



Connect To Change:

Leicestershire Cares' Annual Plan 2023-24

"What I like about Leicestershire Cares is that lots of youth projects just focus on changing the young people, but [Leicestershire Cares] support the young people to try and change the systems and structures that impact on them and the neighbourhoods and communities they live in." **Community Worker Belgrave**

"If you want to bring about change you have to be involved and those in power need to listen to and empower the youth, so it is great this project is giving us a platform where we can build connections and voice our concerns." **Young Somali man from St Matthews**

"It is an absolute pleasure to partner with Leicestershire Cares, you make it easy for the business community to engage with the community and young people." **Sue Woollett, Social Value Manager, Stepnell**

"Leicestershire Cares is a wonderful organisation to work with. The commitment and passion for supporting young people is evident from early interactions. The innovation in project development and commitment to agreed outcomes has been outstanding!" **Diana Dorozkinaite, Business Change Commissioning Manager, Leicester City Council**

Introduction

Leicestershire Cares is a vibrant, result-orientated, award-winning charity that has been operating successfully across Leicester city, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) since 2003. We are a creative, agile and resilient organisation that delivers change for young people and communities through our joined-up approach to work that is rooted in our [vision, mission and values](#).

The new challenges

Our city and county were hit hard by Covid 19 and the soaring inflation that followed the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Across poorer and even more middle class communities, people struggled to pay food and heating bills and demand for food banks and support from community projects soared. Many businesses also suffered as their bills escalated and many shared that they struggled to recruit staff and to overcome challenges of shortages in supplies due to disrupted supply chains.

The 2021 ONS census data highlighted the diversity of Leicester city with only 41 percent of the city identifying as white, a drop of ten percent since the last census in 2011. Poverty remains a significant issue across the city and county. Analysis by Loughborough university in 2023 showed that 40% of children living in the city are living in poverty, and the figure is around 17% for the county. For those living in the more rural areas of the county it can be hard to access services and we find many young people from the county who are suffering hardship gravitate towards the city.

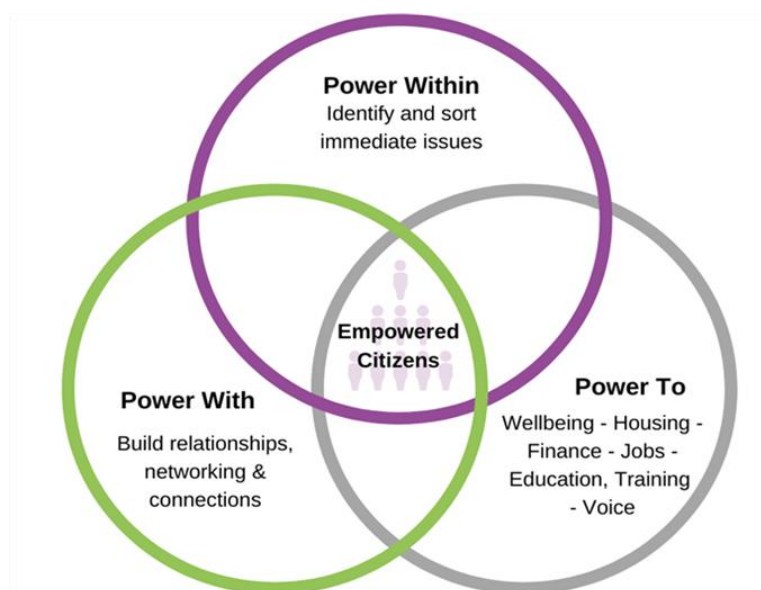
Often held up as a model of a diverse city at ease with itself, Leicester city was "rocked" by riots over a few weekends in September 2022, which some suggested were an overflow of tensions between Muslim and Hindu communities in India. These divisions spilled over into local elections, which saw significant changes in the way local people vote and claims on all sides that parties were trying to use "race and faith" to divide communities to win votes.

Power to Change approach

Our [Power to Change approach](#) to working with young people and communities is, we believe, well suited to dealing with the complex web of issues these challenges present.

At the heart of this approach is the belief that we need to work with young people in a joined up, agile and holistic way that is rooted in partnership working and a solid understanding of the local place and context. It is also based on the belief that young people are often best placed to know what is best for them and, given support and encouragement, they can become “creators” rather than just “consumers” of services and solutions.

[Read more about our Power to Change model.](#)



Focus of our work

We will continue to broker partnerships between business, schools, community groups and public sector so we are able to create meaningful changes for children and young people and communities.

Children and Young People

We will continue to support young people we work with to cope and deal with the complex and interrelated challenges and issues they face that have been exacerbated by the energy crisis, soaring inflation and the knock-on effects of the war in Ukraine. We anticipate these challenges are likely to lead to increased levels of poverty, a possible down turn in the economy and less money going into support services.

