

Cost of Living and Poverty Partnership

Update report June 2023

BWRDD GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS
CASTELL-NEDD PORT TALBOT



NEATH PORT TALBOT
PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

Contents

Introduction and context	Page 3
Cost-of-Living and Poverty Prevention Partnership Achievements	Page 5
Impact on the Third Sector (Voluntary and Community Sector)	Page 8
National Picture	Page 10
Feedback from the Cost-of-Living Workshop	Page 13
Recommendations for Next Steps.....	Page 15
Appendix 1 - The output from each of the groups at the Cost-of-Living Workshop	Page 16
Appendix 2 – Presentation slides from the Cost-of-Living Workshop	Page 23

Introduction and context

Prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable living in our communities has always been a key priority for NPT Council, Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and many other partners.

In September 2019, a Poverty Symposium was held to identify opportunities for improving the way that services and support are delivered to people on low incomes across the county borough.

Unfortunately, the output from that event was put on hold whilst partners focussed their efforts on the emergency response to the pandemic.

In September 2020, NPT Council set up and facilitated the NPT Safe and Well Partnership which brought together partner organisations that were providing a humanitarian response. Partners began to identify contingency plans should another wave of coronavirus affect our communities.

Whilst responding to the emergency, partners were mindful of how the pandemic was impacting further on inequalities, both in terms of health and finance. Those who faced the greatest disadvantage prior to the pandemic were hardest hit and as a consequence, inequalities across Neath Port Talbot widened.

Nationally, evidence demonstrated how many of Wales' poorest areas had been hardest hit by the pandemic and concerns expressed that Wales was facing a "rising tide of poverty".

In July 2022, a discussion took place regarding the potential to refocus the work of the NPT Safe and Well Partnership to address the cost-of-living crisis. Partners started to identify what they could do collectively to support communities through the crisis and a Cost-of-Living Poverty Prevention Partnership was formed. The NPT Safe and Well Partnership transitioned into a Reference Group and is led by a Steering Group, co-chaired by Karen Jones, Chief Executive of NPT Council and Gaynor Richards, Director of Neath Port Talbot CVS.

The work of the Steering Group is an area of focus for the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board and helps to achieve the second well-being objective '**To ensure all our communities are thriving and sustainable**'. The Local Well-being Plan for 2023-2028 states that we will work together to:

- Make sure those who need help and support with the cost-of-living know what support is available and how to access it;
- Identify gaps in help and support and how those gaps could be addressed; and

- Revisit the work undertaken with the support of the Bevan Foundation prior to the pandemic and reset the strategic objectives and actions to address the root causes of poverty now.

For the past year, the cost-of-living crisis has dominated the headlines and according to a Public Health Wales (PHW) report, the crisis is a public health emergency, potentially on the same scale as the pandemic.

(<https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/the-cost-to-life-how-soaring-living-costs-affect-people-s-health-and-wellbeing>). The report details how not being able to afford the essentials, such as food, rent or mortgage payments, heating and hot water, or transport, has significant and wide-ranging negative impacts on mental and physical health.

The current demand for third sector services is unprecedented. Organisations are seeing an increasing demand for mental health support for adults, children and young people. More and more people are accessing food banks, advice services and debt support.

On the 16th March 2023, a Cost-of-Living Workshop was held at the Gwyn Hall. The purpose was to reflect on the work undertaken by the Partnership to date; to better understand how communities are being affected by the cost-of-living crisis; and to determine where the focus of the work should be for the Partnership going forward in order to develop a longer-term approach to poverty prevention.

This report provides information about what the Partnership has achieved to date and provides an overview of the current areas of concerns identified by attendees from the Workshop. It also provides recommendations for the next steps (see page 14).

Cost-of-Living and Poverty Prevention Partnership Achievements

To help our communities through this crisis, the focus for the Partnership to date has been on making sure all Neath Port Talbot residents are aware of the financial help and household support available to them by:

- Signposting to what help and advice is available;
- Administering the help and support which has been made available;
- Working with partners to see what more we can do.

Signposting: Help with the cost-of-living communications campaign

Communication has been key in the response. A dedicated webpage on both the NPT Council and Neath Port Talbot CVS's website was established at the outset which are updated on a continuing basis with new information on what support residents could be eligible for to help with the rising goods and energy costs, inflation and cost of living pressures.

During 1st September 2022 to 26th February 2023 the Council's cost-of-living webpage received 32,312 page views, putting it the 12th most viewed webpage on the Council's website. The cost-of-living page is currently the 3rd most viewed webpage on the Neath Port Talbot CVS website, followed by the mental health services directory which does give us an indication perhaps of how the cost-of-living is impacting on people's mental health.

In order to share regular updates around new and existing support available, a stakeholder ebulletin was created. Six ebulletins have been distributed to date.

A Social Media campaign was undertaken to remind individuals about the various grant support and services available, including energy saving tips on the UK Government's "Help for Households" webpage.

Along with a radio advert campaign to reach those that may not be on social media, 15,000 'Help with Cost of Living' leaflets have been distributed.

Administering the help and support which has been made available

- The Welsh Government Warm Hub / Spaces Grant

Welsh Government allocated £55,906 to Neath Port Talbot. As of the 28th February 2023, £34,488 had been distributed t and 38 applicants had received monies from the grant to support their warm hubs / spaces.

