



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

6 October 2022

Report of the Director of Public Health

Health impacts of the cost of living pressures in Derbyshire

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report summarises the health impacts of the cost of living pressures caused by rising inflation and proposes that the Derbyshire Health and Wellbeing Board receives quarterly updates on this issue until summer 2023 when the position is reviewed.
- 1.2 Health and Wellbeing Board partner agencies are encouraged to actively share intelligence and information on this key issue. This will enable a broad partnership response to mitigate and reduce health impacts.

2. Information and Analysis

- 2.1 Across Derbyshire there is a wide partnership response taking place to help mitigate the adverse effects of the cost of living pressures. This report to the Health and Wellbeing Board and associated presentation highlight some of the health impacts of the cost of living pressures.
- 2.2 The direct health impacts include mental health issues such as anxiety and/or stress as a result of dropping household incomes, malnutrition, undernutrition or conversely obesity from food insecurity and cardiovascular disease from being in cold homes.

2.3 Increased cost of living will have far reaching impacts across the wider determinants of health. This will result in direct and indirect health harms. A summary of these include:

- Work – for example increased costs are resulting in local businesses having to pay more for their goods, heating, lighting and running costs
- Place – for example many people are reducing leisure opportunities, and some may not be able to afford improvements to their immediate environment.
- Money and resources – for example personal finances are stretched resulting in many people making difficult choices about how to spend limited income.
- Housing – for example, previously people who pay rent or have a mortgage tended to consider this their largest payment every month, but now these costs are being dwarfed by rising monthly energy costs for some households. This results in some people unable to heat their homes leading to them living in cold, damp environments or environments in a poor state of repair, increasing risk of injury, illness and material damage to homes.
- Food – for example the cost of key food items has increased within the last 12 months and alongside stretched monthly incomes people are deciding the type of food they buy, are unable to buy essential items or are relying on foodbanks and other forms of support. In some circumstances people are having to choose between eating, heating or housing costs.
- Education and skills - for example, some people who wish to undertake further education may no longer have this option due to the increased housing costs alongside tuition fees, others will need to gain part-time employment to provide further income whilst studying which may impact on educational outcomes, some families are struggling to buy uniforms and some young people may not be able to access technology to support their studies. For schools there are increased heating costs which may mean some headteachers considering what other activities are paused.
- Transport – increased travel costs are impacting on those who need to travel to specific work locations on a regular basis, and for others a larger proportion of their wage is covering fuel or transport costs.
- Friends, family and communities – due to the cost-of-living crisis having an impact in such a diverse and widespread way multiple people across networks of support may be grappling with the same choices and decisions. Whilst this may provide some peer support, it may also create mental health impacts, an inability for

family and friends to support each other through informal networks with budgeting and increase the risk of people falling into debt.

- 2.4 Recent estimates suggest that household energy bills are set to rise compared to last winter. Estimates suggest people will be paying double the average bill compared to October 2021 and people are already struggling with costs. Those with higher than average energy costs will pay more e.g. those who run medical equipment and those on pre-paid meters. Modelling suggests that despite the £400 cost-of-living rebate from the Government, this will push over two thirds of UK households into fuel poverty, exacerbating health inequalities that were already widened during the pandemic.
- 2.5 Leaders across the public sector are warning nationally that rising rates of fuel poverty will create a public health emergency, causing and exacerbating physical and mental illness and placing further strain on health and social care provision.
- 2.6 It is [estimated that the NHS](#) in England already spends £1.3 billion each year treating preventable conditions caused by cold, damp homes and this situation is set to get worse throughout winter 2022/23. Therefore, it is important that preventative action is prioritised wherever possible to help mitigate the risks created by a cold home environment, particularly in relation to mental and physical illnesses which are preventable.
- 2.7 For children and young people, growing up in poverty can create mental and physical health problems that can persist over the whole life course. Preventing child poverty, and therefore preventing avoidable lifelong illnesses acquired in childhood, is one of the most effective ways to manage demand on the healthcare system. For example, [research by the Health Foundation suggests](#) that children growing up in cold, damp homes are more than twice as likely to suffer from respiratory conditions than their classmates in warm homes. There are also wider impacts on mental health, with research from the [Institute of Health Equity](#) suggesting that adolescents living in cold housing are five times more likely to suffer from multiple mental health problems.
- 2.8 For adults and older people there are also increased health risks of living in a cold home such as increased risks of falls, increased risk of respiratory disease and increased demand on care and support provision. Whilst there is increased targeted support in place for

pensioners this winter pensioner poverty has now reached highs last seen in 2008.

- 2.8 People living with health conditions or in vulnerable situations are likely to be disproportionately impacted by the cost of living increase. National Voices has gathered insight and intelligence about the impact and have found that people living with kidney disease, who often choose to have dialysis at home will see energy costs of between £590 and £1,450 each year before recent energy price increases. Whilst some NHS trusts subsidise these energy costs, not all do. This support will be stretched further in coming months. Many people living with a long-term condition have found their limited incomes stretched and are choosing telephone rather than face to face appointments due to the increased travel costs.
- 2.9 The data and insight collated above and provided in the presentation to the Board forms part of an emerging picture of the potential wider health impacts of the cost of living pressures. Partner representatives on the Board are asked to provide feedback in advance of the next Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2023 regarding the impacts seen locally so that key themes can be collated and fed back at the next Health and Wellbeing Board meeting and specific actions via partnership action can be agreed to further mitigate and address local issues.

3. Alternative Options Considered

- 3.1 For the Health and Wellbeing Board not to have oversight of this issue. This is not favoured as the cost of living pressures are likely to have far reaching health impacts across the population of Derbyshire.

4. Implications

- 4.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

5. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Implications.

6. Recommendation(s)

That the Health and Wellbeing Board:

- a) Highlights, monitors and responds to the health impacts of the cost of living pressures and proposes that the Derbyshire Health and Wellbeing

Board receives quarterly updates on this issue until summer 2023 when the position is reviewed.

- b) Agrees that Health and Wellbeing Board members actively share intelligence and information on this key issue to enable a broad partnership response to mitigate and reduce associated health impacts.

7. Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 9.1 To ensure that the Health and Wellbeing Board remains updated on this important matter on an ongoing basis.
- 9.2 To ensure that the partnership actively utilises and receives data, insight and learning to shape the local response to this matter.

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Implications

Financial

1.1 There are no financial implications of this report.

Legal

2.1 There are no legal implications of this report

Human Resources

3.1 There are no human resource implications of this report.