposal-1-6495654
[11] https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/local-hubs/shrewsbury/2019/07/19/community-lottery-plan-rejected-by-council/
[12] https://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/staffordshire/south-staffordshire/2019/07/10/community-lottery-significantly-below-income-target-of-100k/
[13] https://www2.harrow.gov.uk/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=64379

1.1.70. It is valid for the council to consider setting up a locally-focused community lottery, a route to raising funds for local organisations undertaken by a wide number of other local authorities.

1.1.71. Most councils which have set up local lotteries have a very different profile to that of Leicester, and it is not especially helpful to make direct comparisons and draw meaningful conclusions from the experiences of other authorities.

1.1.72. Having acknowledged that a number of local lotteries have not performed as hoped for or expected, and this trend is likely to have been accentuated by the Coronavirus pandemic.

1.1.73. In Leicester there already exists a number of opportunities to take part in lotteries. There is also the option of the city council's crowd-funding scheme, which achieves the objectives of local lotteries in that is supports local initiatives, projects and organisations.

1.1.74. Community contributions to crowd-funding schemes do not involve betting with the prospect of winning a significant amount, though there may be social "returns" through investing in the local community.

1.1.75. The most significant issue for members to consider is the potential damage done to vulnerable individuals, households and communities by gambling. The 2016 NCSI report on fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) noted that even comparatively small sums being bet could be hugely disruptive to the people involved and their families.

1.1.76. Mental health problems, including a range of addictive or compulsive behaviours, are associated with betting problems and have a significant impact on vulnerable communities and individuals. These factors are set out in significant detail within the equality impact comments in section 3.3.

1.1.77. Members may consider that promoting a local lottery would not be consistent with the wider aims and values of the authority, particularly within the framework of the developing anti-poverty strategy.

2. Financial, Legal and Other Implications

2.1 Financial Implications

The establishment of a community lottery would require initial investment in terms of launch and marketing costs. The report also highlights the need for an ongoing profile to retain and stimulate ticket sales. Some administration costs would also be incurred.

The council would not directly benefit from any funds raised as net profits would be directed towards community organisations. The council would also have to administer a process to identify "eligible" organisations and keep this up to date.

The report identifies concerns specifically related to low income households and poverty in the city. The link to gambling issues and debt is also clearly identified and the potential adverse impact on housing rent and council tax collection.

Alison Greenhill, Director of Finance, Leicester City Council

2.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations but, in the event this is revisited legal advice should be sought on any proposed scheme and arrangements.

Emma Jackman, Head of Law (Commercial, Property & Planning), Leicester City Council.

2.3 Equality Implications

Community lottery– initial equalities considerations

There are conflicting views about whether problem gambling is an addiction or a 'behavioural' issue, however the NHS defines addiction as "not having control over doing, taking or using something to the point where it could be harmful to you".

https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/gambling-addiction/?tabname=body

Addiction, in and of itself, may not be deemed **a protected characteristic**, however there may be a disproportionate amount of people with particular protected characteristics who are affected by addiction, and, in particular, gambling addiction.

People who engage in problematic gambling are often young, male and come from families where gambling is the norm. But this is not always the case – people who gamble problematically can come from all walks of life, and population demographics are better at predicting what type of gambling someone will partake in, rather than whether or not they will have gambling problems.

Gambling and co-morbidity

Perhaps more than any other addiction, compulsive gambling is often accompanied by drug or alcohol dependency. In addition, gambling addiction is often accompanied by psychological disorders including mood disorders, anti-social personality disorders, depression, anxiety and insomnia.

Some research has found that people who have co-occurring substance abuse disorders and gambling disorders also tend to have higher rates of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), risky sexual behaviors, and antisocial personality disorder (Jazaeri and Habil, 2012).

Many of these psychological disorders may potentially meet the definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010, in individual cases. The definition under the Equality Act 2010 is; If you have a physical or **mental** impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

- 'substantial' is more than minor or trivial, e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed
- 'long-term' means 12 months or more, e.g. a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection

Therefore, it could be considered that there may be a link between gambling and disability (a protected characteristic) that would need to be considered proactively to understand the impacts and potentially to consider how any disproportionate negative impacts (if identified) could be mitigated for this group, prior to making a decision.

