

Cost of Living Short Life Working Group

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to update the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Board of the actions undertaken by the Cost of Living Short Life Working Group.

2. Recommendations

The CPP Board is asked to note the collective actions taken by the short life working group to help mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis.

The board is also asked to note the targeted work undertaken to raise awareness of the local help and support available.

3. Discussion

In August 2022, a report was presented to the Community Planning Partnership Board highlighting the impact of the rising cost of living on poverty in West Lothian. The CPP board was asked to consider the impact of the cost of living crisis and measures which could be implemented locally to support residents most at risk of poverty and deprivation.

CPP members agreed that the cost of living crisis has impacted on many people in our communities as well as the council, community planning partners and staff, either on a personal or professional level. Partners also agreed that West Lothian is an area rich in resource with strong partnership networks and that partners play a crucial role in supporting residents facing poverty and financial crisis by identifying gaps in current service provision and developing opportunities for collaborative work. It was agreed a short life working group be convened to co-ordinate activities which would support our communities.

The short life working group has met three times and has brought together Community Planning Partners, local authority and the third sector to consider practical ways in which support can be provided to households affected by the cost of living crisis. The remit for the group is attached in appendix 1.

Key actions undertaken by the short life working group include:

Cost of Living Conference

On Tuesday 4 October 2022, a Cost of Living Conference brought together partners from across West Lothian to discuss the impact the cost of living crisis is having on households and the support currently available to those households, both financial and non-financial. The conference aimed to open discussion about demand on services, map what was available locally, identify gaps and how services can work collaboratively to support West Lothian communities. There were 100 tickets booked for the conference with 82 people attending.

Feedback received from attendees was as follows:

- The conference was a good opportunity to network with people face to face after a period of remote working.
- People were very complimentary of the speakers, stating that they found them inspiring and insightful.

- Workshops were well received and people welcomed the opportunity to hear about local support available and discuss/share experiences and opportunities with colleagues from other services and organisations. Participants were keen to see a directory of support developed which listed all support organisations across West Lothian and their opening times and availability to take referrals allowing frontline staff to signpost and refer as appropriate. Organisations also signed pledge cards to take forward conversations around an affordable furniture network.

Challenge Poverty Week

Challenge Poverty Week is an initiative which helps to highlight the scale, challenge and impact poverty has on households across Scotland. At a local level, it is an opportunity for organisations and individuals to showcase what is being done to tackle poverty. This year Challenge Poverty Week took place from 3- 7 October 2022.

The key messages for this year's Challenge Poverty Week included:

- As a result of the rising Cost of Living, many people in Scotland are being swept into poverty.
- There are benefits, grants and support available which may alleviate some of the pressures that families are feeling. It is more important than ever that people access the support they need to unlock poverty's grip.
- The rising cost of energy is a great concern and is set to sweep millions of people into poverty this winter. Action must be taken by all levels of government to ensure people are able to adequately and affordably heat their homes.
- To afford everyone enough to live a dignified life, the economy needs redesigned to make jobs flexible, secure and paying at least the real living wage.
- As with during the pandemic, there is no doubt that community organisations will once again be a primary port of call and frontline support to people struggling with the rising cost of living.
- Public services are crucial in helping people to participate in society and live decent lives. When services like transport, childcare and broadband are easily affordable and accessible, they can increase opportunities and help people to thrive.

During Challenge Poverty Week, partners offered a range of events from a Cost of Living Conference and community information stalls to an 'Ask the Advisor session' on the council's Facebook page and an online jobs fair. In total there were 19 activities on the 2022 Challenge Poverty Week programme. After previous years events being delivered primarily through online channels as a result of the pandemic, events this year involved a mixture of in person and online.

Welcoming Warm Spaces

The Cost of Living Short Life Working Group agreed a sub group be formed to lead on a mapping exercise identifying locations for 'Warm Welcoming Locations' across West Lothian. The aim of the sub group is to identify potential locations, map and co-ordinate activities and create a platform for organisations to assist in the provision of warm hubs and wrap information

and support around the warm hubs allowing those attending a choice of where, when and how they access any support needed.

The approach taken by the sub group to identify locations is threefold:

Council Premises: Officers identified locations where the provision of “warm spaces” can be incorporated with existing resources and promoting existing activities. This is centred around Libraries, Partnership Centres and promotion of existing activities taking place in our community centres and village halls.

Community Partners and Stakeholders: A number of community planning partners have identified locations which can be opened up as potential warm locations and be included in the mapping process whilst existing activities are taking place.

Community Education Associations and faith based organisations: Community Education Associations have shown a keen interest in being part of the warm welcome locations in addition to existing activities or assist in a promotional campaign of current activities within their facilities.

An online map has now been developed www.westlothian.gov.uk/warm-welcome this has been overlaid with the access to community food map and access to free sanitary products will also be added to this map. This means that all provision available is located on one map and those seeking help will be able to easily locate what is available to them in their own locality.

