

 <p> GIG CYMRU NHS WALES </p> <p> Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales </p>	<p>Name of Meeting People and Organisational Development Committee</p> <p>Date of Meeting 11 April 2024</p> <p>Agenda item: 3.5</p>
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<h2>Cost of Living Crisis – Update and Next Steps</h2>	
Executive lead:	Sumina Azam, National Director of Policy & International Health WHO CC
Author:	Gill Carter and Sumina Azam

Approval/Scrutiny route:	This paper has been developed through the Cost-of-Living Co-ordination Group
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Purpose
This paper: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefly summarises organisational work already undertaken and planned in response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis Proposes embedding our organisational response to cost of living as part of business as usual

Recommendation:				
APPROVE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CONSIDER <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RECOMMEN D <input type="checkbox"/>	ADOP T <input type="checkbox"/>	ASSURANC E <input type="checkbox"/>
The Executive Team is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider the scale and breadth of work already undertaken across the organisation in response to the cost-of-living crisis approve embedding the cost-of-living crisis response in business as usual and standing down the Cost-of-Living Co-ordination Group 				



Link to Public Health Wales [Strategic Plan](#)

Public Health Wales has an agreed strategic plan, which has identified seven strategic priorities and well-being objectives.

This report contributes to the following:

Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	All Strategic Priorities/Well-being Objectives
Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	Choose an item.
Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	Choose an item.

Summary impact analysis

Equality and Health Impact Assessment	An assessment has not been undertaken as the paper sets out how current activities will be undertaken as part of business as usual and does not propose starting / stopping projects or programmes.
Risk and Assurance	N/A
Health and Care Standards	This report supports and/or takes into account the Health and Care Standards for NHS Wales Quality Themes Theme 1 - Staying Healthy Theme 7 - Staff and Resources Choose an item.
Financial implications	N/A
	N/A

1. Purpose

The aim of this paper is to

- Briefly summarise organisational work already undertaken and planned in response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis
- Propose next steps, including embedding our organisational response to cost of living as part of business as usual.

2. Background

The cost-of-living crisis (COLC) emerged as a major public health issue over the course of 2022. Public Health Wales needed to respond rapidly to the impacts of the crisis on the Welsh population and as a result a cross-organisational Co-ordination Group was stood up in September 2022. Since then, the group has met on a fortnightly basis to discuss, formulate and implement actions and to ensure alignment in our organisational response to the crisis. As part of this approach and work programme, many valuable initiatives have been delivered.

It is now recognised that the COLC will continue to affect population health and wellbeing, even when the immediate threats abate. It is therefore necessary to ensure that from April 2024 onwards our response to the COLC is embedded in to 'business as usual' and the existing Co-ordination Group be stood down.

3. Description

Since 2022, a significant amount of work has been undertaken as part of the organisational response to the COLC. This includes work that was undertaken initially to inform, advocate and mobilise a public health approach to the COLC, including:

- A report 'Cost of Living Crisis in Wales: A public health lens'
- A report 'Children and the cost-of-living crisis in Wales: How children's health and well-being are impacted and areas for action'
- A number of International Horizon Scanning Reports
- Surveys of the Welsh population to understand the impact on health and wellbeing
- Participation in the Welsh Government Ministerial Advisory Group on the Cost-of-Living Crisis

- Data analysis to support Neath Port Talbot Local Authority in their local response.

As part of the work, the Research and Evaluation Team developed a Theory of Change for how Public Health Wales can best respond to the enduring cost of living crisis.

Five key areas were identified:

- i. Supporting Public Health Wales staff
- ii. Access to screening services
- iii. Continue working with the national Third Sector
- iv. Joined-up communications
- v. Building a Healthier Wales partnership

Activities carried out in these five areas are outlined in Appendix A, where information is provided on work that a) will have been undertaken by 31 March 2024 and b) work planned for 1 April 2024 onwards. Examples of activities include:

- The introduction of WageStream and holding financial wellbeing webinars to support staff
- A Making Every Contact Count (signposting and brief advice) approach trialled by screening services staff
- Winter communications campaigns to promote public awareness of support available
- A Cost-of-Living Summit delivered through Building a Healthier Wales

A number of previously established work programmes and groups incorporated COLC response as part of their business as usual, for example Healthy Working Wales and the Safeguarding Network.

In addition, a range of ongoing work programmes/projects have contributed to tackling or mitigating the harms associated with the COLC, for example smoking cessation programmes, Healthy Weight/Healthy You, HAPUS mental wellbeing programme. A report with details of all these initiatives is being collated separately.

In 2023, the Evaluation Team conducted a formative evaluation to document lessons from implementing the web-based public communications campaign; staff financial wellbeing webinars and a financial wellbeing app; and screening staff involvement in Making Every Contact Count. The aim was to inform future responses to the COLC.

Recommendations for future initiatives include the need for embedding evaluation at the outset to facilitate assessment of the implementation and outcomes of the COLC programme as a whole.

4. Next steps

It is clear that ongoing organisational action is needed to prevent and mitigate population health harms as a result of the COLC. Much of the activity to date has been in addition to business as usual and outside of usual planning and delivery processes.

Going forward, it is proposed that the organisational response is embedded in workplans and forms part of business as usual. Whilst there will no longer be a co-ordinated approach, the COLC will continue to be the focus of Building a Healthier Wales, a key partnership mechanism for enabling co-ordinated action. In addition, Strategic Priority 1 (Influencing the Wider Determinants of Health) has poverty as a lens through which the work programme and roadmap is being developed.