The impacts of gambling addiction

Compulsive gambling can lead to a wide range of problems that may well accumulate over time. A Swedish longitudinal study found that gamblers were 15 times more likely to die by suicide (Karlsson and Hakansson, 2018). Although, it is hard to isolate the role played by gambling, due to co-morbidity, which refers to the existence of multiple overlapping factors that may be present in subjects who take their own life.

For instance, if a subject was diagnosed with depression as well as a gambling disorder, the likelihood of suicide increased even further, but the risk did not appear to rise if substance misuse was added.
Having said this, the research cited above is not specific to community lotteries.

Equalities approach and statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty should be paid before and at the time a decision is taken, in such a way that it can influence the final decision.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In deciding whether to pursue a proposal to a have a community lottery, these considerations around risk factors and the impact on protected characteristics will need to be considered. However, should it be recommended that this is a proposal that can be scoped and potentially pursues, **a full EIA would be needed to examine, in detail, the impacts for people with different protected characteristics** and in order to ensure that, as an authority, we pay due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. This should be an integral part of the decision-making process.

Risk Factors

Several risk factors are related to gambling addiction, including;
Sex – Males are more likely to develop gambling disorder than females. Males are also more likely to develop the disorder at a younger age
- Age – Young and middle-aged adults are more likely to develop a gambling disorder than older adults.

- Ethnic background – people from ethnic minority groups may be more likely to be affected in some contexts
- Psychiatric history – Gambling disorders are more common in people who have anxiety, impulse control, depressive, and certain personality disorders.
- Substance abuse history – People with a substance abuse disorder are more likely to have a gambling disorder. Alcohol use disorders are particularly common in people who are diagnosed with a gambling addiction.
- Socioeconomic status – Gambling disorders are more common among people who live in lower socioeconomic areas

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

These would all need to be explored in relation to any proposal, along with other protected characteristics.

References

Jazaeri S, Habil MHB. (2012). Reviewing Two Types of Addiction – Pathological Gambling and Substance Use. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, 34(1), 5-11.*
American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.).* Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.
Karlsson, A., & Håkansson, A. (2018). Gambling disorder, increased mortality, suicidality, and associated comorbidity: A longitudinal nationwide register study. Journal of Behavioural Addictions, 7(4) 1091-1099. https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.7.2018.112

Equalities Team, Leicester City Council

3. **Summary of Appendices**
   Appendix A – Review scoping document
   Appendix B – Briefing paper from Leicester City Council
   Appendix C – List of councils whose local lottery is operated by Gatherwell.
   Appendix D – Results of STAR survey
   Appendix E - Executive Response template

4. **Officers to Contact**
   Jerry Connolly
   Scrutiny Policy Officer
   Jerry.Connolly@leicester.gov.uk
   0116 454 6343

   Anita Patel
   Scrutiny Policy Officer
   Anita.Patel@leicester.gov.uk
   Tel: 0116 454 6342

APPENDIX A

SCOPING DOCUMENT FOR THE REVIEW - THE VIABILITY AND
APPROPRIATENESS OF A COMMUNITY LOTTERY

Title of the proposed scrutiny review	Scrutiny Review of 'The Viability and Appropriateness of a local Community Lottery'
Proposed by	Cllr Jean Khote, Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission
Rationale Why do you want to undertake this review?	As budget pressures continue to grow on all aspects of the council's work, there will continue to be an impact on the funding available for the voluntary & community sector in Leicester. Therefore, new funding and income generation options need to be considered for the future. Many other councils are now operating or in the process of setting up a local Community Lottery as a means of accessing a new funding stream to support local good causes. Leicester City Council may want to consider the viability of a local Community Lottery as one option to raise funds for good causes.
Purpose and aims of the review What question(s) do you want to answer and what do you want to achieve? (Outcomes?)	The purpose of this review is to highlight the potential risks, the benefits and the impacts involved for Leicester City Council in considering the option of a local community lottery. It is hoped that the following outcomes would be achieved: • Understanding of what a Community Lottery is • Consider what the impact a Community Lottery would have on a Leicester's communities, including ethical and social implications as well as equalities implications • Understand what the resource implications for setting up and maintaining the Lottery are • Consider how current Council strategies and funding support for the VCS would impact having such a lottery system
Links with corporate aims / priorities How does the review link to corporate aims	This review topic links into the support for the city's *neighbourhoods and communities.*