It is anticipated that the availability of “Warm Welcome Locations” will grow over the winter months and a commitment has been made to update the map at regular intervals. Therefore, it is clear that we need to have a flexible approach and provide a platform for any potential venue/organisations to be able to seek advice, not only from the council but their peer groups.

‘Help with Costs’ Publicity Campaign

On 26 October 2022, the ‘Help with Costs’ campaign was launched to provide local residents with cost of living advice. The campaign aims to highlight advice and information that is available on: energy, Benefits, financial support and help with school costs.

Self-help booklets have been developed and printed providing practical advice with hints and tips to help with the rising costs, booklets are available across West Lothian in libraries, schools and within voluntary organisations premises. Copies of the booklet can be requested by emailing Anti.Poverty@westlothian.gov.uk

A dedicated online information hub has been created to hold all cost of living support information within one area allowing for improved accessibility to information. www.westlothian.gov.uk/costofliving

Targeted Take Up campaigns

There are benefits, grants and financial support available which may alleviate some of the pressures which are being placed on low income households. It is important that people access the support they need. Multi-media campaigns are being developed with partners to create targeted take up campaigns. There has been a focus on increasing the take up of Pension Credits, Adult Disability Payment and the Scottish Child Payment.

Winter Pop up Information/Advice Sessions

As a result of a request from community councils and in collaboration with community organisations work is underway to deliver winter pop up information sessions in key communities across West Lothian. These include: Dedridge, Bridgend, Fauldhouse, Blackburn, Armadale and Whitburn. The aim of the winter pop up sessions is to bring help and support into local areas which have the highest level of low income households.

It is clear that the direct and lasting impact of the rising cost of living will continue to be a concern for many households throughout 2022 and 2023. The short life working group will continue to meet and work collaboratively in delivering actions to support those affected. An action plan has been developed to track the progress of the actions and is attached at appendix 2.

4. Summary of Implications

Relevant LOIP outcome (s)	
Relevant LOIP performance indicator (s)	SOA1302_13) Percentage of the population who are income deprived (SOA1303_14) Percentage of employees who earn less than the living wage (P:SOA1301_11) Percentage of children in poverty in West Lothian
Resources	
Link to prevention/community engagement	
Impact on inequalities	
Key risks	

5. Consultations

Feedback from the Anti-Poverty Practitioners Network and Experts by Experience panel has been used to inform to content of this report.

6. Conclusions

The latest projections describe a very challenging outlook for the UK economy. The economy is expected to be in recession for a prolonged period and inflation remains at over 10%. However West Lothian is an area rich in resource with strong partnership networks that can be further developed and strengthened through continued co-ordination to support our communities.

The current Anti-Poverty Strategy will soon reach the end of its lifetime. A full review and refresh of the strategy will be undertaken this year and partners will have an opportunity to

contribute to consultation and discussion to shape 2023-2027 strategy. Partners are asked to continue to consider how to engage with and support people who are facing poverty and potential destitution as a result of rising costs and low income.

Report written by/contact details/date

Nahid Hanif, Anti-Poverty Manager, Nahid.hanif@westlothian.gov.uk

21 November 2022

References

[Cost of Living Impact - CPP August 2022](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1 Cost of Living Short Life Working Group Remit

Appendix 2 Cost of Living Short Life Working Group Action Plan



Cost of Living Short Life Working Group Remit

Remit

The remit of the Cost of Living Short Life Working Group is to consider the impact of the crisis on local people living and working in West Lothian. Partners will work collaboratively through forward planning, sharing of resources, analysing local data, looking at best practice elsewhere to develop practical actions and activities. The Short Life Working Group will put forward recommendations to the Anti-Poverty Task Force for inclusion in the West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy's annual action plan which will include lead organisation, timeline and outcome to be achieved taking into account public sector funding constraints, economic uncertainties and welfare reform agenda.

Frequency of Meetings

The Short life working group will meet four weekly to evaluate agreed actions. Ad hoc meeting may need to be convened earlier than 4 weeks if something urgent requires to be discussed.

Lead Officer

The short life working group will be chaired by the chair of the West Lothian Community Planning Partnership Board. Donald Forrest, Head of Finance and Property Services will be the lead officer.

Contact

The Anti-Poverty Manager is the main contact for any enquiries.

Reporting

The cost of living short life working group will report to the Anti-Poverty Task Force. This will include regular updates on the progress of defined actions or programmes of work that have been agreed as part of the short life working group. Reports will also be presented as required to the Anti-Poverty Task Force.

Responsibilities

- Agree collaborative actions to help mitigate the cost of living crisis locally in West Lothian
- Monitor and Evaluate agreed actions
- Provide quarterly reports to the Anti-Poverty Task Force

Membership

Participants are chosen to provide the relevant knowledge and expertise to fulfil the remit of the Cost of Living Short Life Working Group. Representation on the Task Force will be drawn from relevant partners in West Lothian who have a remit and interest in the Cost of Living Crisis. It will be the responsibility of each organisation to choose their representative.