Also being considered is performance reporting for IMTP milestones to include opportunity to identify whether work supports Public Health Wales’s COLC response. This would enable a rapid appraisal of activities underway in relation to the COLC.

5. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015



This paper sets out immediate, interim and longer-term actions in plan to alleviate the pressures caused by the cost-of-living crisis on both PHW staff and the population of Wales



By continuing the actions outlined above, advice, signposting and support is being provided both for the population of Wales and internal PHW staff in response to the cost-of-living crisis.



The work focuses on and aligns to Strategic Priority 1, Influencing the wider determinants of health, but also addresses the remaining 5 SPs to a lesser extent.



Collaboration with external bodies especially Welsh Government will ensure consistent messaging around the response to the cost-of-living crisis is maintained



Involvement and discussions with PHW staff and external bodies e.g. Welsh Government, BaHW extensive contacts and WCVA, understanding their needs will ensure that the correct actions are being taken.

6. Recommendation

The Executive Team is asked to:

- 1) **consider** the scale and breadth of work already undertaken across the organisation in response to the cost-of-living crisis
- 2) **approve** embedding the cost-of-living crisis response in business as usual and standing down the Cost-of-Living Co-ordination Group

Appendix A: Work underway and planned in response to the COLC

Supporting PHW staff

<p>Delivered up to 31 March 2024</p>	<p>2022-23 (£30k)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WageStream – piloted by People & Organisational Development, then rolled out organisation wide • Financial Webinars • Work How it Works Best – staff made aware of opportunities to work in locations that would be more economical for them • Staff able to request upgraded/new energy efficient equipment • Staff able to increase earnings via overtime / additional hours • Savings & Discounts Yammer • Robust grading of roles in the lowest pay bands <p>2023-24 (£12k)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Webinars • Purchase of Period Products that are distributed throughout sites • Financial support for Easter Holiday Subsidy Childcare scheme (tbc) • Communications materials joint venture with Welsh Government 'Claim What's Yours' campaign
<p>1 April 2024 onwards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for supporting PHW staff is not ring-fenced. However, many of the schemes such as WageStream, Savings & Discounts Yammer feed and working support (detailed above) continue to be available.



Access to screening services and signposting of support.

Delivered up to 31 March 2024	2022-23 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Don’t let money worries get in the way of your health” messaging was used to promote take up of screening services• Financial support for expenses was available for those attending screening in specific venues and in receipt of specific benefits• Taking a ‘<i>Make Every Contact Count</i>’ approach, screening staff shared materials with attendees on COL support available <p>This work was undertaken in addition to post-pandemic recovery activities.</p>
1 April 2024 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial support for expenses for a small subset of the screened population continues, although there is opportunity to consider more attendees would benefit from such support.• In conjunction with the ‘<i>Claim What’s Yours</i>’ campaign, communications materials will be placed in Screening venues and will signpost to resources.



Working with the National Third Sector

Delivered up to 31 March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial discussions started in 2022 with Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) with the intention of drawing up a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Ongoing resourcing issues at WCVA have meant the discussions stalled. Consideration is being given to engaging with 3rd sector organisations directly.• Young Ambassadors – a residential workshop included discussions on Cost of Living, with outcomes and feedback passed to the Executive team.• A 'touchpoints' spreadsheet is nearing completion detailing staff contacts with external partners. It will highlight trends and potential gaps which can be analysed and explored to achieve a more joined up and value-added approach when communicating with external partners.
1 April 2024 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with the WCVA as a joint venture will continue to be pursued• The 'touchpoint' spreadsheet will be utilised to achieve a more joined up and value-added approach when working with and communicating to, external partners.



Communications

Delivered up to 31 March 2024	2022-23 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 2022 – 2023 Winter campaign aligned to Welsh Government’s ‘<i>Here to Help</i>’ campaign. Activity comprised of intranet pages, a social media campaign, a staff SharePoint page, printed literature and stakeholder outreach• Continuous evaluation allowed refinement of content and messaging to ensure the campaign was relevant and timely 2023-24 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welsh Government led a Winter COL campaign which was shaped by a bi-monthly multi-agency Working Group that PHW attended. This resulted in a nationwide, coordinated, streamlined approach amongst agencies and a simplified user journey.
1 April 2024 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The information on the Public Health Wales public facing site that was established in 2022 - 23 is still available to assist users and direct them to external support; however, it is no longer updated or monitored.• Welsh Government cost of living working group meetings will continue, albeit the frequency may decrease. Aligned to this, planning for PHW’s Winter 2024 – 2025 campaigns are expected to commence late Summer / Autumn.



Building a Healthier Wales (BAHW) partnership

<p>Delivered up to 31 March 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fair Work for Health, Well-being & Equity</i> consisted of two phases and included production of a suite of products (launched May 2022) and identified six areas for action where local agencies can improve participation in fair work to develop health, well-being and equity. Phase 2 included engaging with agencies across Wales to increase understanding of policy interventions already in place in relation to fair work. • <i>Cost of Living Summit</i> (March 2023) provided an opportunity for senior leaders across sectors (198 attendees) in Wales to identify opportunities for collaboration on a national level to prevent harms of the cost-of-living crisis. • <i>Universal Free School Meals and Universal Childcare</i> – a report was submitted to Welsh Government in August 2022 to inform delivery of free school meals for primary school pupils.
<p>1 April 2024 onwards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BAHW has a cost-of-living focus, looking specifically at what can be done in relation to child poverty and family finances in the short, medium and long term. The Group will identify opportunities for it to support Welsh Government in achieving the objectives of the child poverty strategy through the health lens.