

Supporting Students as Leeds Residents

University of Leeds Annual Report 2015-2016

This report provides an overview of the University of Leeds approach to supporting our students to be conscientious and responsible members of the local community during the academic year 2015-16. The purpose of this report is:

- (i) To provide information about the complaints made to the Neighbourhood Helpline Service involving University of Leeds students and our subsequent institutional response.
- (ii) To provide information on the Sustainability Service's work to ensure our students are responsible citizens that are aware of their impact on the local community, and of the opportunities that exist to play a positive part in the community during their time at Leeds.
- (iii) To highlight any emerging trends and issues affecting local communities.
- (iv) To outline developments and priority areas for the coming 12 months.

1. Report Highlights

- The University's strategic commitment to communities has been reiterated and strengthened with the publication of the University's new Strategic Plan and an integrated Sustainability Strategy (<http://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/sustainability-strategy/>).
- 1800 households were visited at the start of year. Student households were provided with a copy of our Living in Leeds Guide to support their integration into local communities.
- Student impacts are identified and collaboratively addressed through Sustainability Service representation at local meetings, committees and fora. These include neighbourhood forums, the Student Changeover Working Group, the Noise Nuisance Working Group, the Inner North-West Environmental Sub-group and the Inner North-West Community Committee.
- Between June 2015 and July 2016, the Sustainability Service responded to 52 complaints involving University of Leeds students. This represents 34% of all complaints made to the Neighbourhood Helpline. There has been a 27% reduction in the number of households reported for neighbourhood issues for the same period the previous year. Noise Nuisance is the dominant issue involving University of Leeds students with 90% of complaints relating to this.



- New projects and research have been initiated to address the social and environmental impacts of our students' poor waste management and recycling, particularly during student changeover, when high volumes of waste are generated.
- Work is underway to expand the University's Reuse@Leeds network, with the introduction of the Warpl system. This is with a view to establishing a citywide reuse network in the future, which will aim to increase the number of charitable donations and to encourage domestic reuse.

2. Introduction

The University is committed to maintaining and developing the good relations which we have established with our neighbouring communities. The University has delivered community engagement activities since 2000. This work continues to be sector leading and is often cited as best practice at a national level. The work has evolved from reacting to external pressures to one of genuine community partnership and consultation.

The University has a long strategic commitment to supporting local communities through policies and practices which seek to achieve a sustainable local community. We published our first Community Strategy in 2000, and over the last 16 years we have developed and enhanced our strategic commitments to provide a wide range of positive benefits to local communities. An example of this has been our work in developing student accommodation outside the agreed boundaries of the Area of Housing Mix (AHM). This was successfully implemented through the strengthening of meaningful relationships with local communities, and in supporting our students in playing an active and positive role as local residents.

Our commitments have been reiterated and strengthened by the publication of the University's new Strategic Plan. These include commitments to ensure that we are engaged with wider stakeholders to make certain that the University has a positive impact in the City and further afield, and to create opportunities locally through our research, innovation, teaching and enterprise.

The University's Sustainability Strategy underlines these commitments, and sets out a clear Action Plan that shows how the University will both build knowledge and capacity locally, and be a positive partner in society. Practically this includes establishing projects through the City Living Lab to enhance sustainability within the City and with external partners, supporting our students to be responsible citizens and an active part of society, through initiatives including Living in Leeds and the Universities and Colleges Neighbourhood Helpline, and providing a campus which is accessible and friendly, a place to build knowledge, experience sustainability in action and an integrated part of the Leeds experience.

3. Update on Project Activity

i. Identifying and collaboratively addressing key issues

Through ongoing dialogue and engagement with the local community the University works proactively to meet emerging local needs and play a positive role in society. The Sustainability Service engages with local communities at a grassroots level by attending



community meetings, committees and fora to provide a University perspective, and to listen to the needs of the community to support, enhance and develop our student engagement programme.

