

## Supporting Students as Local Residents

### University of Leeds Annual Report 2014-2015

This report provides an overview of the University of Leeds approach to support our students to be conscientious and responsible members of the local community during the academic year 2014-15. The purpose of this report is:

- (i) To provide information about the complaints made to the Neighbourhood Helpline 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 whom 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 and in wider society as alumni.
- (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/>
- 1100 households were visited at the start of year with the Get to Know Your Neighbour campaign to make our students aware they are part of an already established community.
- A Living in Leeds guide was introduced to support our students to live independently in the local community.
- Climate Change Week activities again sought to raise awareness and encourage sustainable living among our students including sustainable travel and waste reduction.
- Changeover activities were enhanced with the introduction of additional textile donation bins in local communities and a dedicated noise reduction campaign incorporating weekly tips and a corresponding blog on the Sustainability Service webpages.
- Initial scoping work has been undertaken to identify opportunities to expand the University's award winning Reuse@Leeds to a citywide reuse network to capitalise on the University's expertise and established network and provide local benefits through



increased charitable donations and reduced waste generation.

- The University handled complaints involving 48 households where our students are living in local communities.
- Noise nuisance continues to be the dominant issue reported to the Helpline (77%), followed by waste management (15%).
- The majority of complaints made to the Helpline involving University of Leeds were for a single one-off issue. Only 10% of cases involving our students were required to be escalated to a home visit after a second complaint.

## 2. Introduction

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 15 years we have developed and enhanced our strategic commitments to provide a wide range of positive benefits to local communities. For example by developing accommodation outside the agreed boundaries of the Area of Housing Mix (AHM), by strengthening meaningful relationships with local communities and in supporting our students in playing an active and positive role as local residents.

Our commitment has been reiterated and strengthened with the publication of the University's new strategic plan. These include those to ensure that we are engaged with wider stakeholders to ensure the University has a positive impact in the city and further afield and that we 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 with 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.

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 Metropolitan University, Leeds Trinity University, Leeds College of Music and Leeds City College. 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 Police Officer's, GP surgeries, dentists and schools.

Other collaborative approaches include campaigns to raise awareness and encourage behaviour including Get to Know your Neighbour, 10 Cities Love Food Hate Waste, Leave Leeds Tidy and Climate Change Week and noise reduction.

### **3. Update on project activity**

In the last 12 months the Neighbourhood Helpline has continued to build on our partnership arrangements with the City's universities and colleges as well as building on our multiagency work to tackle neighbourhood issues in partnership with Leeds University Union, Leeds Beckett Students Union, Leeds City Council and Police

The University Police Officer, PC Matt Guy has continued to provide his support to the Sustainability Service with responding to behaviour issues involving University of Leeds students. Support includes referring complaints made to the Police concerning noise and antisocial behaviour so that collaborative action can be taken, and supporting the Community and Housing Policy Officer with undertaking home visits. Matt's involvement reinforces the Helpline process by providing our students with a Police perspective on the consequences of their negative behaviour and reiterates the seriousness of the University of Leeds complaints process. For more details on the Helpline procedure, see the link at the end of this document.

This year, with Leeds Beckett Student Union now involved, we were able to expand the Get to Know Your Neighbour campaign to visit even more households. The campaign aims are to make students aware that they are living amongst an already established community as well as fostering a greater sense of community for all residents. This year, the team of student volunteers, supported by the Community and Housing Policy Officer and representatives from the students unions, visited just over 1100 households in neighbourhoods identified through the Helpline as those where students require additional support to understand their role in a wider community and not negatively impact on their neighbours.

Alongside the campaign we distributed our new Living in Leeds Guide to support our students to live independently in the local community. There are many things for our students to consider when making the move in to their first home- the guide is there to help them make the most of their time in Leeds as well as providing information on the essentials of being a Leeds resident.

Our annual programme of activity provided as part of Climate Change Week (2-6th March) again sought to raise awareness and encourage sustainable living among our students. The



focus of our activity this year included the themes of sustainable travel and waste reduction. The week long programme of activities included information stalls in the student's union foyer by Green Action, Green Exchange, Sustainability Service, Green Party Society and Leeds City Council waste advisors, a seminar on food waste with speakers from the Sustainable Research Institute, ASDA, Love Food, Hate Waste and The Real Junk Food Project, sustainability garden drop in sessions and Wacky Cycles were back on campus showing the benefits of cycling.