- Welsh Government - Food Poverty Grant 2022/2023

The grant was made up of two different funding streams – The Direct Food Support Award and the Household Support Fund which totalled over £139,000.00. 33 groups received funding amounting to £139,569.38. The majority of groups who applied for the funding were foodbanks and Big Bocs Bwyd Schools, who received approximately £99,017 to help with purchasing food supplies, food hygiene training for volunteers and Fareshare membership fees up to the end of March 2024.

Other beneficiaries ranged from Housing Associations who wished to purchase supermarket food vouchers for their most vulnerable clients, to groups setting up lunch clubs, community growing schemes and cooking on a budget workshops. Funding was also given to Local Area Coordinators to assist their vulnerable clients with supermarket food vouchers.

- The Hardship Relief Scheme

Following the allocation of £2m by the previous Council administration to establish a Hardship Relief Scheme, the Council entered into an arrangement with Warm Wales. As of the 2nd March 2023, 400 householders had received direct support from the fund; approximately 300 have received top-up vouchers (funded via the Fuel Bank Foundation but accessed through interest in the fund), some of whom will also have accessed other forms of support; and around 300 are being supported currently with outcomes pending. Support has totalled just over £110,000.

- Claiming Benefits

Over the last year, the Welfare Rights Service have continued to maximise the incomes of people living in Neath Port Talbot through the Welfare Benefits system. From 1st April 2022 to 24th February 2023, the service has supported 2,496 people and raised over £6.2 million.

- Welsh Government's Fuel Support Scheme

With regard to help with Household Bills the Council is administering the Welsh Government's Fuel Support Scheme, the aim of which is to reduce the impact of the rising cost of energy and the cost-of-living crisis. As of the 24th February 2023, 21,846 applications had been received of which 21,843 had been processed with 21,098 paid which amounts to £4,219,600. Of those paid, 15,364 relate to the 16,001 who were targeted at the beginning of the scheme meaning 96% of those targeted have been paid.

- Cost of Living Support Scheme

As of 24th February 2023, the £150 cost of living payment for all eligible households in Neath Port Talbot that fall within council tax bands A to D has totalled £8,197,800 (54,652 customers). In addition, £150 has been paid to 5,742 customers totalling £861,300 under the Discretionary Cost of Living Support Scheme. From the Discretionary Cost of Living Fund £250,000 has been awarded to the Discretionary Housing Payment Fund and £100,000 to food banks.

Working with partners to see what more we can do

It is important that we continue to build on the incredible work that is already taking place, avoiding duplication but maximising the support for the residents of Neath Port Talbot.

Impact on the Third Sector (Voluntary and Community Sector)

Neath Port Talbot CVS has continued to bring together third sector organisations through forum meetings and networks and understands how the cost-of-living is impacting people and organisations in different ways.

We know that the cost-of-living is having a greater impact on unpaid carers, those who have disabilities and single parent families. It has also emerged that in-work poverty is a significant issue alongside mental health, and access to services.

The cost-of-living crisis has increased client demand for Citizen Advice services including a 37% increase for clients being advised on general benefit entitlement, 20% increase in debt assessments, 10% increase in fuel debt advice with demand for fuel vouchers increasing by 17%.

Citizens Advice supported 3,213 clients from Neath Port Talbot last year with an average of 5.68 issues, which demonstrates the complexity of troubles residents are experiencing. They have seen a 13% increase in requests for advice via email and the number of phone calls made increased by 15% to 31,000. The number of Food Vouchers has more than doubled (increase of 112%) from 320 in 2021-2022, to 678 in 2022-2023.

Celtic Credit Union is reporting a massive impact on disposable income caused by people taking up buy-now- pay-later schemes (which are not regulated, so do not do affordability checks). One of the worst cases saw a customer having 14 agreements in place! Celtic Credit Union is also reporting that the DWP's cost-of-living payments are 'flying out' despite asking every customer if they would wish to save some of the money; to date, not one customer has done so.

Age Connects Neath Port Talbot reports that queries and associated casework around welfare benefits has increased by 140% and information and advice cases by 185%. Its Local Energy Action Partnership Service (which provides energy efficiency checks and provision of equipment) experienced a 75% increase from quarter 3 to quarter 4 of 2022-2023.

To help address some of the issues around fuel poverty, Warm Hubs/Spaces have been set up and the community, as always, has rallied together to look after one another.

Stori Cymru (formerly Hafan Cymru) has said that there continues to be an increase in food bank use and emergency Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) payments across its projects, and a reduction in grants available to support clients financially

that the organisation has been able to access in previous financial years. The impact of cost-of-living challenges, impacts staff as well as those the organisation supports.

Neath Port Talbot are facing an increased demand for mental health support from adults and children and young people. There is also an increase in complex needs of people approaching them for support. It's getting increasingly difficult to plan and develop new services as so much time and energy is spent on trying to maintain existing services.

Thrive Women's Aid reports how the Welsh Government allocation for the Housing Support Grant have remained the same value that they were last year. This means that providers may need to use reserves or seek match funding from other sources to meet the shortfall caused by the strain on their core costs caused by the cost-of-living crisis and increases to organisational costs.

