

## Cost of Living Meeting

Leader & Chief Executive

Leah Whitty & Jon Rae

07979018 007 [jon.rae@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:jon.rae@wlga.gov.uk)

### Overview

Helping citizens in financial difficulty is not new to local authorities and the response to the cost-of-living crisis is simply providing a focus lens on what is a broader programme of work to tackle poverty and inequality in our communities.

Councils are not looking to re-invent the wheel but are in the process of mapping existing provision within their LA area to identify and address any gaps whilst taking steps to increase capacity within public services, third and voluntary sectors and building the resilience of local community and faith groups.

- The table below summarises the initiatives that councils are pursuing to combat the cost-of-living crisis
- These are set out on a thematic basis following the Leaders call for information and the recent meeting with the Minister
- We'll develop this with officers in the Tackling Poverty and Inequality Network over the next 2 weeks

Council Cost of Living Activity – Summary	
Cross Cutting Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whole organisation approach being taken across councils</li><li>• Key priority that every interaction with a council service is an opportunity to promote assistance available and offer advice</li><li>• Establishment of cross party elected member groups</li><li>• Discussions with trade unions on package of support for Council staff]</li><li>• Strategic prioritisation on prevention and interventions that stop people from reaching crisis</li></ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspiration to develop “customer intelligence” to provide an in-depth view of citizens and proactively identifying individuals who are getting into difficulty</li> </ul>
Co-ordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment of cost-of-living coordinator type roles to oversee activity at a local level</li> <li>• Mapping of existing provision and activity to avoid duplication, identify and fill gaps</li> <li>• Vulnerability mapping - working with Public Health Wales to map vulnerability/risk in our communities to target our partnership working more effectively</li> <li>• Enhance and expand community support groups already in existence and not replicate their role and function</li> <li>• Creating digital maps for citizens so can enter their address / postcode to understand ‘help near me’</li> </ul>
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of multi-agency working groups</li> <li>• Building on partnership working, sharing of knowledge and good practice and co-ordinating responses at local level</li> <li>• Exploring options for data driven solutions to maximising take-up of locally administered benefits</li> <li>• Collaboration between college and community centres to offer free services in centres e.g., haircuts, manicures, massages etc, as part of course</li> </ul>
Citizen Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing financial inclusion capacity of council and commissioned advice services</li> <li>• Increasing the number and range of emergency provisions to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Food bank, pantries, and community fridges</li> <li>➢ Fuel cost assistance for those that cannot afford the minimum delivery of oil / connecting community members to buy oil in bulk</li> <li>➢ Toy banks / food parcels in readiness for Christmas</li> <li>➢ Provision of a service for pre worn recycled school uniforms</li> <li>➢ Establishment of warm clothing donation boxes and distribution of warm packs to people that cannot access warm spaces</li> <li>➢ Enhancement of EMA for learners most in need</li> <li>➢ Additional hardship style funding for citizens most in need</li> <li>➢ Creation of recipe food boxes akin to ‘Hello Fresh’ with ingredients and recipe cards</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of Food and Fuel champions to provide practical advice across a range of locations</li> <li>• Targeting of discretionary spending to provide citizen centric support e.g. through discretionary cost of living scheme, discretionary housing payments and homeless prevention funding</li> </ul>
Community Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buddy/Befriending Service – volunteer led support for isolated/vulnerable adults</li> <li>• Community Connectors – council/third sector support for isolated adults in the community</li> <li>• Production of resources to education households on where to access low-cost food, special offers including suggestions for low-cost recipes and advice on batch cooking, reducing waste and correct storage of food.</li> <li>• Re-launch of street-based schemes to support the work being done locally – like what took place during the pandemic</li> <li>• Extension of existing provision and offers within youth, education, community, and social care setting including extending hours and provision of warm meals</li> <li>• Resurrecting Business Resilience Forums</li> <li>• Financial support through small grant schemes for businesses and community groups to extend hours, provision and introduce warm spaces</li> </ul>
<p>Communication</p> <p><b>Pivotal to success – key message throughout LAs is that there is lots of help available - just need to get the message to those that need it</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drop-in sessions for advice in libraries and community hubs</li> <li>• Cost of living websites to centralise the local support available and to signpost to external stakeholders and partners</li> <li>• Cost of living information stations</li> <li>• Mailshots to all householders</li> <li>• Regular newsletters for members, stakeholders, and partners</li> <li>• Campaigns on understanding energy costs and how to save energy</li> <li>• Development of multi-agency assets (hard copy and digital version) outlining support available and how this can be accessed.</li> <li>• Promotion of help and support available through local and national campaigns</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joint communication with Welsh Government Comms teams for consistent and transparent messaging</li><li>• Cost of living events/summits/roadshows and other events to promote help available and take advice services to the citizens that need them</li></ul>
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