The Sustainability Service is also represented by Amanda Jackson on local working groups to address key student impacts. This includes a Noise Nuisance Working Group with the City's other Universities and Colleges, Police and Leeds Antisocial Behaviour Team. The group meet throughout the year to monitor and respond to noise issues in local communities. Through the group a number of collaborative approaches have been formulated to better prevent noise issues. This includes working in partnership to communicate to students, particularly at peak times which include the beginning of the academic year and Changeover. The Partnership have also been able to formulate an improved response to student's vulnerabilities through a collaborative communicative approach which signposts students to services including mental health, drug and alcohol support services.

Waste issues continue to be addressed through the Inner North-West Environmental Subgroup and Student Changeover Working Group. Through these groups ongoing waste and recycling issues are monitored, and communications are developed to educate and inform our students on how they can dispose of their waste in a social and environmentally responsible way.

ii. The Neighbourhood Helpline

The Neighbourhood Helpline has been in operation since 2000, and continues to be recognised as a valuable service alongside those of statutory authorities such as Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police. The Helpline operates as a partnership between the University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds Trinity University, Leeds College of Music and Leeds City College. The Neighbourhood Helpline is a mediation and education service which is used to remind our students about their responsibilities as residents of Leeds. All students involved with a Helpline case are engaged by the relevant College or University to raise awareness of the impact that they are having on others, and are provided with advice and information to correct a particular behavioural issue.

To ensure a consistent approach to complaint handling, each institution follows the procedures detailed in the Neighbourhood Helpline Code. The Code has been developed and adapted since 2007 to ensure that our students have an opportunity to correct their behaviour before disciplinary action is taken.

The Helpline service is well publicised in the local community with Helpline cards circulated to community and residents groups, as well as by Police Officers, GP surgeries, dentists and schools.

iii. Engaging Students as Responsible and Active Citizens

Collaborative student engagement campaigns are developed in response to ongoing, as well as emerging, student impacts. This includes our year-round activity as part of Living in Leeds, which involves visiting student households in the local community at the beginning of year. Our aim is to welcome students to the local area, whilst also making them aware that they are living amongst an already established community. as well as fostering a greater



sense of community for all residents. Supported by a team of student volunteers, over 1800 student and permanent resident households were visited in October 2015, an increase of 60% on the number of households visited the previous year. Each household was provided with information to support their integration in local communities. This included receiving a copy of our Living in Leeds guide developed to help our students make the most of their time in Leeds, as well as providing information on the essentials of being a Leeds resident.

This is supported by a range of communication throughout the year, which is undertaken through the Student Portal, social media, the Sustainability Service webpages, and an end of year weekly blog series to raise awareness of the impacts of noise from end of year celebrations. Last year, our student communications, including social media posts, blog posts and the Your Community sustainability webpages, were viewed over 93,000 times.

iv. Working on Waste and Changeover Issues

The Sustainability Service have implemented new projects and research to give fresh insights and develop new approaches to the issue of poor waste management and recycling amongst students, particularly during Changeover.

Last year the Sustainability Service established a new University-wide student-led working group, focusing on reducing waste and increasing recycling in residential areas close to campus. Membership of the group involves students from NetImpact, the Sustainability in Action group, Leeds University Union, Student Sustainability Architects and individual Green Reps from student Halls of Residences. The meetings will provide an opportunity to share ideas, and to explore ways to address ongoing problems with waste, in particular high levels of additional waste associated with the student Changeover period. Student representatives are currently scoping a number of projects to complement existing projects, including the Leave Leeds Tidy project, to further reduce the amount of reusable goods sent to landfill.

To further address issues around student Changeover the University has funded two student researchers to evaluate the economic, social and environmental impact of the period. The researchers undertook interviews with students and other key stakeholders to formulate recommendations for how we can reduce the impact in future. They are due to present these recommendations at the start of term in September, and will work with Leeds City Council and other partners to implement any changes to project delivery.