With increased demand for services, some organisations have now got waiting lists and have had to put a hold on referrals for the first time in 20 years. They are also seeing an increase in safeguarding concerns being reported.

Recruitment and retention of paid staff and volunteers in the sector is increasingly difficult. Some organisations are giving their time and expertise to train new staff only to lose them to other sectors where there are higher paid jobs and better terms and conditions. Individuals are using their spare time to take on additional employment rather than volunteering their time.

The Sector is becoming fatigue. It's vital that we continue to support our communities, building resilience and providing sustainability where we can.

National picture

Poverty

Some of the concerns raised at a local level isn't too dissimilar to what is being reported Nationally. The [Summer 2022 'Snapshot of Poverty'](#) report by The Bevan Foundation revealed how the majority of people in Wales were reporting how they were cutting back on essentials and how there was a need to do more work in raising awareness of what support is available.

The Cost-of-Living and Poverty Partnership has helped to raise awareness of the support available but agrees that there is much more that could be done. The most recent report from The Bevan Foundation provides information about how they commissioned Policy in Practice to evaluate how data can support the process of developing greater commonality across [Welsh benefits](#) which is likely to increase take-up of support but would have financial implications for Welsh citizens, the Welsh Government, and Welsh councils.

The [Winter 2023 'Snapshot of Poverty'](#) report provides an overview of how people in Wales are managing rising costs and looks in greater detail at the experiences of those that are being most affected. It also explores the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on people's health and how nearly half of people in Wales (48 per cent) report that their mental health is being negatively affected by their financial position. This is a concern that is being raised locally through mental health agencies.

The recent action plan from The Bevan Foundation ['Easing the Cost-of-living Crisis this Winter'](#) sets out a number of recommendations. In the short term, their recommending that the eligibility for free school meals to be extended, an uplift made to Education Maintenance Allowance, a top up the Discretionary Housing Payment budget and for the Wales Fuel Support Scheme to be extended.

Their medium to long-term recommendations includes accelerating the provision of social housing, bringing forward plans for a new Warm Homes programme, improving data used to set LHA rates and seek devolution of powers to determine LHA rates in future, to further extend free school meals, applying inflation-linked uplifts to all devolved, means-tested grants and allowances on an annual basis and to accelerate the implementation of a Welsh Benefits System.

Housing

Wales is facing a housing crisis. There is a shortage of properties that people in Wales can purchase or rent at affordable prices. Over the course of 2022 the Bevan Foundation published a series of [reports](#) looking at the challenges faced by low-income private renters and found that the support provided by the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is nowhere near sufficient to cover the costs of renting in the

private rental sector in Wales. Of the 22 local authorities in Wales, only 6 have any properties available at or below LHA rate In February 2023. There were 52 properties advertised to let in Neath Port Talbot and none of these properties were covered by the respective Local Housing Allowance rates.

Food banks

Inadequate social security is the main driver of food bank need. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Trussell Trust have come together to campaign for a Welsh Benefits Guarantee. In the recent report '[Guarantee our Essentials: reforming Universal Credit to ensure we can all afford the essentials in hard times](#)', it states that 90% of low-income households on Universal Credit are currently going without essentials. Universal Credit allowance is currently set at £67 for single claimants under 25 (£85 for aged 25 or over) and £106 for a couple under 25 (£134 for a couple aged 25 or over). However, the report analysis indicates that Universal Credit would need to be at least £120 a week for a single adult and £200 for a couple.

Trussell Trust recently published their latest annual statistics on food bank need (showing numbers/breakdowns of food parcels given out in the year to April 2023 and rises since previous years). As part of this they published a [Wales-specific fact sheet](#) and it highlights the resilience, strength, and persistence of food banks in supporting their communities to access emergency food, signposting people to further support, and providing a warm and welcoming space for people to be heard will continue, but they are exhausted.

Working together

In March 2023, Neath Port Talbot CVS held two engagement events to discuss what should be included in a Child Poverty Strategy for Wales. The events were attended by representatives from organisations within the voluntary, statutory and independent sectors that offer support services for all young people aged 11-25 years in Neath Port Talbot.

Attendees highlighted that investment in childcare and transport would help children and their families now and in the future. They would like to see an expansion of the Apprenticeship Programme and a more robust careers advice offer. They call for Welsh Government to support Wales to become a Real Living Wage Nation and to invest long term in early intervention and prevention schemes which address underlying barriers to education, training and work such emotional wellbeing and mental health, low levels of aspiration lack of role models and behavioural change.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation recently published a learning report looking at [designing out the most severe forms of hardship in local areas](#) – it captures how local public services, Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, community

groups and other partners are working to mitigate and tackle the root causes of it poverty in their areas. The report provides a framework to support local areas to make progress towards designing out the most severe forms of hardship. It's based around six key areas of action, in three groups:

1. building a strategy and coalition,
2. shifting power and redesigning the system,
3. creating the conditions for sustainable local change.

Feedback from the Cost-of-Living Workshop

The Workshop was held in-person at the Gwyn Hall in Neath. It was attended by 36 individuals from across NPT Council, Neath Port Talbot CVS, members of the Steering Group, Reference Group and Third Sector Strategic Forum.

