



SHROPSHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD Report

Meeting Date	17.11.22			
Title of Paper	Social Task Force – Cost of Living Update			
Reporting Officer and email	Emily Fay Emily.fay@shropshire.gov.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.			

1. Executive Summary

The Social Taskforce has been meeting since March 2022. Chaired by Executive Director for Public Health Rachel Robinson, the taskforce brings together organisations to work in partnership to create a joint response to the cost-of-living crisis. Our partners include Citizens Advice Shropshire, Age UK, Marches Energy Agency, Community Resource, Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance, and many other key organisations who have been contributing via the taskforce and its subgroups.

This report provides a brief overview of the current situation in regard to the Cost-of-living crisis, and a description of the key areas of work to date.

2. Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the work underway to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our residents and to make any comments as appropriate.

Members undertake to take this information on the cost-of-living back to their organisations and consider how the cost-of-living crisis is impacting both their own workforces and the residents they support.

3. Report

The cost-of-living situation

Inflation rose to 10.1% in the year to September 2022, a 40-year high, leading to significant rises in retail prices. Some of the largest increases have been seen in our supermarkets, with the [ONS](#) reporting that some of the lowest priced food items rising 40% since September 2021. Residents have seen an increase in average household energy prices from £1277 at the beginning of the year, to £2500 in October. The [FCA](#) has reported that one in four adults are now in financial trouble or at the brink of difficulty. The [Food Foundation](#) reports that 9.7 million adults (18.4% of households) and one in four households with children have experienced food insecurity in September. [Food Standards Agency](#) research from September found that 40% of participants were worried about being able to afford food in the next month, 30% had skipped a meal or cut down the size of their meals because they did not have enough money and 18% had turned off a fridge and/or freezer containing food, at least once in the last month, to reduce energy bills.

[Citizens Advice](#) are producing monthly reports on the Cost of living. In September they reported:

- In the year to date they have seen more people unable to top up their pre-payment meter than the previous three years combined.
- They have never seen a higher proportion of people in a negative budget (meaning they have more essential spending going out than they have coming in).
- They are helping two people every minute with crisis support, such as referrals to food banks and fuel vouchers. They have supported more people this year than 2019 and 2020 combined.
- They are seeing more disabled people with issues around the cost of living than other issues.

Shropshire's Social Taskforce

Organisations in Shropshire have been working together to support residents through the cost-of-living crisis through a social taskforce, chaired by Executive Director for Public Health Rachel Robinson. This taskforce brings together organisations to work in partnership to create a joint response to the cost-of-living crisis. Our partners include Citizens Advice Shropshire, Age UK, Marches Energy Agency, Community Resource, Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance, and many other key organisations who have been contributing via the taskforce and its subgroups.

Cost of living Data

Working with partners we have developed a preliminary index of vulnerability to the cost-of-living crisis. We will be using this mapping to help with the targeting of communications and support across the County.

Cost of Living Communications

With our partners we have developed three key messages we want all Shropshire residents to know:

- If you or someone you know is worried about money or is struggling right now, **you are not alone**.
- There may be **simple steps** you can take to cut costs or maximise your income.
- If you are getting into debt or your mental health is suffering, **do not wait to get help**.

We are encouraging residents worried about money to:

- Visit the [cost of living help page](#) for information on what support is available in Shropshire.
- Use our [checklist](#) to see if there are any steps they can take which may help them to cope with rising costs. Recommended steps include using a benefits calculator to check they are not missing out on income, exploring schemes which help with household bills, getting support with debt, and reaching out for mental health support.
- Use the ['Worrying About Money' leaflet](#) to identify which organisation in Shropshire can offer support.

Warm Welcome

More than 50 community spaces and council buildings will be offering a Warm Welcome to Shropshire residents this autumn and winter.

The colder months can be a lonely and challenging time for many people, especially those who may be worried about the cost of energy bills.

The Warm Welcome project is a collaboration between Shropshire Council and partners which highlights community venues where people can go for free to socialise, meet friends and take part in activities while also keeping warm.

Visit www.shropshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living-help/

Cost of living helpline

The Social Taskforce has worked with partners to develop a helpline for residents. Based within Shropshire Customer Services, the line provides residents with signposting information about the support which is available. Call centre staff will be making targeted outbound calls to the most vulnerable households, alongside dealing with incoming enquiries.

Shropshire Local

The Shropshire Local team will be available in the Local Hubs in Shrewsbury and Ludlow and visiting libraries over the winter to support residents.

Financial Support for households (2021-22)

Shropshire Council have been administering funds from Central Government to support households. Teams have been taking a targeted, cash first approach, to ensure that the funds reached the most vulnerable households. Since 2021 Shropshire Council has delivered more than £30 million in support to residents with rising living costs:

- £6.266m Household Support Fund to support low-income families, single parents, pensioners in receipt of council tax support and has also provided around 7,500 children meal vouchers for the school holidays.
- £789,000 via the Welfare Support team to support Shropshire households in crisis.
- £16m Energy bills rebate scheme.
- 3,500 children and young people have accessed free food and activities during the school holidays via the Holiday Activities and Food scheme.
- The council's Affordable Warm and Energy Efficiency team has delivered a huge range of support to residents throughout the ongoing cost of living crisis. 300 households have received grants of up to £90,000 to carry out energy efficiency works totalling £1.65m.

Household Support Fund (October 22-March 23)

Shropshire Council have received a £2.1 million Household Support Grant to support residents most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. The funding is being allocated:

- £1m to fund a one off £180 payment to around 5,250 households on low incomes in receipt of Housing Benefit who have not previously received support through the Council's Household Support Fund.
- £450,000 to support 7500 children entitled to Free School Meals with meal vouchers in the 4 weeks of school holidays.
- £300,000 funding for the Welfare Support Fund to provide support to low-income households who are most in need of help with food, energy and water bills and with other wider essential costs.
- £220,000 Keeping Warm at Home funding for a range of initiatives to help low-income households in debt with energy costs and grants to help reduce energy costs.
- £75,000 is helping to support a range of partners' hardship grants.

Cost of living training

This session was developed in partnership with Community Resource, the Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance, Age UK, Marches Energy Agency, and Shropshire Citizens' Advice.

The training video will help you understand the key issues faced by residents, the key groups likely to be impacted and the likely impact on health inequalities.

It will also take you through the key resources you can use to support residents and outlines the support available both nationally and from local organisations. Over 500 frontline staff and volunteers have watched the session so far.

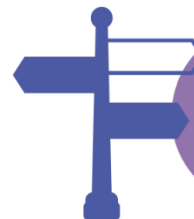
You can watch the session here:
<https://youtu.be/oDQaCScx5p4>

Cost of living briefing sessions



350 frontline staff attended live sessions

Over 500 reached in total with recording of session



98% of people now feel better equipped to signpost people to the support available

"The course was extremely well presented and informative. Thank you to everyone, great session!"



99% of people thought the information shared in the session was relevant and helpful

"The information shared was well presented, clear and easy to understand along with covering a vast age group."



Risk assessment and opportunities appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)

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	
	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. Gwilym Butler Finance and Corporate Resources Cllr. Simon Jones Adult Social Care and Public Health		
Appendices Cost of living Presentation		