and priorities?	Consideration to be given to: • The council's commitment to anti-poverty and the current work to develop an Anti-Poverty Strategy • The recent Scrutiny review into 'The Impact of Gambling on Vulnerable Communities' • Existing support for the voluntary and community sector for example via Crowdfund Leicester
Scope Set out what is included in the scope of the review and what is not. For example which services it does and does not cover.	The review will include: • the financial aspects and impacts • the ethnical and social implications • the resource implications • the risks and benefits to the council and the community The review will **not**: • set out a methodology of how to implement a community lottery, it will only consider the viability of having one.
Methodology Describe the methods you will use to undertake the review. How will you undertake the review, what evidence will need to be gathered from members, officers and key stakeholders, including partners and external organisations and experts?	The review evidence gathering will include: • Best practice and experience of other councils • Relevant supporting research reports and documents • Views of councillors re: impacts to wards
Witnesses Set out who you want to gather evidence from and how you will plan to do this	• LCC Financial and Community Services lead directors • LCC Lead Executive Members (e.g. Cllr Clair, Cllr Russell) • Council's regulatory responsibilities and impacts – lead directors • Council support for VCS – lead officers • Evidence from other councils
Timescales How long is the review expected to take to	Two months

complete?	
Proposed start date	October 2019
Proposed completion date	End of December 2019
Resources / staffing requirements Scrutiny reviews are facilitated by Scrutiny Officers and it is important to estimate the amount of their time, in weeks, that will be required in order to manage the review Project Plan effectively.	The review can be conducted within the resources of the scrutiny team. It is estimated a total of three weeks of collective time over the proposed period will be required to support the review and prepare the report.
Do you anticipate any further resources will be required e.g. site visits or independent technical advice? If so, please provide details.	No outside technical advice is envisaged to be needed.
Review recommendations and findings To whom will the recommendations be addressed? E.g. Executive / External Partner?	ALL recommendations will be directed to the City Mayor and Executive.
Likely publicity arising from the review - Is this topic likely to be of high interest to the media? Please explain.	It is expected that this review will generate medium media interest and the Lead Directors, the Executive lead and the council's communications team will be kept aware of any issues that may arise of public interest.
Publicising the review and its findings and recommendations How will these be published / advertised?	There will be a review report that will be published as part of the commission's papers on the council's website.

How will this review add value to policy development or service improvement?	The review hopes to set out clearly the potential impacts, the risks and the possible benefits of a local community lottery option.
Executive Lead's Comments The Executive Lead is responsible for the portfolio so it is important to seek and understand their views and ensure they are engaged in the process so that Scrutiny's recommendations can be taken on board where appropriate.	I am happy to be part of this review taken up by the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission Councillor Piara Singh Clair, Deputy City Mayor
Divisional Comments Scrutiny's role is to influence others to take action and it is important that Scrutiny Commissions seek and understand the views of the Divisional Director.	Local lottery schemes have attracted significant negative media elsewhere in the country. Careful consideration needs to be given to align with the Council's key strategic priorities, particularly anti-poverty.
Are there any potential risks to undertaking this scrutiny review? E.g. are there any similar reviews being undertaken, on-going work or changes in policy which would supersede the need for this review?	Negative publicity, conflict with gambling scrutiny review and conflict with the emerging anti-poverty strategy.
Are you able to assist with the proposed review? If	Yes, research resource will be available

23

not, please explain why. In terms of agreement / supporting documentation / resource availability?	314
Name	Alison Greenhill
Role	Director of Finance
Date	22 August 2019
Will the proposed scrutiny review / timescales negatively impact on other work within the Scrutiny Team? (Conflicts with other work commitments)	It is anticipated that there will no adverse impact on the scrutiny team's work, to support this review but it must be anticipated that there may need to be some prioritising of work done during the time of this review.
Do you have available staffing resources to facilitate this scrutiny review? If not, please provide details.	The review can be adequately support by the Scrutiny Team as per my comments above.
Name	Kalvaran Sandhu, Scrutiny Support Manager
Date	21/08/19

APPENDIX B

Local Authority Lotteries – Evidence Briefing for Task Group

Background

A number of local authorities have now created local lotteries. These tend to be done through specialist operators.

