

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

**North Area Council Meeting:
14th November 2022**

Agenda Item: 4

**Report of North Area Council
Manager**

Cost of Living Workshops Developing a North Area Response

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To apprise Members of the discussions that took place at a recent workshop regarding challenges currently faced by local communities due to the increased cost of living. Information may be used to help develop a time limited project funded by the North Area Council.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. **Members note the detail extracted from stakeholder discussions at the two workshops held on the 6th and 13th October.**
- 2.2. **Members ascertain what is important to the Area Council based on the discussions to ensure the Priority Working Group with the support of the Area Manager have sufficient direction to progress the priority effectively.**
- 2.3. **Members agree to hold a further workshop to develop the North Area response.**

3. Background

- 3.1. At the Area Council Meeting on the 10th March Area Council representative received a presentation from Business Intelligence's Jill Bills regarding demography, deprivation, life expectancy and excess winter deaths.
- 3.2. In addition, Members voiced the challenges that they are experiencing in local communities and identified the following:
- Support for fuel, food and the cost-of-living crisis
 - Anti-Social behaviour and the increase in nuisance caused
 - Parking enforcement

- Careers advice / raising aspirations of 14- and 16-year-olds including information on a variety of jobs and opportunities that would not come out of regular careers advice in school

3.3. At the Area Council Meeting on the 14th March it was agreed that any further development work regarding the current priorities and remaining commissioning budget would be delayed until the outcome of the Welfare Review was available.

3.4. At the Area Council meeting on the 16th May 2022 it was agreed that a further workshop would be held to discuss priorities for the North Area. The Area Council Manager was requested to focus the workshop on the Cost of Living.

4. Workshop – 6th July 2022

4.1. On the 6th July 2022, a workshop took place led by Emma Robinson from Business Intelligence. Supported Leyla Nayeri, Senior Health Improvement Officer and the Area Manager.

4.2. The workshop was attended by anti-poverty working group members: Cllr Leech, Cllr T Cave, Cllr Hunt and additionally by Cllr Platts.

4.3. The information session included three main sections:

- Labour Market Profile
- Cost of Living – The ‘squeezed middle’ and poverty
- Impacts on wider determinants of health
- Existing Support

4.4. Labour Market Profile

4,111 people of working age in the North Area are claiming Universal Credit. 14.9% of working age population. (Not all of which will be unemployed)
The North Area overall is under the Barnsley average of 17.7%. However, St Helen's is 24%.

26.8% of Barnsley's working age people are economically inactive. The numbers have increased since the outset of the pandemic. However, the vast majority have expressed a desire to work.

The most prevalent reason for people who are economically inactive is poor mental health, followed by musculoskeletal complaints.

During the pandemic many people have re-evaluated their household budgets and some people have chosen to step back from work before retirement age, many in their 50s.

31.1% of working age adults have a Level 4 qualification or better. (Barnsley)
18.9% of people are earning below the Living Wage. (Barnsley)

4.5. Cost of Living – The ‘squeezed middle’ and poverty

Low Income

Children in low-income families in Barnsley is 24.5%.
However, in St Helen's Ward this is currently 32%.

Fuel Poverty

Low Income and Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) defines a household as fuel poor if:

"The household has a residual income below the poverty line (after accounting for required fuel cost)".

AND

"Lives in a home that has an efficiency rating below BAND C".

Barnsley is higher than the national average at 19.2%.

24% of St Helen's Ward households are considered to be fuel poor.

End Fuel Poverty Coalition - April 2022 figures projected that number of Barnsley households in fuel poverty could increase to 37.1%. Equating to 41,000 of households in Barnsley, 7,650 of which would be in the North Area
For single adult households on low incomes - percentage is even higher at 54%

The 'squeezed middle'

Families with a middle-income standard of living are also struggling to manage the surging cost of living. These are typically households with high cost associated with mortgages, childcare and energy and are being forced to make large spending adjustments to cope.

YouGov Poll (2,001 people) of which 55% participants said that their health had worsened owing to issues such as higher heating and food costs.

It is predicted that over-indebtedness will rise during 2022.

The proportion of people experiencing their debt as a heavy burden has increased by almost 5% for those receiving Universal Credit and Tax Credits compared to 3% for those who are not.

There is a two-way relationship between debt and health. Indebtedness can have a significant impact on mental wellbeing.

4.6. **Impacts on wider determinants of health**

Life expectancy at birth in Barnsley:

81.8 for women and 77.9 for men.

However, **healthy life expectancy** is much less.

