

Community Action Plan

2009 to 2011





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Designed and produced by LUU Marketing Department, October 2009.

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In 2007, Leeds University Union (LUU) launched its first Community Strategy. The purpose was to represent our members in key areas of student life. The University of Leeds has always been, and remains, our key partner in all work, particularly in this area. We would also like to acknowledge that none of our achievements so far and plans for the future would be possible without support from our other partners, Leeds Met Students' Union, Unipol Student Homes, West Yorkshire Police and Leeds City Council.

Over the past 20 years, the number of students in Leeds

has risen dramatically. This has had an impact upon crime, noise and rubbish. It has also often led to negative feelings towards students.

Whilst acknowledging this, we believe that students bring a vibrant, diverse and unique culture to the community. Students also bring economic and volunteering benefits to their local surroundings. We believe that we can make life better for our local community and for our members by building positive relationships between local residents and students.

After setting out on this journey two years ago, we've made a lot of friends in the community. Local involvement has become a part of LUU's everyday activity and we now wish to commit to this even further. After listening to local residents, as well as our members, we have identified five key areas for LUU's work in the community.

These are:

- Creating Informed Tenants
- Representation
- Keep Leeds Tidy
- Volunteering & Working
- Safety

We believe that there is still a long way to go in improving relations between students and local residents, but we are committed to doing everything in our power to make this a reality. Through this plan we hope that we will be able to build upon and improve our work in the community and we look forward to working with all of our partners and friends, old and new, as we try to make living in Leeds a brilliant experience for everyone and help our members love their time at Leeds.

Hannah Greenslade
Community Officer

Our achievements

Union Community Reps

We set up the UCR scheme, which has gone from strength to strength. We are now able to have representation at many community meetings and have improved our communication with local groups:

"The UCRs that I have met are very committed to the communities in which they live and their attendance at community meetings is invaluable.... When we look to 3 years ago there was practically no LUU/UCR attendance at ward forums or area committees. Now attendance is much more frequent and the views of students are being put across at these meetings and fed into the local democratic system in a way in which they never have been before."

Cllr James Monaghan, 2009

Volunteering and Community Department

We now have a one stop shop for volunteering available to students and groups in

the community who need volunteers. We were awarded Investors in Volunteering in February 2008.

Green Streets and Leave Leeds Tidy

In 2008 our Green Streets project diverted over 8 tonnes of re-usable items from landfill, donating them back to local people, charities and students. In response to this success a grant of £15,000 was given by Leeds City Council inner NW Area Committee to expand Green Streets, and to pilot a Changeover Wardens scheme. In 2009 Green Streets diverted 21 tonnes of re-useable items from going to landfill (an increase of 13 tonnes on 2008). Green Streets received two Community and City Pride Awards and a Green Gown Award in 2009.

Knowledge

This is a project co-ordinated by LUU and overseen by the Leeds Universities & Colleges Crime Reduction Partnership. Within 10 months of the launch of the

campaign, burglaries against students were down 10% (West Yorkshire Police statistics to July 2008). There were many contributory factors involved in this reduction of burglaries but we believe that the partnership working that the Knowledge campaign has developed also played a part.

Community Guide

A successful joint project with both Universities and Leeds Met SU. LUU designed and produced the first Community Guide in 2008, with 4000 copies being distributed to students from both universities. In 2009, 14,000 copies were produced so that every first year student living in halls of residence at the University of Leeds and Leeds Metropolitan University received a copy. Unipol also distributed a copy to every property that they own.

Contract checking

269 student households attended contract checking sessions during Jan-March 2009. Feedback tells us that 100% of

students using the service said they would recommend it to a friend.

".....it put our minds at rest about quite a lot. We also appreciated the honesty of your staff and helpfulness. We signed for the house and got a new cooker and sofas written into the contract. We felt more in control when speaking to the estate agents by knowing what we were talking about."

2nd year undergraduate

Housing Campaign

Our campaign was a finalist in the NUS Award for Campaign of the Year 2009.

Students working in the community

Our Joblink Service has provided students for mentoring black and minority ethnic pupils, who have the potential to enter HE, in High Schools across Leeds. Our students have also worked on many more local projects such as playschemes attached to Burley Lodge Centre.

More Details

For a more comprehensive list of our achievements is available via advice@luu.leeds.ac.uk or 0113 380 1300.



Hyde Park

Our Strategy and Themes



The Collection from Green Streets

Our Aim

We will support our students to lead safe, sustainable lives, whilst playing a positive and active role in their local communities.