Representatives from Audit Wales also attended and gave an overview of three recent publications that relate to poverty:

1. "Time for Change" – Poverty in Wales (November 2022)
2. "A Missed Opportunity" – Social Enterprises (December 2022)
3. "Together We Can" – Community Resilience and Self-Reliance (January 2023)

During the workshop, attendees were asked to have groups discussions about what issues they were seeing on the ground that evidence how the cost-of-living was affecting communities. They were then asked to pick their top three areas of concern and make notes on how we may be able to address them. The output from each of the groups can be found in Appendix 1.

The key themes that emerged from the discussion were:

- Energy
- Food
- Debt
- Mental Health
- Housing (and furniture poverty)
- Basic Skills

With regard to how can we address the issues, the following ideas / suggestions were highlighted:

Theme	Suggestions
Fuel Debt / Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy saving tips • Education around needing warm/healthy homes • Links to energy/environment • Local Leaders' support • Sharing stories, talking about issues they are facing • Windfall Tax to be completed by Westminster
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking on a budget • Information / education • Free equipment e.g. slow cookers / air fryers with cooking instructions • Grow your own veg initiatives • Local food producers • Supporting food banks / hubs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at where food is being wasted e.g. schools • Supporting people to access healthy, nutritious and affordable food
Debt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit entitlement - eligibility criteria • People not knowing what they are entitled to • Raising awareness (not only online) • Community Champions - conduit LA / staff / volunteers • Easier access to locally based debt advice • More advice in communities - lots of small schemes e.g. food / clothing / vouchers • Encourage people to deal with it at an earlier stage
Mental Health & Emotional Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips on keeping well • Signposting to services that can help e.g. Mind, Citizens Advice, Credit Union • Co-ordinate resources • Supporting existing provision • Challenge existing processes • Speaking to communities to get their view and ideas of solutions • Cross-Directorate working on key issues - share resource / knowledge / messages • Early intervention and prevention • Better partnership working and awareness
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with RSLs / private landlords • Suitability of new builds • Making homes sustainable and looking at decarbonisation • Housing clearance - can RSLs leave flooring / white goods / unwanted furniture to help alleviate furniture poverty?
Basic Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeting / Maths / English • Living skills - cooking etc. • Identifying and supporting people in communities to be community 'enablers' • Simple pathways for people to get support ('no wrong door') • Social media messages

Attendees were also asked to consider the structure of the Cost-of-Living and Poverty Prevention Partnership and discussed how we could work better together. We recognise that the Reference Group (formally the NPT Safe and Well Partnership) is a fairly large group and is made up of members who were initially providing a humanitarian response during the pandemic. Whilst all members bring value by sharing intelligence within the partnership, it has been suggested that smaller focus groups may provide more meaningful engagement and will help us to address some of the local concerns that are arising.

Recommendations for Next Steps

The Steering Group to:

1. Consider the information contained in this report
2. Agree the focus areas for the Cost-of-Living and Poverty Prevention Partnership and develop an action plan outlining what initiatives will be taken forward
3. Revise the Cost-of-Living and Poverty Prevention Partnership structure to provide more meaningful engagement
4. Facilitate six monthly (in-person) Cost-of-Living Workshops, bring partners together to reflect on the work of the Partnership and identify any additional concerns
5. Consider how to involve individuals who are experiencing financial hardship
6. Deliver actions outlined in the NPT PSB Local Well-being Plan 2023-2028:
 - Make sure those who need help and support with the cost-of-living know what support is available and how to access it;
 - Identify gaps in help and support and how those gaps could be addressed; and
 - Revisit the work undertaken with the support of the Bevan Foundation prior to the pandemic and reset the strategic objectives and actions to address the root causes of poverty now.

Appendix 1

The output from each of the groups at the Cost-of-Living Workshop

What issues are we seeing on the ground?

Table 1	Issues	Commentary
1	Mental Health	
2	Voluntary recruitment crisis	
3	Welfare benefits	
4	Working adults/colleagues	
5	People not online are usually the ones who really need support	
6	Relationships	
7	Complex referrals and inappropriate requests	
8	Families taking packed lunches to stay in libraries all day	
9	Cost of cooking food	
10	Physical health impact	
11	Transport costs	
12	Mould/Damp – health issues	
13	Digital exclusion	
14	Heating Homes	
15	Cost of food	
16	Young people using youth clubs/services more now that food/drink provided	
17	Older people using buses to keep warm	
18	Cuts to grants and services	
Table 2		
19	Benefit entitlement	Very little for those not eligible / suffering for those just outside the threshold / eligibility criteria set by WG
20	In-work poverty	Staff concerned – impacting mental and physical health / mortgage, phone bills and utilities impacting on everyone
21	Micro business	Struggling and knock-on effect / same with 3 rd Sector
22	Access to services	Transport – lack of services / cost of running vehicles
23	Disparity across county	Food banks / warm hubs (some not being used – do people know where to go?) Can't just use social media / websites.
24	Local Members	60 in NPT, Community Champion on ground / People unable to do things themselves (build resilience)
25	Council seen as answer to everything	