This note analyses a proposal produced by Gatherwell, to operate and manage a local lottery for the City Council. Gatherwell are one of the leading companies involved in this market and now provide lotteries for some 60 authorities. In schemes operated for other authorities, tickets are sold at £1 each and draws take place weekly.

Sums generated by the lottery are paid to community bodies/charities, and are not available to the City Council.

Were we to proceed with a lottery, a procurement exercise would be required to select an operator.

1. **Advantages of the Proposal**

    * New funding for good causes
    * No or minimal costs to the Council, other than initial set-up
    * Greater public exposure for local causes, and additional opportunities for support which they may not otherwise receive
    * Players can choose the good causes they support, from those who have subscribed to the scheme
    * Opportunity for the Council to influence which good causes are supported

2. **Disadvantages of the Proposal**

    * Amount generated for good causes is tiny, and unlikely to be worth the effort (median estimate is £40,000 per year)
    * The City Council could be deemed to be encouraging gambling
    * Negative attention from the media is likely (as was the case with Aylesbury Vale) – **The Bucks Herald, 2015**
    * A gambling licence would need to be obtained
    * The Council will be responsible for marketing the lottery, and therefore will have to bear the initial expense of doing so
    * Citizens of Leicester who are on low incomes may spend money playing the lottery, hoping for a win, but end up worse off
    * Prizes offered are small, relative to the 1,000,000/1 chance of actually winning the jackpot (e.g. **Lyme Lottery, 2019)**
    * Increased competition for charities running their own lotteries (Rainbows Hospice, LOROS, etc.)
    * Potential impact on collection of council tax

3. Costs to Leicester City Council

Costs are estimated at £10,000 in year one, falling to £3,000 to £5,000 thereafter, based on the information shared by Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council (2019). These can be recouped from the lottery proceeds, if these are sufficient. Income figures below suggest they will be after year one. Any surplus is added to the amount for good causes.

There is administrative effort required to launch the scheme in year 1. At Newcastle, this involved a launch event at a theatre; along with promotions including use of billboards, press coverage and advertising publications.

Subsequent promotion can be done through the Council's website and social media platforms.

The Council would be responsible for approving the applications submitted by good causes to join the lottery. The Council would also have to authorise monthly payments, and prepare a Gambling Commission lottery return.

4. Income

Annual income is based on figures provided by Gatherwell, tempered by figures actually being achieved at Portsmouth whose scheme is operational. This suggests a best-case scenario of 2,000 ticket sales per week, and a prudent best estimate of 1,500.

Income is split into percentages pre-determined by Gatherwell, as shown below. They themselves retain 17% of the income.

Annual Tickets (£1 each)				
Breakdown	Amount	39,000	78,000	104,000
Gatherwell	£ 0.17	£ 6,630.00	£ 13,260.00	£ 17,680.00
Prizes	£ 0.20	£ 7,800.00	£ 15,600.00	£ 20,800.00
Good causes	£ 0.50	£19,500.00	£ 39,000.00	£ 52,000.00
Council admin	£ 0.10	£ 3,900.00	£ 7,800.00	£ 10,400.00
VAT	£ 0.03	£ 1,170.00	£ 2,340.00	£ 3,120.00
Total	£ 1.00	£39,000.00	£ 78,000.00	£104,000.00

5. Other Considerations

As the chances of winning the National Lottery jackpot are extremely slim (around 45,000,000/1), players may be willing to accept the smaller jackpot offered by the Local Authority lottery, as it is half the price to play and there is a greater chance of winning.

However, there are alternative lottery options available to players that may be more attractive. One example is the Health Lottery. It is the same price to play and the jackpot offered is 4 times that of the Local Authority lottery. Having said that, the odds of winning are more than double that of the Local Authority lottery and the jackpot prize would be split if there were multiple winners. (**The Health Lottery, 2019**)

There are also more specialised versions of the lottery that offer a better risk/reward balance for players. Online betting companies such as Betfred offer options to players that allow them to only play a certain amount of numbers from the lottery draw.