60.1 years for women and 55.9 years for men. For men, this is 6.9years lower than national average and the lowest in Yorkshire and Humber.

St Helen's Ward has the lowest life expectancy at birth within the North Area.
79.8 years for women and 75.6 years for men.

Debt

It is predicted that over-indebtedness will rise during 2022.

The proportion of people experiencing their own debt as a heavy burden has increased by almost 5% for those receiving Universal Credit and Tax Credits compared to 3% for those who are not.

There is a **two-way relationship between debt and health**. Indebtedness can have a significant impact on mental wellbeing.

Excess Winter Deaths

Further work is underway with public health colleagues to understand why the rates of excess winter deaths for Darton East ward are so high. The Senior Health Improvement Officer advised that work is underway with Healthwatch. A link with industry-related disease is being explored and data has been requested from Integrated Care partners

- 4.7. The working group had an opportunity to discuss the information that they had received.

5. What were the main priorities identified?

- 5.1. High numbers of low-income families in St Helen's.
- 5.2. St Helen's Ward has the lowest life expectancy at birth within the North Area. 79.8 years for women and 75.6 years for men.
- 5.3. 24% of St Helen's Ward households are considered to be fuel poor.
- 5.4. Concern that if predictions are correct by the end of 2022, 7,650 household in the North Area could be experiencing fuel poverty. (For single adult households on low incomes - percentage is even higher at 54%).
- 5.5. Concern for the 'squeezed middle' group of households who are struggling to cope with inflation.
- 5.6. Increase in indebtedness.
- 5.7. The impact on mental health cause by mounting financial pressures and indebtedness.
- 5.8. The presentation delivered at the May 2022 Area Council meeting by YMCA and Ad Astra was touched upon mentioned. Members were keen to do more to support young people's mental wellbeing as they recover from the wider impacts of covid.

6. What support is already available?

6.1. Household Support Grant

Barnsley MBC has been allocated £500,000 that must be used by the end of March 2023. The fund will provide financial support to households needing help with the rising cost of living.

6.2. More Money in your Pocket (MMIYP)

Offering advice and signposting for residents.

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/advice-benefits-and-council-tax/help-with-the-rising-cost-of-living/>

Information includes:

- Housing Support
- Support with utility bills
- Food Support inc. Free school meals
- Budgeting Support to help manage money.

6.3. Warm Homes Charter is in draft.

There is a vision which aims to ensure that everyone lives in a warm, healthy and energy efficient home. More information will be available when the charter has been through BMBC's decision making processes.

6.4. Warm Homes Team

Promote, manage and administer grant-funded, fuel poverty energy efficiency schemes (private sector).

Currently recruiting additional Warm homes Officers to work with the most vulnerable residents and engage the community.

6.5. Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency Schemes

Funding available for private sector properties for:

- boiler replacements
- 1st time gas central heating
- wall, loft and underfloor insulation
- windows and doors (to replace single glazing only)

Eligibility – Income <£30K, EPC Bands E/F/G (D with health condition)

6.6. More and Better Jobs

An employment and skills strategy for Barnsley aiming to ensure that unemployment in Barnsley is below the national average and there is an increase in apprenticeships, amongst other aims.

6.7. DIAL – Warm Connections

DIAL were able to roll out the Warm Connections project, piloted in North Area, following a successful Energy Redress Grant fund application. DIAL have the ability to support customers with energy switching.

