


JULY
2022

COST OF LIVING: EVENT REPORT

Prepared by the office of
Heledd Fychan MS



The background of the report features a photograph of several tall stacks of Euro coins, with a green plastic bottle partially visible behind them. Overlaid on the bottom portion of the image is a blurred price list with two columns: item names on the left and prices on the right.

NI RIVER HAND	7.05
ORANG/MADARINE	2.85
L M/USAGE CIF	1.93
L DEPOUSS. PL 12	2.12
1L CACHER	.93
T. FRUITS SIROP	2.49
NGOLINI BELIN	.68
POIVRON PIQUI	5.30
CLEMENTINES 1L	2.70
VERTE PICHQ	3.25
SEL TRAD. P	3.10
PANZONI	1.12



Senedd Cymru
Welsh Parliament



Plaid Cymru
Party of Wales

Cost of Living Crises Networking Event - Taff Ely and Ogwr

Pontyclun Athletic Club - 19.7.22

In February 2022, Heledd Fychan, Member of the Senedd for South Wales Central, held a cost-of-living summit, attended by organisations from across the region of South Wales Central who are working to support people impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. Attendees discussed practical ways to coordinate support, and as a result several new initiatives emerged such as Citizens Advice and Interlink holding advice surgeries in Pontypridd Foodbank and greater cooperation between the foodbanks and local pop-up pantries.

This latest event was organised in collaboration with Luke Fletcher, Member of the Senedd for South Wales West, to involve groups working across the 'borders' in the Taff Ely and Ogwr communities.

The objective of the event was to get a clearer understanding of how the cost-of-living crisis was affecting local organisations and their service users. It also provided an opportunity for attendees to establish working relationships and to learn best practice from one another.

In attendance were representatives from Citizens Advice, Taff Ely and Pontypridd Foodbanks, Interlink, RHondda Cynon Taf Council, Llanharan Community Council, The Pantry Llanharan, People and Work Unit and Age Cymru – Hope advocacy.

Summary of key issues

The main issues identified linked to the cost-of-living crises were:

- **In-work poverty** - The demand for support has risen significantly from people who are in-work but are struggling to make ends meet.
- **Cost of energy prices** - The rise in demand for support towards energy costs is one of the biggest concerns. While some support has been made available through community grants or Fuel voucher schemes, organisations felt that this was only a temporary solution to the problem and does not address the issue which is expected to worsen in October.
- **Digitally excluded groups** - Age Cymru specifically mentioned the difficulty of supporting those who are digitally excluded and do not have access to the same tools as others when looking to lower costs through comparison websites.
- **Food Poverty** - There has been a significant increase in the number of people asking for help for the first time.

Summary of discussion

Attendees had the opportunity to discuss the different issues their organisations are facing in tackling the cost-of-living crisis. Throughout the event organisations shared that the demand for support has risen exponentially, with the demand for food tripling since the start of the year. With the end of the furlough scheme, delays in receiving universal credit and low-income, people are presenting to services at crisis point.

Services have seen a significant increase from families with children as well from those in work. In-work poverty was of particular concern to services as this group of people earned too much to qualify for financial support but weren't earning enough to meet the cost of living.

The need for financial support for energy costs is one of the biggest concerns shared by Age Cymru, RCT Neighbourhood Network, Food Banks and Citizens Advice. While some support has been made available through community grants or Fuel voucher schemes organisations felt that this was only a temporary solution to the problem and does not address the issue which is expected worsen in October.

Age Cymru specifically mentioned the difficulty of supporting those who are digitally excluded and do not have access to the same tools as others when looking to lower household costs through comparison websites. This issue is not exclusive to those over 50 with representatives from Interlink sharing that this is an issue that their service users face due to inability to afford phones or tablets, which then limits people's ability to access support available online.



The importance of collaboration to link up support was highlighted throughout the event. Evidence of best practice was shared through examples from both foodbanks, who since the first cost of living summit have developed working partnerships with Interlink RCT and Citizens Advice RCT to offer wrap round support on site to those in crisis.

It was evident that there are a lot more organisations working in communities to deliver services now than there was pre pandemic, such as local food pantries. What was clear in discussion throughout the event was that many were still unaware or found it confusing to know what support was being offered by each organisation to support those in their communities.

James Hall from the People And Work Unit shared how his organisation was addressing this issue in the Rhondda by setting up a Facebook group for local people and projects to share what support was on offer to make it easier for people to know where to go when requiring support. His organisation is mindful that not all have access to digital tools and are exploring options to open a physical location for people to access support from different agencies in one location.

Concerns were also raised about food poverty over the summer holidays, and how families will survive.

Recommendations and follow up

To address the key issues, attendees highlighted a number of recommendations that they felt could help them tackle the crisis and support those living in the Taff Ely and Ogwr communities.

Organisations were very vocal that more needs to be done by both the UK Government and the Welsh Government to tackle the root cause of the issues, acknowledging that their organisation can only offer temporary solutions.

Recommendation 1: Heledd Fychan MS and Luke Fletcher MS to keep pressing Governments to take further action to tackle root causes of poverty, building cross-party support to achieve this.

Organisations shared that they would like to see the Government develop community energy initiatives making energy prices more affordable in order to benefit communities and people.

Recommendation 2: Heledd Fychan MS and Luke Fletcher MS to raise this issue on behalf of organisations in the Senedd, linked to the cooperation agreement and plans to establish Ynni Cymru.

Organisations also stated that there needs to be a joining up of all projects and agencies across Wales, as well as consistent capturing of data.

The support available is so different from area to area that an overview could help get rid of the postcode lottery of support and make it easier for agencies to sign post to help available.

Recommendation 3: Heledd Fychan MS and Luke Fletcher MS to write to the Minister for Social Justice to ask how Welsh Government will help this to happen.

Recommendation 4: Heledd Fychan MS will look to organise future networking events for organisations to collaborate on projects related to the cost of living. She will also share the contact details of attendees from the event so that organisations can continue to develop working relationship post this event.

Following the event, Heledd Fychan MS and Luke Fletcher MS will support local organisations to deliver on these recommendations and will look to organise future networking events for organisations to collaborate and share ideas on how to support those in crisis.



Heledd Fychan MS

✉ Heledd.Fychan@Senedd.Wales

☎ 01443 853214

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