

Cost of Living Update

Report To (Meeting):	ONE Stockport Health and Care Board		
Report From (Board Lead)	Jilla Burgess-Allen, Director of Public Health, Stockport MBC		
Report From (Author):	Emma Handby, Head of Resident Services, Tom Plant, Anti-Poverty Lead, Stockport MBC		
Date:	4 December 2024	Agenda Item No:	12
Previously Considered by:	N/A		

Purpose of the report:

The report provides an update to the previous Cost of Living report provided in April 2024. The report includes progress since April and outlines the priorities for the final 6 months of 2024/25.

Key points (Executive Summary):

The cost of living continues to have a significant impact on the lives of residents leading to increased demand for support. In Stockport, there has been a 26.8% increase in the number of children living in absolute low-income households and 14.5% increase in the number of children living in relative low-income. 26% of households (32,928) are financially vulnerable.

29% of Stockport respondents (to GM Residents Survey) state that they have had to borrow more money or use more credit in the last month, whilst 46% find it difficult to afford their energy costs.

Whilst Government cost of living support has protected vulnerable households, much of this has ended (£400 energy bill support scheme, Cost of Living Payments). Whilst inflation has eased there have been increases in Council Tax, water and broadband – low-income households are disproportionately affected by rising prices due to spending a higher % of their income on food and energy. The Ofgem energy price cap increased by 10% in October and therefore 30% higher than winter 2021.

The changes to the Winter Fuel Payment will mean that c51,000 households will not receive the Winter Fuel Payment this winter.

Since April 2023, over 59,000 residents have received advice and support with over 76,000 issues via the Resident Advice and Support Alliance. Trend analysis shows that the numbers of requests are decreasing but complexity is increasing – for the period April to September 2024, 14,290 residents sought support with 27,615 issues compared to 16,028 in April to September 2023 with 23,497 issues. This complexity is also leading to higher cash gains from £7.881m between April to September 2024 compared to £4.190m in April to September 2023.

The report outlines the significant activity delivered since April 2024 including:

Council and partners won the national award for ‘maximising financial resources available to households’.

Household Support Fund Phase 5 was successfully delivered and benefitted an estimated 20,224 households with an estimated 36,999 items of support. The HSF Trusted Partner Model (discretionary awards as part of wider help to access sustainable income) is recognised as regional and national best practice and included in a recent BBC Money Box interview.

Pensioner Assist Network launched in November as part of Warm and Well 2024 programme. Council one-off resources used to increase advice capacity across Trusted Partners (RAS Team, Disability Stockport, Age UK, Support Hub and Signpost for Carers) to provide targeted support to pensioner households to access sustainable income.

Investment into VCFSE (Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise) sector as part of focus on prevention and investing in activities and initiatives that will have a longer-term impact. Examples include: ReDish have launched the ‘Good Stuff Social Supermarket’ with funding from the Stockport Local Fund. The council are working in partnership with Cherry Tree Project to set up ReLoved Uniform For All which will provide pre-loved school uniform to families as part of joint anti-poverty and Climate Action Now approach.

The report provides a summary of the priorities for the next six months.

Recommendation:

The Board are asked to:

- **Note** the report including the priorities for 2024/25

Decision		Discuss/Direction	X	Information/Assurance	
-----------------	--	--------------------------	----------	------------------------------	--

Aims (please indicate x)

Which integrated care aim(s) is / are supported by this report:	People are happier and healthier and inequalities are reduced	X
	There are safe, high-quality services which make best use of the Stockport pound	
	Everyone takes responsibility for their health with the right support	
	We support local social and economic development together	