26	Duplication of services	Schools / community centres / rugby clubs / churches – who is best placed to do what?
27	More joined up working across sectors	Collaborate, not compete (i.e. Glynneath – county / town council / 3 rd sector / businesses) / Make optimum use of what?
28	Assets of communities	Mapping of communities (area interest)
29	Debt	High interest loans / Apps online e.g. klarna
30	Welfare Rights	Debt advice, benefits advice / Who is best to contact? Streamline!
Table 3		
31	Not enough money from welfare benefits to enable an appropriate standard of living	
32	Budgeting awareness is lacking	
33	Hoarding	
34	Food – appropriate for special diets	
35	Lack of awareness / lack of confidence to access support	
36	Basic skills are at a low level	
37	General mental health issues – Anxiety and depression not being addressed	Affecting lives for years and years – need more support for mental health (resource)
38	Mental health issues of / for BME Communities	
39	Fear and lack of confidence	
40	Increase in social isolation	
41	Debt and debt issues	Loan sharks / exploitation
42	Housing quality	No heating or water / damp / access – stuck in house
43	Impact on children's diets	
Table 4		
44	No flexibility / no way to change	
45	Foodbank fatigue / lifestyle / choices	
46	Resilience is wearing out	Poor mental health
47	Gap between people's needs and them knowing where to go	
48	Pre-payment meters still going in	
49	Employment vs. Benefits	Knowledge of support availability / in-work support
50	Mental health – anxiety and depression	Becoming a barrier to employment
51	Relationships at home	Parents not feeling able to provide for children / stuck in housing situations
52	Complexity of funding / benefits	
53	Financial health	Knowledge / access
54	Housing	Difficult to make financial choices as budgets shrink – housing stock is old / repairs get incrementally bigger

Table 5		
55	Worried about this coming winter regarding fuel crisis	Accruing fuel debt (example of £10k)
56	Worrying about the cost of everything going up	
57	Issues with older people (60+) supporting with fuel debt	
58	Not available to come to services due to fuel costs (petrol)	
59	£500-£1k fuel debt since crisis started	Worried turning on the heating
60	Amount of Universal Credit isn't much	Changes with what they work
61	Work based poverty	Increase in use of food banks
62	Rent increases	
63	Avoidance of financial issues	People terrified of getting into a financial crisis
64	Fatigue – repeating their stories to multiple organisations	
65	Organisations are stretched in every sense of the word	
66	Bedroom Tax – unable to pay	
Table 6		
67	Debt	Hiding or ignoring debt advice / lack of debt advice / no budgeting / can't afford utilities – S/C's on meters
68	People not using fuel	Warm home discount changes / cash flow vs bills
69	Transport costs / isolation	Can't get to appointments or access services
70	Scams	
71	Community centres / Churches – cost of fuel	
72	Lack of housing – affordability	
73	Increase in levels of poor mental health	
74	Un-safe solutions	
75	Crime	
76	Online gambling	
77	Relationship strain	
78	Unaddressed maintenance issues	
79	Loan Sharks	
80	New credit offers e.g. klarna	
81	Cost of services for older people	Some costs for services such as shopping and cleaning are increasing. Also services that were free previously are not costing individuals which is a barrier.
82	Lack of National Insurance contributions	People who are not claiming benefits or are living off their savings are not paying into their NI contributions.
83	Increase in loneliness and isolation	Lack of befriending support locally and those that exist are full to capacity.

How can we tackle any of our top 3 issues?

	Issue	Commentary
Table 1	Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking on a budget • Information and education • Free equipment e.g. slow cookers and air fryers with cooking instructions • Grow your own veg initiatives • Local food produce • Supporting food banks and hubs • Look at where food is being wasted e.g. schools • Supporting people to access healthy, nutritious and affordable food
	Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy saving tips • Education around needing warm and healthy homes • Links to energy / environment
	Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips on keeping well • Signposting to services that can help e.g. Mind / Citizens Advice/Credit Union
Table 2	Duplication of Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating resource and capacity to undertake • Need to map – whose problem is it to solve (everyone's)? • Engagement – change management (collaborate, not compete) • Deliver what is best for the community • Tailored approach • Where does funding come from? LA / WG / Health / Charity • Areas – GP clusters / ward / catchments / Env. Areas – what is the community?
	Behavioural / Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal / external • Need to learn from others
	In-work poverty / debt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit entitlement – eligibility criteria • People not knowing what they are entitled to • Raising awareness (not only online) • Community Champions – conduit LA / staff / volunteers
Table 3	Housing Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with RSLs / private landlords • Suitability of new builds • Making homes sustainable – decarbonisation • Housing clearance – can RSLs leave flooring / white goods / unwanted furniture to alleviate furniture poverty?
	Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinate resources • Supporting existing provision • Challenge existing processes (Health) • Speaking to communities to get their view and ideas of solutions • Cross-Directorate working on key issues – share resource / knowledge / messages
	Basic Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeting / Maths / English • Living skills – cooking etc.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and supporting people in communities to be community 'enablers' Simple pathways for people to get support ('no wrong door') Social media messages
Table 4	Create effective chain of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response / benefits and support through to beneficiary
	Expertise in information and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could there be a commitment to specific categories to complete the MAPS (Money Guidance Competency Framework)?
	Equality of schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful schemes going into all communities equally Link up with what is available to people Fix the system – stop plugging gaps!
Table 5	Fuel Debt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Leaders' support Sharing stories, talking about issues they are facing Windfall Tax to be completed by Westminster
	Avoidance of Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local leaders, especially for small groups Marketing campaign re: talking about problems Sharing stories, talking about issues they are facing Managing expectations to people referred into them GP cluster work? GPs understand community groups etc.
	Organisations stretched	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase co-production working – how it works / set-up Short-term funding issues – create better ways to fund Procurement issues Staff retention / recruitment pressures
Table 6	Debt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easier access to locally based debt advice More advice in communities – lots of small schemes e.g. food / clothing / vouchers Encourage people to deal with it at an earlier stage Need to raise awareness of impact of scams and door step lending. Staff to complete the MAPS 'Money Guidance Competency Framework'.
	Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsafe use of appliances for heating – more education Crime – to supplement income
	Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early intervention and prevention Better partnership working and awareness
	'Other' Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplifying complex referral pathways Concept of '20-min neighbourhood' – the idea that you can access everything needed for a happy / healthy lifestyle in your neighbourhood Bringing partners together regularly to share intelligence and good practice / resource Listening to people with lived experience and making sure they are part of the designing solution