The Leave Leeds Tidy campaign, delivered by Leeds University Union, again provided information and advice to students through the changeover period with a dedicated communications strategy, student warden patrols and collections of unwanted items from local communities in partnership with Emmaus. To enhance this activity this year we were able to secure 10 new temporary community based textile bins to make it even easier for our students to donate their unwanted clothing, keep streets clear of waste and raise funds for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance.

In conjunction with Leave Leeds Tidy, the Sustainability Service delivered a new communications campaign to raise awareness on the impacts of noise from end of year celebrations on other residents and to encourage reporting to the Neighbourhood Helpline Service. The campaign combined practical weekly tips through social media along with a corresponding blog on the Sustainability webpages, including the impacts of noise on those still revising for their exams.

The Sustainability Service is currently scoping the opportunities to expand on our sector-leading Reuse@Leeds scheme to a citywide reuse network. Utilising our expertise and building on our established network we are seeking to widen participation whilst providing wider benefits to the City through increased charitable donations and domestic reuse. Initially we would seek to create a citywide furniture reuse network to freely distribute unwanted furniture, with the view to expanding the system to one that will incorporate domestic reuse. Our plan is ambitious, but we believe that working in collaboration with other major organisations in the city we could provide all stakeholders the same massive savings, reduce our city-wide carbon impact and create a reuse community that would put Leeds on the national map as 21st-century leaders. We have already received expressions of interest from Leeds City Council, NHS and the Leeds Furniture Reuse Network.

The University also produces a range of communication throughout the year to raise student's awareness of their neighbourhood responsibilities. These include waste, recycling and noise reduction messages on the student portal and social media.

#### **4. Neighbourhood Helpline Cases Involving University of Leeds Students 2014-15**

- The Sustainability Service handled complaints involving 48 households involving University of Leeds students living in local communities, a slight increase on the 42



households reported the previous year.

- 25% of all complaints made to the Neighbourhood Helpline were attributed to University of Leeds students. This is a figure that has remained unchanged from previous years.
- Peak times for issues to be reported coincide with start of each semester with October (21%), September (19%), November (13%) and February (15%) being the peak months.
- Complaints received during the May-June changeover period have again fallen to this year's low of 4 complaints. A 50% reduction from the previous year. Our new noise reduction campaign that coincided with changeover may have contributed to this fall.
- Noise nuisance is the dominant issue reported to the Helpline (77%), followed by waste management (15%).
- LS6 1 (Hyde Park, 67%) and LS6 2 (Woodhouse and North Hyde Park, 31%) are the postcode areas affected by University of Leeds students negative behaviour.
- 84% of cases involved a one off issue and required the Community and Housing Policy Officer to communicate with our students through a letter or email regarding their behaviour. 10% of cases were escalated to a home visit after a second complaint and no action was required in 6% of cases. The number of households where repeat complaints were made has fallen from the previous year's 31%. The Neighbourhood Helpline Code outlines the procedure that the Helpline partnerships follow in the event of receiving a complaint or repeat complaints. See links provided at the end of this document.

## 5. The Year Ahead

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

- (i) Continue to support our students as active and responsible citizens through innovative collaborative projects.
- (ii) Identify and implement opportunities to enhance the Get to Know Your Neighbour campaign. This includes welcome events based in local communities and incorporating activities in to the Sustainability Service Coffee Breaks to support students to increase their local engagement and develop sustainability projects.
- (iii) Work with our stakeholders to expand on our sector-leading Reuse@Leeds scheme to a citywide reuse network to provide benefits to the City through increased charitable donations and domestic reuse.
- (iv) Work collaborative with Leeds City Council and Leeds University Union to review the Ash Road and Environmental Champions pilots to identify effective solutions to local waste services delivery to improve environmental impacts.
- (v) Repeat the successful end of year noise reduction campaign, including weekly tips and



corresponding blog, at the start of each semester.

- (vi) Explore and implement opportunities to reduce the amount of waste produced at changeover through increased charitable donations, reuse and hire schemes.

### **Additional Information**

For more information on the University's Strategic Plan:

<http://strategy.leeds.ac.uk/>

For more information on the Sustainability Strategy:

<http://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/sustainability-strategy/>

The Helpline can be contacted on 0113 3431064 (voicemail service) or at

[neighbourhood.helpline@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:neighbourhood.helpline@leeds.ac.uk).

For more information on the Neighbourhood Helpline service and procedure:

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/sustainability/helpline.html>

For more information on our community initiatives, download our newsletter:

<http://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/being-a-positive-partner-in-society/our-community/>

Your Guide to Living In Leeds:

<http://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Community-Guide2.pdf>

Contact our Community & Housing Policy Officer, Amanda Jackson.

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