Our Themes

Keeping Leeds Tidy
Volunteering and Working
Safety
Representation
Creating informed tenants

The principles underlying our plan are:

- Listening to local people and our members for mutual benefit.
- Close partnership working with the University of Leeds.
- Directing our resource where it can have most impact.
- Acting to improve the reputation of all students.

Themes of our plan

In writing this plan we took a critical look at our existing document, consulted key members of local community groups and thought about the wider political context. In terms of the original strategy, we recognise that much of the work is ongoing whilst some was of limited interest to our community partners. The consultation exercise made it very clear that we needed to produce a straight forward plan that took account of local

concerns. The national political context is currently difficult to predict, other than to be certain that we will continue to do what we can to keep up to date with proposed housing legislation and to try to ensure that the student voice is heard, including via NUS (National Union of Students). Locally we will continue to lobby Leeds City Council to take action that benefits our members.

Five themes have been identified for the next two years that we believe will enable us to achieve our aim: Leaving Leeds Tidy, Volunteering and Working, Safety, Representation Creating informed tenants.

Under each theme we have identified key objectives, and under each objective there are a set of actions. The objectives make our priorities clear for the next two years. The changes we expect to see as a result of our action plan are shown on the full action plan on page 10.

Keeping Leeds Tidy

The student changeover period will continue to be a priority under the 'Leave Leeds Tidy' campaign. We aim to reduce the impact of student changeover; both the appearance of the area and the amount of waste going to landfill. We will do this through improved communications, Green Streets and Changeover Wardens.

We will also develop a campaign to tackle waste issues such as littering on Woodhouse Moor during the summer months.

We will work with students, local residents, landlords and the council to improve the recycling rates in the local community. This will be done with the aim of improving neighbourhood relations, extending LUU's commitment to environmental issues and to help Leeds City Council to achieve and surpass its 41% recycling target by March 2011.



Leave Leeds Tidy Team of Volunteers

Volunteering & Working

Over the past two years volunteering at LUU has changed dramatically with the development of the Volunteering & Community office. Our staff team ensure that existing community projects will develop and improve, and any new projects are set up in response to a need identified by the local community.

Close partnership working with the University of Leeds has allowed us to share resources, make it easier for students to find out about volunteering and to cast a wider recruitment net across campus. We aim to increase the number of students volunteering while in Leeds and link the skills that they are gaining through their studies with the needs of local community groups and charities.

It is now easier for charities and organisations to register with the University and our V&C team. Our shared data base makes it easy for us to promote local

volunteering opportunities to students.

Our student employment service, Joblink, has continued to grow and on average assists 8,500 students per year. Students work to gain skills and experience and to supplement their income. As part of our commitment to the community we offer a free service to local employers. Between 2009 and 2011 we aim to link up organisations seeking specific skills with the right students.



Action Tea Party!



Bardon Grange Project



Student Volunteers



Bardon Grange Project

Safety



The 'Knowledge' Inflatable at our Open Days.

The LUU 2004 Strategic Review highlighted safety as a major concern amongst our members. Subsequently, we created the Knowledge campaign, which is now overseen by the Leeds Universities & Colleges Crime Reduction Partnership (LUCCRP). The campaign aims to take information provided by West Yorkshire Police and Safer Leeds and break it down in to relevant chunks for students to give them a greater knowledge of what is happening in their community and how they can avoid becoming victims. One of the primary aims of the Knowledge campaign is to encourage students to take more responsibility for their safety and the security of the property they live in.

We have recently been awarded Home Office Funding to set up a pilot Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and to develop the Knowledge project. Working under the LUCCRP we will continue to expand the knowledge website and

run specific projects to target the burglary hot spot areas as identified by West Yorkshire Police.

North West Leeds is a burglary hotspot for the whole of West Yorkshire. This problem is compounded by the fact that, for example, in 2007, there were 796 recorded burglaries against students: 57% of these were through open doors and windows. By raising awareness amongst students of the importance of keeping their homes secure we hope to reduce the number which has benefits for all members of the community.

In 2009 LUU did some follow up research. The results highlighted the fear of crime amongst international students. We will be tailoring advice on crime to international students in order to address their particular concerns.

Representation

The key project under this theme is the Union Community Rep (UCR) scheme. The UCR scheme is now two years old and we have learnt a great deal about how to improve the existing model and further develop communication between ourselves and local permanent residents. The main purpose of the UCR scheme is to ensure that LUU has representation on as many local forums as possible, both to provide a student voice and to bring feedback, both positive and negative, back to LUU. We believe we currently have a strong model but will continue to review how the scheme works and to develop it over the next two years.