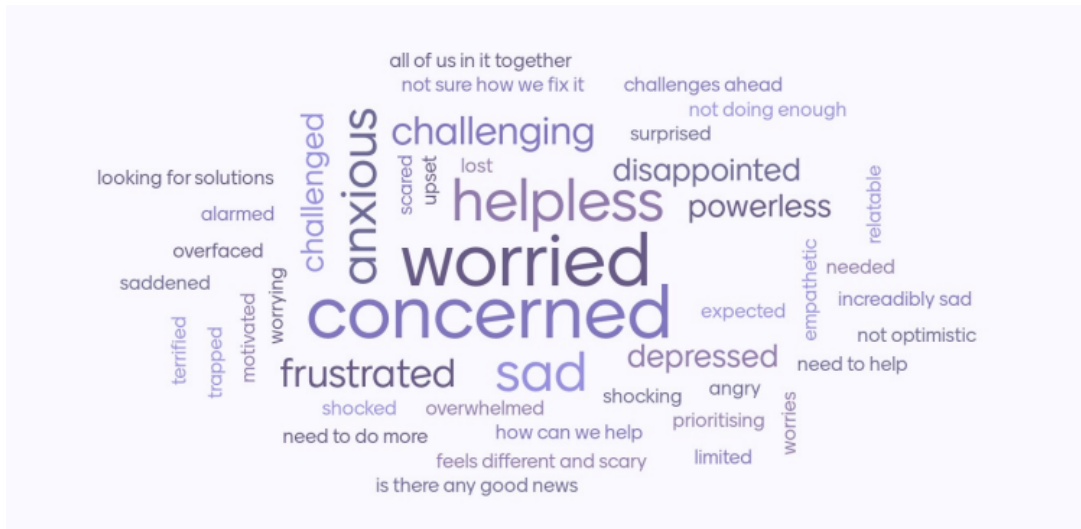
7. Stakeholder Workshops

7.1. Two cost of living stakeholder workshops were held in October 2022. These were aimed at identifying gaps in provision and opportunities for Area Council investment. The theme for both events was learning and sharing; aiming to empower and enable participants.

7.2. **Thursday 6th October – Celebrating our assets and identifying gaps in provision**

7.3. Attended by Councillors Leech, T Cave, Tattersall, Hunt and Lofts.

- 7.4. Participants were asked how the current cost of living challenges are making them feel as professionals:



- 7.5. Celebrating Assets – themes:

- i. Over Arching – Partnership Working and support for colleagues
- ii. Social Welfare Advice – CAB, DIAL, Romero,
- iii. Assets – Ad Astra, Community Shop, Romero, Community Fridge
- iv. Resources – food banks, food distribution
- v. Activities – Healthy holidays, Health and Wellbeing project work
- vi. Current NAC commissioned services – Housing Cohesion regarded highly
- vii. Energy efficiency providers – Warm Homes, DIAL

- 7.6. What are the current gaps in provision?

- i. Community Buildings – running costs limit the availability of support for wider community
- ii. Lack of funding to co-ordinate partnership working
- iii. Opening hours of community venues (eg Community Shop)
- iv. Transport – affordability and routes – impacting people ability to connect with services
- v. People being under threshold for support / not meeting criteria for support / falling through the gaps
- vi. Financial support for people in low paid work who can't access welfare provision
- vii. Social Isolation leading to deterioration in personal wellbeing (elderly, men, long term disabilities). Connecting people in the winter months.
- viii. Complex referral process and restricted ability to share information between services
- ix. Digital Inclusion – Access to equipment and broadband and knowledge of how to self-serve online (Internet access identified as a barrier to students completing homework)
- x. Stigma & Pride impacting on people willingness to seek support
- xi. Childcare – no support for people who want to upskill and attending training or improve their own health and wellbeing

- xii. Healthy Activities and Food Programme is not accessible in every ward. Children/ Families are falling through the gaps. Participants interested in more funding for smaller groups to deliver school holiday activities.
- xiii. Hygiene Poverty was identified as a gap

7.7. Addressing the Gaps – Themes

- i. Co-location of provision (resources) multi-disciplined hubs where resources and different services are co-located, improving information flow and access to support [one-stop shops] (mentioned in 3 different round table discussions). [Communities Directorate are currently exploring 'Team Around the Community'].
 - People having issues dealt with within one place
 - Housing/ Health Visitors/ ASB Team / South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue
 - CVS organisations for professionals to spend time in the same place
- ii. More partnership networking and information sharing opportunities within localities
- iii. Early Intervention – Offering support before crisis i.e. psychological wellbeing. Helping to identify people early before deterioration occurs. Participants asked if additional mental health provision could be commissioned?
- iv. Raising awareness of funded provision for Social Isolation & asking residents if we have the right support in place.
- v. Data Sharing – register of vulnerable people (GDPR and data sharing mentioned as a barrier on ½ the tables)
- vi. Out of hours provision for working people
- vii. More support for people who are in low paid work but are struggling financially to survive and manage household budgets
- viii. Fund longer opening hours for community spaces – Welcoming Spaces
- ix. *Helping hands – volunteers to support people with hoarding (clearing out spaces)*
- x. Community Connector model –exciting provider-led- peer support model – employing people to work within their own communities – empower people to pass on information
- xi. Game changer – employing people – linked to 5 ways to wellbeing

7.8. At the end of the session participants were asked that services/ways or working must be preserved

Identify 3 hidden stars - things that must be preserved at all costs?

