

# Cost of Living



Draft framework

# Background



- The economic downturn, the impact of Covid-19 and increases in the cost of living, alongside historically high levels of deprivation, have encouraged a renewed focus on debt, poverty and promoting financial wellbeing in Plymouth.
- The cost of financial exclusion is high, both to households affected and to society. It impacts on general wellbeing and is closely related to poverty and social exclusion.

# AIMS FOR OUR CITY RESPONSE



- Work together as partners, specialist agencies and stakeholders to deliver a range of relevant and supportive financial inclusion services that meets the needs of all residents
- To provide a joined up, multi-agency offer with access to other advice services so residents facing financial hardship are supported at the earliest opportunity
- To use key messages to promote awareness and improve access, signposting to existing and any new services

# WHO IS AT RISK?



There are lists in the literature but we are at the stage where these cover a large percentage of the population, with very high proportions in the most deprived groups, for example

- Households on low incomes/ in social housing / entitled to means-tested benefits
- Homeless / vulnerably housed
- Single parents / Single person households
- People aged 60+
- People aged 18 to 24
- People with disabilities inc SMI
- Households where there has been an unexpected event which has caused a significant reduction in income.

As the cost of living increases, disposable income reduces and more households start to face serious choices around heating, eating and debt.

# WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS?



- There are multiple impacts since poverty is such a strong determinant of future health and wellbeing, and reaches across into so many areas of lives.
- Even a relatively short term issue (such as over the winter) can have a lasting impact on finances; especially if debts are incurred with high interest rates.
- There are of course significant impacts on health and wellbeing;
  - Cold homes bring a significant increased risk of hospitalisation, and death, for people with existing cardiovascular, respiratory and circulatory problems.
  - Health issues caused by cold and damp also impact children; exacerbating the impact of illnesses such as asthma, and increasing the severity of viral and bacterial infections.
  - Poor nutrition; food that is cheap, energy dense and requires little to no preparation is often also unhealthy. This can lead to poor nutrition, as well as unhealthy weight (under or over weight).
- In addition, stress and worry has a negative impact on health, and may lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms

# PLYMOUTH APPROACHES



- Plymouth as a city has already adopted joined up, system leadership approach to tackling many of its challenges, as signalled by the Plymouth Plan.
- Many of the approaches needed to support people through the challenges expected around the Cost of Living are already in place; at least to some extent.
- This includes for example; Wellbeing Hubs, Complex Lives Alliance, Plymouth Energy Community, Food Plymouth and the Food Aid Network.
- Sources of support can be accessed through the Cost of Living hub, which is regularly updated

[Cost of living support - Plymouth Online Directory](#)

# THEMES



- Managing finances
- Managing at home – housing, heating and eating
- Supporting mental health and wellbeing

# THEME; MANAGING FINANCES



- **Managing finances**
  - *Understanding of and access to financial products, including affordable and responsible credit, an appropriate bank account, the benefits of affordable repayment plans, and the risks of high interest loans*
  - *To provide financial health checks and income maximisation through various partners across the city, working closely with residents to maximise income and sustain and maintain tenancies/homes, seek stable and secure employment.*
  - *To ensure all frontline staff are knowledgeable and can offer or signpost residents to appropriate financial well-being advice/services across the city*



# THEME; MANAGING AT HOME



- Managing at home – housing, heating and eating
  - *Reducing fuel poverty both by tackling the causes and by helping to meet the needs of people in crisis*
  - *To support a joined-up system in each community to provide enough no-cost, low-cost and affordable healthy food in moments of crisis and in long-term low-income households*
  - *To prevent people from becoming homeless, and support those living in poorer quality housing*

# THEME; SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING



- Supporting mental health and wellbeing
  - *Recognising the impact on people's mental health and wellbeing and signposting to support available*
  - *Supporting people in choices which are healthier, within the limitations of their situation*

# Graduated Response for each theme



- Urgent support – this is the support needed for people who are already in crisis
- Emerging needs – this is targeted to the households identified as being most at risk, both of financial hardship and of harm caused by that hardship
- Resilience – this is aimed at early prevention through a strength-based approach by working with communities and the voluntary sector to create an environment and opportunities that act, as far as possible, to prevent escalation and crisis. This is considered ‘business as usual’ for Plymouth, though the need is likely to grow.

# Workstreams



- Managing Finances –CAB, PEC, digital inclusion, Food Plymouth
- Communications –comms strategy aimed at public and professionals for signposting
- Managing at home
  - Food aid network – crisis and the community larder. Skills and recipes, equipment
  - Housing – community connections
  - Heating linked to finance group
  - Warm spaces
- Mental health and wellbeing
  - Thrive Plymouth/ One you Plymouth

# Enabling workstreams



- Community Empowerment
- Digital inclusion
- Inclusive growth (200+ businesses signed up to charter)
- Thrive Plymouth & Wellbeing Hubs
- Child Poverty Action Plan
- PH and ASC wellbeing workstreams / community builders

# Emerging areas



- Signposting and joining up the offer
  - (helpline, face to face, sharing information )
- Tiered approach – including helping people to help themselves
- Collaboration around HSF and other resources
- Warm spaces
- What can employers do?

# Warm Spaces



The costs of heating the home every day may be beyond the reach of many people, compromising their ability to manage at home. This may be a particular issue for households including those who are very young, older people, those with disabilities and/or chronic conditions. An emerging piece of work is to collate information on warm spaces (ones where you can stay somewhere warm with minimum cost). We are looking at the following;

- Workplaces (employees, plus might they open to immediate family e.g. children?)
- Community spaces – will they be able to continue offering warm spaces without additional funding for their own energy bills
- Cafes, restaurants, pubs – any that will encourage daytime trade? Recognising this has to be commercial
- Spaces used by the public which are already warm – what's the messages we could be giving out

# What can employers offer their staff? (1)



## Money

- employee discount schemes
- Signpost to benefits check (them or their families) (online [citizensadviceplymouth.entitledto.co.uk](http://citizensadviceplymouth.entitledto.co.uk))
- Signpost to [www.moneyhelper.org.uk](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk) – includes calculators for budgeting
- Highlight dangers of high interest loans
- Offer financial education seminars

## Mental health

- Talk about the issues, and remove the stigma around debt.
- Consider offering an employee assistance programme, and promote
- Adopt Workplace Wellbeing Charter (see Livewell) – inc 5 ways to wellbeing, to promote healthier coping strategies
- Promote Qwell



# What can employers offer their staff? (2)



## Food

- Subsidised staff food (costs org money)
- At cost staff food (no cost but loses profit)
- Help staff to set up food clubs which might;
- Bulk purchase food allowing people to buy a share of food at a much lower price
- Share advice and tips on lower cost foods and recipes

## Warm spaces

- Can you identify any spaces which are heated and so could be used more for example by;
  - Staff before or after their shift to keep warm
  - Children – after school / before school to do homework and wait til parents finished work
  - Other family members – allow travel together, enable them to keep heating off for longer at home