



SHROPSHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD Report

Meeting Date	14 th July 2022			
Title of Paper	Social Task Force – Cost of Living Update			
Reporting Officer and email	Rachel Robinson, Executive Director of Health, Wellbeing and Prevention rachel.robinson@shropshire.gov.uk and Jackie Jeffrey, Chief Executive, Citizens Advice Shropshire jackiejeffrey@cabschropshire.org.uk			
Which Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy priorities does this paper address? Please tick all that apply	Children & Young People	x	Joined up working	X
	Mental Health	x	Improving Population Health	X
	Healthy Weight & Physical Activity		Working with and building strong and vibrant communities	X
	Workforce	x	Reduce inequalities (see below)	X
What inequalities does this paper address?	This work is seeking to raise awareness of the cost-of-living crisis and the detrimental impact on health and wellbeing and the wider determinants of health for people living in Shropshire. The cost-of-living crisis is likely to increase levels of fuel poverty, food poverty, homelessness, and limit opportunities for social engagement due to the increased cost of fuel. It is also likely to intensify rural health inequalities.			

1. Executive Summary

A Task Force focusing on the rising cost of living and its social impact locally, was convened at the suggestion of the COVID Engagement Board, comprising stakeholders from across Shropshire on the 24th March. The forum provides an opportunity to bring a range of stakeholders together to share their knowledge of the impact and support available for our population and communities. The forum has met monthly to look at gaps and further actions stakeholders can take jointly within Shropshire to support our residents struggling with the cost-of-living increases, with a focus on ensuring that the most vulnerable in our community are supported; it reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board and to each of its own member organisations.

2. Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to recognise the work underway to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our residents and any support it can give to deliver key actions identified by the Task Force. There is some urgency to this work as there is consensus amongst local organisations that the cost-of-living crisis will intensify in October due to further increases in energy bills and the continued rise in inflation.

The Healthy Lives Steering group to consider how the Social Taskforce action plan can be actioned at their next meeting.

We encourage members to take actions around the cost-of-living back to their organisations, particularly in relation to the impact on their own workforces.

3. Report

This paper presents an overview of the Social Task Force for the Cost of Living, its purpose, work to date including the development of an action plan owned by the Task Force, reporting to the Health

and Wellbeing Board and respective partners organisations, which identifies key issues that need to be targeted locally to reduce the cost of living locally.

A Task Force focusing on the rising cost of living and its social impact locally, was convened comprising stakeholders from across Shropshire on the 24th March. The forum provides an opportunity to bring a range of stakeholders together to share their knowledge of the impact and support available for our population and communities. Members include CAB, Age UK, Councillors, SPIC, Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance, Marches Energy Agency, Energize, Qube, Police, Landau, Headteachers, DWP, LEP, ICS, SATH and Shropshire Council (housing, welfare, food insecurity, communications, public health, libraries, economic development, affordable warmth). The Task Force has met monthly to look at gaps and further actions stakeholders can take jointly within Shropshire to support our residents struggling with the cost-of-living increases, with a focus on ensuring that the most vulnerable in our community are supported.

The forum has considered anonymised data and shared case studies which illustrate the current reality of hidden inequalities across rural Shropshire where the cost of living and particularly the rising costs of transport and fuel are having a disproportionate impact on people who are living in a low wage economy. This intelligence is being collated to understand areas to target outreach and communications activities.

Joint communications have already been produced including a joint webpage with key information in one place [Cost of living help | Shropshire](#), sharing help and support available for short term crisis and longer term.

The Task Force have also developed an open letter for ministers, highlighting the challenge faced in Shropshire including the specific rural challenge in a low wage economy dominated by health and care employment, alongside the evidence of the impact of poverty on health and wellbeing.

Working together the Forum, through the Poverty and Hardship sub-group, have developed an action plan, the most significant gaps currently are the need to:

- 1) Review capacity across the system to support people in Shropshire with the cost-of-living crisis. Consider which resources and skills are available. Triage and offer specialist support for those in need.
- 2) Improved information sharing between partners in relation to the cost-of-living crisis to ensure that partner organisations are kept informed of up-to-date information on assistance available so they can cascade to the people they support (e.g., Household support fund, HAF scheme).
- 3) Joint working to create protocols around more common debts.
- 4) Workforce training/Improved signposting information for frontline staff and volunteers to boost their knowledge of support available and increase confidence to hold difficult conversations around the increases in the cost of living.
- 5) Data & Insight. Continue to review what insight is held on groups most likely to be impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. Plan an event to learn what data is available. Do community organisations have case studies or insight which might help to identify the best way to support the groups identified in this plan? Can we target those at greatest risk?
- 6) Work with Stakeholders to review the Household Support Fund allocation to date. What worked well? How can we target better to vulnerable groups identified?
- 7) Joint communications on the cost-of-living crisis highlighting help available, including panels on Shropshire Radio. Key messages include: Encouraging householders to contact Marches Energy Agency (MEA) now for help with energy efficiency measures over the summer to help householders get ready for Autumn/Winter & Energy advice. Communications around how to make best use of the £650 government support payment. Promotion of Breathing Space to prevent government support payments being allocated to overdraft/debt repayments/rent arrears.
- 8) Assessment of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the workforce, including how it will impact their ability to effectively do their jobs. A key focus on workers on lower incomes, particularly the impact on carers.

Risk assessment and opportunities appraisal	The work of the Task Force aims to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the population of Shropshire through supporting people to access the help available.	
Financial implications (Any financial implications of note)	There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. However, increases to energy costs, fuel and the price of goods will impact on the cost of delivery of services across the county.	
Climate Change Appraisal as applicable	Working to support people in local communities to improve energy efficiency is an important part of the programme.	
Where else has the paper been presented?	System Partnership Boards	
	Voluntary Sector	Hardship and Poverty Task Force
	Other	
List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)		
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) or your organisational lead e.g. Exec lead or Non-Exec/Clinical Lead (List of Council Portfolio holders can be found at this link: https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=130) Cllr. Simon P. Jones – Portfolio holder for Adult Social Care and Public Health		
Appendix A: Draft Open Letter to Ministers Appendix B: Summary of cost-of-living crisis		