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community focused schools, looking at how communities can benefit from school facilities • Provide a focus on education to prevent issues.
--	---

Draft Governance Structure

Review of Governance Structure	Comments
Emergency Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add 'Clothing • Add Furniture • Add 'Crisis Support / Response' (disaster) • Add 'White Goods'
Services / Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-name as 'Community'
Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrap as a workstream - the same people are in attendance at all (1-3) • Have sub-group 'Task & Finish' groups (1 – Access to Services / 2 – Skills & Training / 3 – Emergency Support) • Add 'Disabled People' • Add LGBTQ+ / BAME / Asylum Seekers & Refugees
Access to Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add 'Social Activities' • Add 'Health'
Skills & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add 'Social Enterprises'
'Other' Feedback	
Emotional Support & Wellbeing has been completely missed out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not represented in the structure
Should we be 'silo-ing' into different sub-groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations would fall into many
Spending a lot of time 'talking' and not 'doing'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This looks very similar to what was done before – should we be looking to 'shake things up' and do something different?
Takes time to decide on actions and for them to come to fruition	
Lived Experience – needs to be part of it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use 'lived experiences' to identify real life experiences and how it can be supported • This would encourage co-production and partnership working
Develop 'front door' service in communities	
Need to avoid fatigue and being passed 'pillar to post'	
Agenda needs to be clear and concise on what is to be achieved at the meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E.G. what is the problem to be solved?
Meetings to be held F2F / Hybrid at different organisations to build relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding what each other does
Case Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brand new way of working

What's the purpose of the groups? Is it information sharing? How would the groups connect?	
Overlap between communities group and others	

Appendix 2

Presentation slides from the Cost-of-Living Workshop

Cost-of-Living and Poverty Prevention Workshop

16th March 2023

Neath Port Talbot County Borough
Bywdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd Port Talbot

NEATH PORT TALBOT
CVS
CASTELL-NEDD PORT TALBOT

Archwilio Cymru
Audit Wales

1

Karen Jones Chief Executive
Neath Port Talbot Council

Reflection - What Have We Achieved to Date?

4

Gaynor Richards
Director
Neath Port Talbot CVS

Welcome and Introductions

2

Our focus has been on making sure all Neath Port Talbot residents are aware of the financial help and household support available to them by:

- Sign posting to what help and advice is available
- Administering the help and support which has been made available

Always been mindful not to duplicate as we recognised there is a lot going on at the community level – it was important to identify where we could add value.

5

Supporting communities together

- Purpose and structure of today
- Snapshot of poverty in Neath Port Talbot
- Forums and networks
- Resilience and sustainability of third sector

3

Signposting:
Help with the cost of living communications campaign

www.npt.gov.uk/costoflivinghelp

During 1st September 2022 to 26th February 2023 the webpage received 32,312 page views, putting it the 12th most viewed webpage on the Council's website.

www.nptcvs.wales/get-help/help

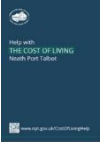
Dedicated webpages

The cost-of-living page is currently the 3rd most viewed webpage on the CVS website followed by the mental health services directory webpage.

6

**Signposting:
Help with the cost
of living
communications
campaign**

- Distribution of 15,000 "Help with Cost of Living" leaflets.
- Social media campaign
- Radio advert campaign
- WalesOnline advertorial (online)
- South Wales Evening Post advertorial
- Five stakeholder bulletins.