Mentimeter

Family centres	Being bold & brave to try new ideas.	Partnership working
More money in your pocket	Ad astra, community shop, Dial/ cab	The power of face to face networking - invaluable
The forward thinking within the group, but then putting into actual action.	Community services.	Family centres
Community centresPartnershipsCommunications	Face to face networking helps develop ideas	People that care about the community
Networking events	Local services/partnership working	Support for services that already do great work
Face to face contactCommunity involvementLocal networks	Partnerships with schools	CAB/DIAL Advice Service
Local Libraries	Face to face Home visiting Local networks	Menti

7.9. Thursday 13th October – Identifying opportunities for investment

7.10. Attended by Councillors Leech, T Cave, Tattersall, Newing, Denton, Hunt and Lofts.

7.11. Participants shared money saving hacks in round table discussions. This was intended to get people into a positive frame of mind where they were more likely to be solution focussed.

7.12. Adding Value – Participants were asked: What type of local community provision would help to address the gaps identified and add value to the services that you deliver?

7.13. Consultation

- i. Ask residents what is needed in terms of services / provision
- ii. Are we on the right track?

7.14. Partnership Working – Maximise North based resources (Accessibility of provision)

- i. Connect partners, buildings (multi-service hubs & co-location)
- ii. One Stop Shops
- iii. Coordinate activities
- iv. Rolling programme of service delivery for each building
- v. Funding to coordinate more partnership working
- vi. Increase knowledge and understanding of all roles within the North Area.

- vii. Spread the word about the More Money in Your Pocket provision
- viii. General Enquiry – Drop In Sessions at community hubs
- ix. ‘Resident First’ - staff available 7 days both early and late

7.15. Community Champions

- i. Community Connectors (Volunteers or paid staff?) – Provider led, peer support model embedded into communities to sign-post, guide and mentor individuals. A successful early intervention model.
A paid model would be similar to the HomeStart offer
- ii. Mental Health Champions
- iii. Empowerment provision – How can we help people to help themselves?
- iv. Training free access, mental health champions, community champions – use existing champions to help deliver training – signpost were to do it
- v. Travel Buddies to support others on public transport

7.16. Cost of Living - Food and Fuel

- i. Coordination of Food Parcels
- ii. Food Vouchers - Aldi Vouchers (Gift Card 1 can't be used to purchase alcohol) & Rose Vouchers or local scheme similar to Fresh Street Vouchers.
- iii. Cost of Living Advice Sessions (MMIYP) – Fun, Creative and Empowering
- iv. Cook and Eat Programme with Slow Cookers (Advise on meal planning, shopping, healthy bulking of meals, store cupboard essentials)
- v. Grow Your Own
- vi. Sewing workshops
- vii. Thrifty Tips – linked to recycling and reuse
- viii. Household Financial Management Sessions
- ix. Household Energy Assessments and Advice to householder

7.17. Young People

- i. Hygiene Poverty project with schools
- ii. Inclusive Healthy Holiday programme with more flexible funding solutions. Prioritise places for parents who work
- iii. Fund Breakfast Clubs for School Children
- iv. Free School Meals for all children whose parents are in receipt of Universal Credit
- v. School Uniform swap shop

7.18. Low / Medium Cost

- i. Community Hubs with warm spaces: providing hot drinks/snacks and empowering activities
- ii. Book Clubs – linked to library provision
- iii. Free Child Care enabling parents to upskill or attend wellbeing sessions

7.19. High Ticket Items

- i. Re-instate MiCard
- ii. Additional Mental Health provision
- iii. Community Bus (Gap evidenced by ASDA / Yorkshire Rose Bus collaboration)
- iv. ‘Resident First’ - Service systematically approaching vulnerable households to proactively ask if they are getting the support they need?

7.20. Participants were asked to summarise their workshop experience in 3 words:



7.21. Participants have actively approached the Area Manager and requested more face-to-face workshop based opportunities to help them be more effective in their roles.

7.22. The Area Manager expresses thanks to the North Area Team, Area Council Managers and all Members who attended the workshops for their support in the facilitation of the events.

8. Risks

8.1. Acknowledge that there are some points raised that can not be solved in isolation e.g. GDPR and data sharing and core transport offer.

9. A further Members workshop will be necessary to:

- 9.1. Consider the information collated in the workshops.
- 9.2. Ascertained what is important to the Priority Working Group regarding cost of living support?
- 9.3. How the Area Council's underspend can be used to produce maximum, sustained impact for the community?
- 9.4. Agree which elements the Area Council wish to focus on.
- 9.5. Identify potential project outcomes and existing resources that could be used to support this work.

10. Next Steps

10.1. The Area Manager will arrange a further Members workshop.

Officer Contact:
RosemarieAdams@barnsley.gov.uk

Date:
2nd November 2022