As some lotteries have a "fairer" reward available, relative to their chances of winning, the Local Authority Lottery may be seen as unfair by the citizens of Leicester. The charitable donations offered may seem desirable to some, but many people will be playing the lottery primarily to win money and will therefore look elsewhere to find greater chances of winning.

For those whose prime objective is to donate to charity, they can do so themselves with 100% of the donation going to the charity (plus Gift Aid where applicable), rather than 50% of a lottery ticket. Additionally, some members of the public are likely to take the view that operating a local lottery will just be a precursor to further spending cuts on services, as was the case with locals in Aylesbury Vale (**The Bucks Herald, 2015**).

It is possible that a local lottery in Leicester would be met with negative reactions, resulting in a low volume of ticket sales. However, Portsmouth lottery's tickets are still selling well two years on (approx. 1,700 a week).
It is worth noting though that the majority of authorities operating lotteries are smaller bodies, such as borough and district councils. Appendix 1 provides a list of local authority lotteries run through Gatherwell.
Additionally, it is possible that a local lottery in Leicester would generate high ticket sales. The BH Coastal lottery is currently selling approximately 3,200 tickets per week (according to Phil Wright, Business Development Manager at Gatherwell). However, ticket sales may decline over time, as they did in Portsmouth.

Sources Used
Betfred Lotto, **2019 -** www.betfred.com/lotto
Gambling Commission, 2019 –
https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/home.aspx
Gatherwell, 2019 (brochure)
The Health Lottery, **2019**- https://www.healthlottery.co.uk/
LOROS Lottery celebrating 20 years, **2019** - http://www.loros.co.uk/support-us/lottery/
Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council, 2019 (report)
Lyme Lottery, 2019 – https://www.lymelottery.co.uk/
Melton Community Lottery, **2019** - https://www.meltonlottery.co.uk/
The National Lottery, **2019** - https://www.national-lottery.co.uk/
Portsmouth Lottery, **2019** - https://www.portsmouthlottery.co.uk/
Rainbows Lottery, **2017** - https://www.rainbows.co.uk/get-involved/rainbows-lottery/
The Bucks Herald, 2015 - http://www.bucksherald.co.uk/news/vale-lottery-slammed-for-promoting-gambling-in-aylesbury-1-6953502
Vale Lottery, **2017** - https://www.valelottery.co.uk/

28

APPENDIX C

List of Local Authority Lotteries operated by Gatherwell

Local Authority	London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
Aylesbury Vale District Council	London Borough of Bexley
Blaby District Council	Mansfield District Council
Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	Melton Borough Council
Borough of Telford & Wrekin	Mendip District Council
Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council	Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Council
Bracknell Forest Council	North Lincolnshire Council
Breckland Council	Northampton Borough Council
Broxbourne Borough Council	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Broxtowe Borough Council	Portsmouth City Council
Cambridgeshire County Council	Powys County Council
Charnwood Borough Council	Rugby Borough Council
Cheltenham Borough Council	Rushmoor Borough Council
Cherwell District Council	Somerset West and Taunton Council
Chiltern District Council	South Bucks District Council
City of Lincoln Council	South Hams District Council
Corby Borough Council	South Kesteven District Council
Daventry District Council	South Oxfordshire District Council
Dover District Council	South Staffordshire District Council
East Herts Council	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Eastbourne Borough Council	Surrey Heath Borough Council
Essex County Council	Tandridge District Council
Gloucester City Council	Thanet District Council
Guildford Borough Council	The Oxford City Council
Harborough District Council	Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
Harrogate Borough Council	Torbay Council
Harrow Council	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Hart District Council	West Berkshire Council
Havant Borough Council	West Devon Borough Council
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	Worcester City Council
Lewes District Council	Wycombe District Council

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF STAR SURVEY: FEBRUARY 2016