Continued

7

**Nick Selwyn
Audit Manager**

**Charles Rigby
Senior Auditor**

Audit Wales

10

**Administering
Support:**

- Welsh Government Warm Hub/ Spaces Grant
- Welsh Government - Food Poverty Grant 2022/2023
- Hardship Relief Scheme
- Claiming Benefits
- Help with Household Bills
- Cost of Living Support Scheme



8

**Archwilio Cymru
Audit Wales**

Poverty in Wales

Key messages from Audit Wales

11

Looking Forward

Today is an opportunity to think about what more we could be doing

Audit Wales – Nick Selwyn Audit Manager & Charles Rigby, Senior Auditor



- "Time for Change" – Poverty in Wales (November 2022)
- "A Missed Opportunity" – Social Enterprises (December 2022)
- "Together We Can" – Community Resilience and Self-Reliance (January 2023)

9

Audit Wales 2022-23 programme of poverty related reviews

Baseline setting out the challenge of poverty in Wales

Supporting solutions



November 2022 December 2022 January 2023

12

Poverty – where we are now

- The number of people living in poverty is rising.
- Key levers to alleviate poverty are outside of Wales's control.
- The national Child Poverty Strategy needs refreshing.
- While all councils and partners have prioritised work on poverty, the mix of approaches and a complicated partnership landscape mean that ambitions, focus, actions and prioritisation vary widely.
- The short-term nature of Welsh Government grant programmes, overly complex administration, weaknesses in guidance and grant restrictions mean that funding is not making the impact it could.
- Preventative work is hard to deliver because of the growing demand from people in crisis
- The way services are delivered do not always help people.
- Delivering socio-economic duty varies and is not always effective.

19

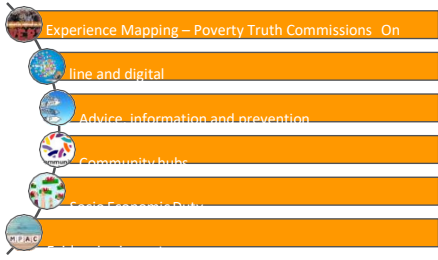
Cost of living crisis impact on public services

- Higher costs for capital projects as result of inflationary pressures.
- Utility cost increases on key services – schools, day centres, etc.
- Impact of inflation on external contracts and staff costs.
- Rising fuel prices for transport.
- Result - need to invest/spend more money to stand still.
- Setting 2023-24 budget and beyond extremely challenging.



22

Challenges in organising and delivering services to help tackle and alleviate poverty



20

Councils have opportunities to offer new approaches and solutions building on their recent work in the pandemic to tackle poverty

Making more of social enterprises

- S16 of SSWBA 2014

Social resilience and self-reliance

- Changing the relationship between the council and citizens

23

Looking to the future.....



- Austerity 1, 2 and
- Reductions in capacity
- Growing demand
- Challenging targets and responsibilities – e.g. carbon emissions
- Efficiency savings are becoming exhausted
- Post pandemic recovery
- Cost of living crisis impact on public bodies

21

What is a Social Enterprise?

What Are The Difference Between These Three?

CHARITY	SOCIAL ENTERPRISE	FOR PROFIT COMPANY
Non-profit, not generating revenue or profit.	A combination of business and social goals, but with emphasis on the latter.	Profit maximizing company. CSR and social impact considered an add-on to the core business agenda.
	Profit is reinvested in community or company.	

24

The value of Social Enterprises in tackling poverty

- Social Enterprises focus on **keeping wealth within communities** and can assist people who are in poverty by:
 - directly helping people in disadvantaged communities by providing services that would otherwise not be available;
 - supplying basic public benefits such as social, educational, health and general economic interest services to local communities, including to people who are unable to pay;
 - creating new employment opportunities as a result of the services they supply;
 - contributing to the economic development of deprived communities; and
 - targeting their work to help disadvantaged people, including vulnerable women, people with disabilities and ethnic minority groups.

25

Social Enterprises – where we are now

- Councils are not effectively working with Social Enterprises to maximise their impact, make better use of resources to help people and communities:
 - Gaps in information and a lack of understanding of the scale and range of work undertaken by Social Enterprises in communities.
 - Most councils do not effectively engage with Social Enterprises.
 - Procurement and commissioning approaches do not encourage Social Enterprises to work with councils.
 - Councils not able to judge the value and impact of Social Enterprises because of limitations in management information and reporting.
- As a result, most local authorities are not delivering their S.16 responsibilities under SSWBA 2014.

28

The Social Enterprise Sector in Wales

- Covers roughly **2,250** businesses employing **56,000** people.
- Generates **£3.1 – £3.8 billion** in value.
- Between 2018 and 2020 the Social Enterprise sector in Wales increased by **43%** rising from **1,601** organisations in 2016 to **2,247** in 2020.
- **5%** of Welsh Social Enterprises are medium sized to large (i.e. have at least **50** employees), far above the equivalent for all businesses within the Welsh economy (only **1%**).
- **32%** of Social Enterprises surveyed had no paid staff at all, whilst a further **9%** only had one.
- Mean average turnover level was **£1.25 million**.

26

The case for prioritising community resilience

- Community and self-resilience has begun to appear as a priority in more council corporate plans and strategy documents.
- In essence focus is on equipping people to do more for themselves.
- Prioritising where to focus council activity.
- Recognition that councils cannot do what they always have done.
- **Importantly...** the pandemic showed us councils can work differently and communities can do more.