We will offer a range of one to one and group interventions that will be delivered across the city and county. We will actively set up more youth and community partnerships based in local neighbourhoods alongside the city and county wide issue-based work we currently deliver.

We will continue to partner with schools and link them with business volunteers who can support young people to develop soft and hard employability skills. We will also use creative arts as a method to empower young people to identify issues of concern, to find their voice and develop soft

and hard skills. We will create more opportunities for business volunteers to support young people and community groups.

Specific work with children and young people will include developing and delivering targeted work with care experienced, NEET, homeless, SEND and ex-offending young people aged 15 to 24 alongside neighbourhood based work in both the city and county. We will also run a wide range of employability sessions with business partners in schools across the city and county. The emphasis of this work will be framed by our “Power to Change” approach and will:

- Support young people to deal with the many overlapping issues that hold them back in life such as inadequate housing, physical and mental wellbeing, financial management, dependency issues, dysfunctional and abusive relationships.
- Support young people to understand, explore and enter education, employment and training.
- Enable local business community to share skills, knowledge and resources.
- Ensure young people’s lived experience and voice guides the development, delivery and evaluation of our work and feed into relevant local and national policy and practice debates. We would seek to do this in a creative way, using arts based approaches as appropriate.

Community development

We will build on our strong relationships with local authorities and community groups across LLR so our work is firmly anchored in local agendas. Our work will:

- Proactively build on the partnerships we have developed with African, Afro Caribbean, Asian and East European groups and seek to develop more ways to enable the business community to partner with them to share skills and knowledge.
- Proactively support neighbourhood youth work initiatives, where business, community and public sector work in partnership to support young people especially those who are vulnerable and at risk.
- Through our #PowerToChange partners forum provide a platform where local community groups can come together to share, reflect, learn and influence local policy and decision making.
- Identify and facilitate practical ways the community, business and public sector can work together to strengthen community responses to poverty and exclusions.
- Create more opportunities for the business sector to contribute to local community development.
- Support initiatives that seek to promote understanding between the diverse communities of our city and county.
- Reflect on learning arising from our work and promote partnership working between business, community and public sector through a variety of formats.

Priorities

As we enter 23/24, we have identified the following priorities.

1. **Respond to challenges thrown up by ongoing energy crisis, soaring inflation and knock on effects of war in Ukraine.** This will be framed by our “Power to Change” approach and we anticipate our ability to be creative and agile will be key.
2. **Programme delivery.** We deliver high quality, high impact, high profile programmes where all our work is planned and evaluated within a Results Based Management framework. We

will ensure all internal and external donor targets, milestones, budget and reporting deadlines are met. We will continue to improve our ability to capture both “hard” and “soft” data arising from our work and will skill team up to use our Lamplight database. We will ensure we share our learning to relevant local, regional and national audiences. We will seek to develop our capacity to use arts-based approaches to support young people and community partners finding and sharing their voice. This is the nuts and bolts of what we do.

3. **Income.** We will continue to proactively seek sustainable income streams for our work which add value to our vision, mission and values. This will involve all our programme workers but especially managers becoming more aware of the “funding ecosystem” for their work and being able to highlight opportunities that we might be able to pursue in order to continue and or develop/expand our work. This may well include developing partnerships and coalitions we can partner with such as our #PowerToChange community partners.
4. **Team work.** We continue to work in a creative, agile and joined up manner and all staff are encouraged and supported to proactively participate in the development of our programmes and projects. Managers will proactively seek to ensure all staff are supported and given opportunities to grow and develop in their roles through consistent and ongoing performance management.
5. **Business partners.** We will seek to work sensitively with business partners as they continue to deal with the challenges caused by soaring inflation, supply chain and staff recruitment and retention issues. We will proactively seek to encourage and support business partners to work with team to develop new ideas and approaches for supporting the community and young people. This will continue to include remote as well as face to face volunteering.
6. **Mainstreaming issues.** Across all areas of our practice, we will seek to mainstream Diversity and Inclusion and working in an environmentally friendly way.

Conclusion

The energy crisis, soaring inflation, knock on effects of the war in Ukraine have presented many challenges to our city and county, which was already hit hard by Covid 19. Our Power to Change approach has the potential to bring young people, communities, schools, business and public sector together to tackle these issues. Rather than seeing young people and communities as victims or problems, we see them as assets and solutions who can create rather than just consume ideas and policies.

We believe our power to change approach can inspire people to work together and in doing so turn despair into hope, and strategic action that brings about long term lasting change.

#TogetherWeCan

Kieran Breen

June 2023