We will encourage more students to vote in local elections to ensure that their voice is heard and to try to raise more awareness of issues of local concern.

Creating informed tenants

Supporting our members as tenants does, we believe, have benefits for more permanent residents. It supports increases in property standards, ensures tenants take pride in their home and develops stronger communities.

Our house-hunting service begins each year with talks to first year students in Halls. We know through research undertaken in 2006 that students rely on word of mouth from peers when thinking about where to live and when to start looking. Every student looking for a house should know where to look, when to start looking and what to consider before signing a contract. We believe that if students are effective at house hunting they will choose the more reputable landlords. The impact should be that well managed housing agencies thrive and the ones just hoping to make a quick profit regardless of the impact either improve standards or lose business. We will continue to strengthen our links with Unipol

Student Homes and will support both the Code of Standards and the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme.

We will work to increase the numbers of students attending talks to prepare them for moving into the private-rented sector. The talks are backed up by our Community Guide. We will talk to them about the history of the area and the small things they can do to enhance their neighbourhood, such as putting the bins out on the right day and bringing them in again. We will promote the benefits of a greener lifestyle that will save students money as well as reduce their impact on the local community, for example by not bringing a car to University, and using recycling facilities properly. These talks will aim to instil the idea of 'students as residents', encouraging them to take care and responsibility of the community in which they will be living.



Houses in the Hyde Park area

Theme 1: Keeping Leeds Tidy

Key Contact: Isabel Swift, Volunteer Development Coordinator, I.Swift@leeds.ac.uk, Tel 0113 380 1326

Objective	Activities	Time Frame
We will work to address the issues of litter and barbecues in Hyde Park and on Woodhouse Moor	We will undertake research with our members, the council, stakeholders and other local residents	Autumn 2009
	We will develop an action plan of campaigns and projects based on the outcome of the research	January 2010
	Delivery of action plan	January 2010 and ongoing for impact Summer 2010
We will work with Leeds City Council and our members to improve recycling rates in the student populated area	We will undertake research to determine the barriers to recycling for our members and the issues facing the local authority in partnership with the University of Leeds and Leeds City Council	October to November 2009
	We will develop an action plan of campaigns and projects based on the outcome of the research	Jan 2010
	We will campaign and develop projects to improve recycling rates in the local area.	Ongoing from September 2009
We will campaign to influence the attitude and behaviour of our members to be less wasteful	We will identify key areas for improvement and work with our societies and the institution as a whole to campaign around waste issues	Ongoing from September 2009

The changes we expect to see:

- A visible improvement in the appearance of Woodhouse Moor - reduced litter.
- Positive feedback from local residents.
- Recognition of new recycling focus by members.
- Visible commitment to student recycling by Leeds City Council (particularly in Inner North West).
- Positive response to waste reduction schemes.

Theme 2: Volunteering & Working

Key Contact: Isabel Swift, Volunteer Development Coordinator, I.Swift@leeds.ac.uk, Tel 0113 380 1326

Objective	Activities	Time Frame
We will ensure that all new volunteering and community projects are focused on what the community wants.	We will promote all small scale local opportunities to students on our database and ensure that all new ongoing projects developed are based on a local community need	Ongoing
	We will develop an LRU staff volunteering program to link with local charities, groups and projects	June 2011
	We will develop a local focus for the RAG fundraising society	September 2009 to May 2010
We will make sure that local people know about the work that happens in their neighbourhood	We will produce an annual Impact report on the progress and activity of this action plan and distribute it to local people, groups and stakeholders	July 2010 and annually thereafter
	We will have a presence at local community days promoting the work happening locally	July 2009 and annually thereafter
We will find students with the skills needed by local voluntary and community groups and organisations and place them into relevant opportunities	We will create a skills related volunteering project and find opportunities for volunteers with local groups and charities	Ready by September 2010 then ongoing
	We will support local organisations to find student staff with specific skills	September 2009 onwards
	We will promote these opportunities via specific academic departments and recruit student volunteers to fulfil them	From September 2010
	We will continue to find course related job vacancies locally and promote these to our members.	Ongoing

The changes we expect to see:

Feedback from local people, charities and community organisations will show:

- Students will be seen as a skilled resource for local community groups and employers.
- Local community members will feel their needs are being met by student volunteering projects.
- Local people and community groups will be aware of the involvement of our students in the community.