The Sustainability Service is expanding our sector leading Reuse@Leeds scheme to better facilitate the distribution of unwanted furniture on campus, with the introduction of the Warp-it resource redistribution network. Building on this work we hope to establish a City-wide reuse network to increase charitable donations. Initially, we would seek to create a City-wide furniture reuse network, with the view to expanding the system to one that will incorporate domestic reuse. Our plans are ambitious, but we believe that working in collaboration with other major organisations in the City would allow us to provide all stakeholders with the same massive savings, as well as reducing our City-wide carbon impact, and to create a reuse community that would put Leeds on the national map as leaders in the area. We have already received expressions of interest from Leeds City Council, the NHS and members of the Leeds Furniture Reuse Network.



4. Neighbourhood Helpline Cases Involving University of Leeds Students 2015-16

- Between June 2015 and July 2016, the Sustainability Service responded to 52 complaints involving University of Leeds students living in 34 households. This represents a 27% reduction in the number of households reported for neighbourhood issues for the same period the previous year.
- 34% of all complaints made to the Neighbourhood Helpline were attributed to University of Leeds students. This is consistent with previous years reporting.
- Peak times for issues involving University of Leeds students coincide with start of each semester with September (17%), January (13%), February (13%), March (13%) and June (12) being the peak months for complaints.
- Noise nuisance is the dominant issue reported to the Helpline involving University of Leeds students (90%), followed by other forms of antisocial behaviour (6%), parking (2%), waste, recycling and litter (2%).
- Hyde Park and Woodhouse is the ward area most affected by University of Leeds students negative behaviour (56%), followed by Headingley (44%).
- 52% of complaints required the Sustainability Service to communicate with our students through a letter or email regarding their behaviour. 42% of complaints required a home visit due to receiving more than one complaint, or due to them involving vulnerable residents. Escalation to an enquiry meeting or disciplinary action was not required as issues were resolved through a letter or home visit.

5. The Year Ahead

This forthcoming year, particular attention will be paid to the following issues and priorities. We will:

- Continue to support our students as active and responsible citizens through innovative collaborative projects;
- Continue to deliver the Living in Leeds campaign and increase the number of students engaged through Welcome to Leeds, social media, blogs, website and directly through events on campus;
- Support the delivery of the Living in Leeds campaign by recruiting additional volunteers to deliver additional student engagement activities throughout the year;
- Review recommendations of the Changeover and Living Lab research with Leeds City Council and other partners to address waste management and recycling issues in student concentrated areas and wider in other comparable inner city communities;
- Continue to deliver the Student Lead Waste Group to identify and implement new projects with the aim of reducing consumption, increase recycling and reuse, and reducing the impact of changeover;
- Repeat the successful end of year noise reduction campaign; and



- (vii) Identify funding opportunities to undertake additional research on student impacts. In particular a project to identify student perceptions around parties and noise, and to determine whether noise nuisance is an issue which is effectively been addressed by the Sustainability Service projects, including Living in Leeds and Neighbourhood Helpline.

Additional Information

For more information on the University's Strategic Plan visit:
strategy.leeds.ac.uk/

For more information on the Sustainability Strategy:
sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/sustainability-strategy/

For more information on how the University is making a positive contribution to society:
<http://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/being-a-positive-partner-in-society/>

The Helpline can be contacted on 0113 3431064 (Voicemail service) or
neighbourhood.helpline@leeds.ac.uk.

For more information on the Neighbourhood Helpline service and procedure:
leeds.ac.uk/sustainability/helpline.html

Sign up to our Community Newsletter to keep up to date with activities making a make a positive contribution to society:
sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/community-news/community-e-newsletter/

Your Guide to Living In Leeds:
<http://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Community-Guide2.pdf>

Contact our Sustainability Project Officer, Amanda Jackson at a.m.jackson@leeds.ac.uk, or 0113 3434073.