29

Where Social Enterprises focus their work

Main social or environmental objectives	2016	2018	2020
Improving a particular community	64%	57%	66%
Improving health and well-being	39%	45%	52%
Supporting vulnerable people	35%	46%	48%
Addressing financial exclusion	26%	28%	44%
Encourage people to participate in the arts, sports & recreation	-	32%	42%
Supporting vulnerable children and young people	20%	29%	34%
Creating employment opportunities	21%	24%	31%
Promoting education and literacy	32%	29%	29%
Protecting the environment	16%	26%	29%
Providing access to services	-	22%	27%
Supporting other social enterprises / organisations	9%	16%	25%
Promotes and protect culture, heritage & the Welsh language	-	21%	24%
Addressing social exclusion	7%	9%	21%
Providing affordable housing	5%	4%	3%

27

Current approaches by councils – a good start to build on



30

Shifting from 'doing' to 'influencing' and 'enabling' – the barriers

- Lack of resources, limited skills and weak capacity to be able to drive this agenda.
- Inability to redirect resources from service delivery to supporting communities to be more self-reliant.
- A lack of trust between the council and residents and a perceived inability and appetite within communities to be more self-reliant.
- The prevailing service delivery culture within the council of needing to be 'direct providers' rather than 'influencers' and 'enablers'.
- Limitations in joined up working with partners on the ground to foster stronger community involvement and influence.
- Lack of a strategic vision and limited understanding of community needs and abilities.
- Ongoing challenges in helping connect and re-connect communities due to challenges of poverty, rurality, transportation and digital exclusion.

31

Opportunities for the future – Audit Wales self-assessments

2 Community resilience and self-reliance evaluation tool

Active

Active	Yes	No	Not Rated
Has been clearly defined and agreed what community resilience and self-reliance means to you			
Has been clearly defined what you need to do and how you will do it			
Has been clearly defined how you will measure and monitor progress			
Has been clearly defined how you will communicate and engage with the community			
Has been clearly defined how you will work with partners			
Has been clearly defined how you will ensure you are inclusive and accessible			
Has been clearly defined how you will ensure you are sustainable			
Has been clearly defined how you will ensure you are resilient			
Has been clearly defined how you will ensure you are adaptable			
Has been clearly defined how you will ensure you are inclusive and accessible			
Has been clearly defined how you will ensure you are sustainable			
Has been clearly defined how you will ensure you are resilient			
Has been clearly defined how you will ensure you are adaptable			

2 Checklist for local authorities for effectively engaging and working with Social Enterprises

Active

Active	Completed	Not Started	Not Rated
1 Strategic Arrangements			
1.1 Vision			
Has been an agreed vision on how we will work with Social Enterprises			
The vision has been shared with, and understood by, all relevant staff in the local authority			
The vision has been shared with, endorsed by and implemented by relevant partners			
The vision has been developed in consultation with the local Council's Strategic Council			
The vision has been disseminated to Social Enterprises in the area			
1.2 Roles and Responsibilities			
The vision clearly sets out how we intend to deliver our vision in respect of the following: Strategic Arrangements			
Regional Partners Board and Regional Partnership Board and			
Use of an Regional Impact Fund to promote and develop Social Enterprises			

34

Looking to the future

- Creating a clear vision of how things will work in the future.
- Holding a two-way dialogue and communicating what change will 'look' and 'feel' like.
- Revitalising the role of council members as community champions.
- Refocussing the work of council staff.
- Recognising that recasting community relationships will require different solutions in different places.
- Ensuring wealth stays local and works for all the community.

32

GPX events

Together we can – creating the conditions to empower our communities to thrive (South Wales)

Date: 19 April 2023

Start Time	End Time
10:30	16:30

Your Details

First Name:

Last Name:

Email Address*:

* You must provide an email address

- North Wales – March 28, 2023 @ Venue Cymru, Llandudno
- South Wales – April 19, 2023 @ Cardiff, venue to be confirmed

35

Learning from elsewhere

- Bristol City Council Resilience Strategy
- The role of 'Community Charettes' in Scotland
- Oldham City Council – 'Local Leaders'
- Strategic coherence in Scotland
- 'Preston Model' and the role of 'Anchor' institutions


33

Contact details


- Nick Selwyn – nick.selwyn@audit.wales
nick.selwyn@archwilio.cymru
- Charles Rigby – charles.rigby@audit.wales
charles.rigby@archwilio.cymru
- www.audit.wales
- www.archwilio.cymru

36

Introduction to 1st Workshop (40 minutes)

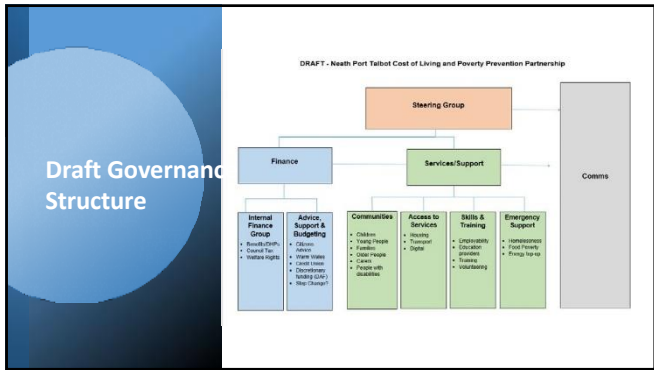


Q1) What issues are we seeing on the ground?



Q2) How can we address any of our top three issues?

37



40

Break (10 mins)

38


Closing Remarks What Next?

41

Feedback (5 mins per table)

What are the top three issues?

How could these be addressed?



39