Date	Office	Problem?	Nature of problem
02/02/16	Beaumont Leys	Yes	£50 - £100 Impacts on paying bills, tenancy at risk
02/02/16	Beaumont Leys	No	N/A
02/02/16	Beaumont Leys	No	N/A
02/02/16	Beaumont Leys	No	N/A
04/02/16	Beaumont Leys	No	N/A
04/02/16	Beaumont Leys	No	N/A
02/02/16	Beaumont Leys	No	N/A
02/02/16	Beaumont Leys	No	N/A
05/02/16	Beaumont Leys	No	N/A
05/02/16	Beaumont Leys	No	N/A
02/02/16	Braunstone and City	Yes	Affected my general well being
01/02/16	Braunstone and City	No	N/A
01/02/16	Braunstone and City	No	N/A
04/02/16	Braunstone and City	No	N/A
03/02/16	Braunstone and City	No	N/A
02/02/16	Braunstone and City	No	N/A
04/02/16	Braunstone and City	Yes	Spends £100 per week leaves no money for food
01/02/16	Braunstone and City	No	N/A
04/02/16	Braunstone and City	Yes	£10 per week Scratch cards/Lottery
02/02/16	Braunstone and City	No	N/A
03/02/16	New Parks	Yes	Spend more than they can afford and go without meals
02/02/16	New Parks	Yes	I think I may in lots of money
03/02/16	New Parks	No	N/A

Date	Office	Problem?	Nature of problem
02/02/16	New Parks	No	N/A
02/02/16	New Parks	No	N/A
03/02/16	New Parks	No	N/A

Date	Area	Problem?	Comment
03/02/16	New Parks	No	N/A
02/02/16	New Parks	Yes	I shoplift and sell goods to fund my gambling habit. I have lost money and an inheritance.
02/02/16	New Parks	Yes	Spend most of my money gambling
02/02/16	New Parks	No	N/A
03/02/16	Saffron	Yes	£20 - £30 per week
03/02/16	Saffron	Yes	Uses wife's pension money at the bookies
03/02/16	Saffron	Yes	Gambles regularly
03/02/16	Saffron	No	Do not believe it has an impact on myself or my family. Spend £6 a week.
03/02/16	Saffron	Yes	£250 per week. This was the entire household income, leaving us without food and the ability to pay bills.
02/02/16	Saffron	Yes	Work in a betting shop
02/02/16	Saffron	Yes	Would go without food and get into debt
04/02/16	Saffron	Yes	Not paying bills
03/02/16	Saffron	Yes	Spends over £10 per week
03/02/16	Saffron	Yes	£20 a week impact on the family as less income, causing arguments, less food for the family
04/02/16	Saffron	Yes	Yes
02/02/16	Saffron	No	N/A
03/02/16	Saffron	Yes	£4 a week
04/02/16	St Matthews and Highfields	Yes	£10 a week on gambling which affect my financial situation
05/02/16	St Matthews and Highfields	No	N/A
05/02/16	St Matthews and Highfields	No	Spend everything in my pocket and borrowed money

Team	Count	Problem?	Count	How?	Count	Where	Count	How far?	Count
Beaumont Leys	10	Yes	20	Online	5	Casino	0	Home	4
Braunstone and City	10	No	26	In Person	27	Bingo	1	Within half a mile	18
St Matthews and Highfield	3			By Phone	0	Online	3	Half to five mile	9

31

								s	
s									
New Parks	10			N/A	14	Phone	0	Over 5 miles	0
Saffron	13					Betting Shop	12	N/A	15
						Scratch Cards/Lottery	16		
						Pools	0		
						N/A	14		

Family type	Count	Ethnicity		Gender	
Single 25 – 54	22	WHITE BRITISH	35	MALE	27
Pregnant Single 18 – 24	0	WHITE OTHER	1	FEMALE	19
Single Parent	6	ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH INDIAN	4	TRANSGENDER	0
Couple	6	ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH OTHER	2	PREFER NOT TO SAY	0
Couple with Children	3	BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH CARIBBEAN	1		
OAP 55+	7	OTHER	3		
Single 25 – 54	22				
Pregnant Single 18 – 24	0				

32

APPENDIX E

Executive Response to Scrutiny

The executive will respond to the next scrutiny meeting after a review report has been presented with the table below updated as part of that response.

<u>Introduction</u>

Scrutiny Recommendation	Executive Decision	Progress/Action	Timescales

323