This will include:

- Voluntary Sector organisations
- Organisations from West Lothian Community Planning Partnership
- Councillor Representation from the Community Planning Board

Appendix 1

Representatives from the following council services will also be included in the Cost of Living Short Life Working Group

- Representative of Finance and Property Services
- Representatives from Housing, Customer and Building Services
- Representatives of Education, Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration

Membership

Member	
Donald Forrest (Lead Officer)	
Housing, Customer and Building Services: Management Committees Housing Services	Ralph Bell
Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration: Regeneration Team Education	Alice Mitchell
Finance & Property Services: Anti-Poverty Service Anti Poverty Manager	Nahid Hanif
West Lothian College	Jackie Galbraith
Visit Scotland	Neil Christison
NHS Lothian	Ashley Goodfellow
Police Scotland- Area Commander	Louise Brownlie
Chamber of Commerce	Charles Wardman
Member of West Lothian Food Network	Steven Turnbull
Skills Development Scotland	David McCallum
Representation from local voluntary organisations	Alan McCloskey
Community Wealth Building / CPP Rep	Clare Stewart
Community Planning Partnership Chair	Cllr Kirsteen Sullivan
HSCP	Yvonne Lawton

Review

The short life working group remit, progress and membership will be reviewed in 2023 as part of the refreshed Anti-Poverty Strategy 2023-28.

Cost of Living Short Life Working Group Action Plan 2022/23

1. Collaboration with Partners				
Description	Action	Progress	Owner	Completion date
1.1 Continue to work with partners to promote and raise awareness of local support available	Develop a bi monthly partnership newsletter highlighting local cost of living support available to be shared with staff - all members of the cost of living short life group to input into newsletter	1 st edition of newsletter to be issued in November 2022	Anti-Poverty Manager	Ongoing
1.2 Working with community groups and partners to co-ordinate and promote ongoing support and activities throughout the winter	Deliver pop up winter ready information sessions key communities across West Lothian	Communities identified and first pop session will take place on 19 November in Dedridge.	Anti-Poverty Manager / Community Regeneration TL	Ongoing
1.3 Work with partners, including Community Centre Management Committees, to identify public spaces where people can feel warm and welcome this winter	Invite partners to take place in discussions to develop warm welcoming locations across West Lothian.	Discussions have taken place and a 'Warm Welcome Locations' map has been developed	Customer and Community Centre Manager	Ongoing
1.4 Co-ordinate ongoing benefit take up campaigns to improve uptake of financial and other support with rising living costs.	Working with key partners by sharing information to target support to vulnerable households.	Targeted interventions undertaken for families to raise awareness of the Scottish Child Payment extended eligibility. Pensioner Income Maximisation campaign is currently being delivered.	Anti-Poverty Manager / Cost of Living Short Life Working Group	Ongoing
1.5 Identify and share funding opportunities for partners to access allowing them to further support the cost of living crisis locally.	Share funding opportunities	Big Lottery – Cost of Living Support Scotland Rural Community Led Local Development (RCLLD) Cost of living Crisis - Small Grant Scheme	Community Wealth Building Manager / Cost of Living Short life working group	Ongoing

Cost of Living Short Life Working Group Action Plan 2022/23

2. Communication				
Description	Action	Progress	Owner	Completion date
2.1 Create a dedicated space on the council's website holding all cost of living support and information in one easily accessible area.	A dedicated online information hub has been created.	Hub has been created, promoted and shared with a range of partners.	Corporate Communications Manager	Ongoing
2.2 Campaign to promote 'Help with Costs' available locally.	Self-help booklets have been developed and printed providing practical advice with hints and tips to help with the rising costs, booklets are available across West Lothian in libraries, schools and within voluntary organisations premises	Campaign has been launched and regularly promoted in schools/libraries and community spaces across West Lothian including health settings.	Anti-Poverty Manager/Corporate Communications Manager	Ongoing
2.3 Engage with Scottish Government's Cost of Living Campaign to ensure consistency and to enable joined up working/promotion of key messages.	Key messages are shared and promoted alongside the local campaign	Scottish Government information is promoted locally.	Corporate Communications Manager	Ongoing
2.4 Roll-out programme of training for all front-line staff working across West Lothian to fully support those looking for help.	Continue to work with the council, Community Planning Partners and the third/voluntary sector to train customer facing staff to refer/signpost those seeking support.	Training is currently in development	Anti-Poverty Manager	Ongoing
3. Heat, Meet & Greet – Warm Welcome Locations				
3.1 Map the warm and welcoming spaces geographically and review the provision	Online map developed to allow accessibility and promotion of the Warm Locations.	Monitor and review locations and continue to promote the ongoing activities and support available.	Customer and Community Centre Manager	Ongoing
3.2 Building on existing activities and events encouraging people to spend time in public buildings to help with heating costs.	Promote activities and events as part of the warm location's promotion.	Monitor and review feedback from partners and those accessing warm locations to build on existing activities and events.	Customer and Community Centre Manager / Cost of Living Short Life Working Group	Ongoing