Theme 3: Safety

Key Contact: Andrea Kerslake, Housing Advice Manager: a.kerslake@luu.leeds.ac.uk, Tel: 0113 380 1296

Objective	Activities	Time Frame
We will promote the knowledge brand so that it is recognised as the key safety campaign for students across Leeds	With partners improve and update the knowledge website	September 2009
	Develop a communication plan for promoting Knowledge to all HE students in Leeds.	September 2009
	Be involved in organising and delivering a safety seminar directed at International Students	November 2009 & May 2010
We will work with West Yorkshire Police and key partners to develop a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme	Run a pilot scheme	September 2009 to May 2010
	Evaluate pilot scheme and seek further funding	December 2009 to May 2010
	Establish permanent scheme and continue to monitor	August 2010 to July 2011
Make it easier for students to report crime	Provide an e.mail link via the Knowledge website for students to report low level crime direct to the WYP Student Liason Officer	January 2010 and review May 2010
	Promote the positive news stories via Knowledge to show students the benefit of reporting crime	October 2009 to May 2010
	Promote Neighbourhood Watch and encourage students to raise issues	November 2009 to May 2010

The changes we expect to see:

- Promotion of the Knowledge brand at Leeds Metropolitan University, Trinity and All Saints, Leeds College of Music and Leeds College of Art and Design.
- No increase in walk-in burglaries in Hyde Park and Headingley in 2009/10 and aim for a reduction in 2010/11.
- Positive feedback from students and residents following the implementation of a neighbourhood watch scheme.
- More students reporting crime and other incidents.

Theme 4: Representation

Key Contact: Rose Hampton, Community Rep Co-ordinator, R.J.Hampton@leeds.ac.uk, Tel: 0113 380 1324

Objective	Activities	Time Frame
We will represent students at local forums and in local campaigns and bring the concerns and needs of the community back to LUU to be addressed	We will recruit, train and support a team of Union Community Reps (UCRs).	Recruit late spring, and train by start of following academic year.
	We will create new volunteering projects in direct response to community need.	Monthly feedback meetings to exchange information internally.
	We will create new Exchange opportunities as a direct result of referrals from the UCR scheme.	Monitored monthly, reported quarterly
We will promote local democracy, consultations and campaigns to students.	We will promote active participation in local and national elections to our students.	Local Council Elections and General Elections
	We will promote active participation in local campaigns that affect the community in which students live.	Monitored monthly and reported quarterly
We will work closely with a small number of targeted landlords/agencies to help them improve their business activities	We will identify and work with landlords and agents who currently receive a high number of complaints from their tenants, aiming to improve their systems and maintenance of their properties	Identified October 2009, aim to complete work by March 2010. Repeated in 2010 if successful.
We will promote LUU's community work locally, Leeds-wide and to key stakeholders	We will produce LUU community updates which will incorporate all community related activities from LUU departments and UCR updates.	Monthly reporting to stakeholders

The changes we expect to see:

- Positive feedback from the local permanent community on our response to their concerns and needs.
- More students voting.
- Fewer repeat housing problems with a small number of landlords or agents.

Theme 5: Creating informed tenants

Key Contact: Andrea Kerslake, Housing Advice Manager: a.kerslake@luu.leeds.ac.uk, Tel: 0113 380 1296

Objective

We will continue to develop a proactive house hunting strategy that encourages students to rent good quality accommodation from landlords who are part of a code or accreditation scheme.

Activities

Organise a community themed event which enables the quality landlords to make contact with prospective tenants and introduce tenants to their responsibilities within the community

Promote house hunting talks and contract checking sessions further to encourage students to seek advice before signing for a property.

Increase the number of students attending moving-out talks in halls to prepare them for living in the private rented sector.

We will work with unipol student homes to develop their Code of Standards starred system, which will highlight properties of the highest standard that are well managed.

We will work to make it easier for students to identify good quality properties

We will promote and support the National Student Housing Survey to get feedback from students on the private sector in Leeds and undertake follow-up work based on the research findings.

Time Frame

November 2009 and 2010

November 2010 and ongoing

April 2010 and April 2011

October 2010

April 2010 and April 2011

The changes we expect to see:

- Students aware of which quality landlords they should rent from
- Students having a better understanding of why they should choose a Code or Accredited property
- A 10% increase in the number of students who get their contract checked before signing
- A 10% increase in the number of students who vote in the National Student Housing Survey

More information

For more information on our Community Action Plan, please contact:

advice@luu.leeds.ac.uk

or visit our website:
www.leedsuniversityunion.org.uk



