**CLD and the cost-of-living crisis**

**18 November 2022**

**A professional dialogue**

**Context**

This session was organised by the East of Scotland training consortium as part of a series of staff development events in the Winter Learning Festival .

Guest speaker Professor John Mckendrick of Glasgow Caledonian University and the Scottish Poverty Research and Information Unit (SPRIU) opened the event with a half hour presentation and question & answer session. The presentation and all /pre reading materials can be found here:

<https://wakelet.com/wake/6c48f6c4-8e25-45d2-8f21-31a5c2243ab7>

54 people attended the session form a range of settings including the CLD services of Councils, third sector and other public bodies including Education Scotland. The 4 Facilitators were drawn from Higher Education, Education Scotland and CLD service management.

After the opening session, delegates broke into 4 small groups to consider three questions:

* ***How do you in your practice respond to the views of people facing hardship from the costs of living crisis?*** *(Hoping to draw out how those who are in financial difficulty interact with and shape services and provision, how well we involve them and value their experiences and opinions, highlight/share any good practice examples)*
* ***What is reasonable to expect of CLD practitioners in addressing the costs of living crisis?*** *(Referring to structural causes and political/ market responses and what we can reasonably do as practitioners to address this. Are we engaged in delivering on local crisis response plans? Can anything we do make a practical difference? What’s a realistic balance between practical help, supporting campaigning actions, and political education that explores causes and alternative solutions)*
* ***What impact is the crisis having on our services and our third sector partners; and what should we do?*** *(Are we seeing closures, service reductions, staff cuts?)*

Recordings of each group's discussions are set out below:

**Group 1**

Q1. ***How do you in your practice respond to the views of people facing hardship from the costs of living crisis?***

* Give attention to the impact on women.
* Work upstream
* Support Perth and Kinross Council costs of living taskforce (referenced later in the plenary feedback as a good practice example worth visiting). The results of the post covid survey in Perth and Kinross were shared.
* Supported Challenge poverty week in October 22
* People need more money to survive, and this is not a short-term issue but part of wider poverty
* We are providing short-term sticking plasters but cannot sustain this in the long term
* There was concern about how we make offers in a dignified way on subjects such as budget cookery at home, which could imply a lack of capacity or be seen as blaming but linking this to the sustainability / green agenda could help with this.
* The West Lothian experts by experience panel was also referenced , with a small note that whilst good , this could still be more representative
* We are in danger of being overwhelmed by the need, the jargon and the number of band aids that are being applied
* We know how to respond but we don’t have the resources.
* There are funding streams coming from everywhere, but we are in danger of becoming fund administrators, putting the security of core learning work at risk.

**Q2 .*What is it reasonable to expect of CLD practitioners in addressing the costs of living crisis?***

* We are facing continuing cuts to services and further threatened
* Yes, reducing inequalities is core work, but our work should be preventative and about learning
* We should support campaigning – modern day soup kitchens are not right
* Communities are shattered after covid and now this.
* We need to explain what we do and promote this, “This is our role”- not everything
* Is this up to us? who are our partners – reference to cost of school day and who took this forward.

***Q3. What impact is the crisis having on our services and our third sector partners; and what should we do?***

* We should support communities
* Costs are going up and we have an acute crisis, so strengthen partnerships, make smart use of funding
* Pick up on national funding strategies
* Support clever elected members on local boards
* Show we have unique services that can support the voices of communities freely
* Ther are real worries about recruitment , loss of buildings, ‘spinning plates’ making it hard to keep priorities at the forefront.

**Group 2 :** the notes were shared as a “ jamboard” which can be found at the link below

<https://jamboard.google.com/d/1kT5JF-DnkFTD4b4i8eQjTOmELMF41GbiGwgf5Vbn3gk/edit?usp=sharing>

**Group 3.**

***How do you in your practice respond to the views of people facing hardship from the cost of living crisis?***

**Stirling**

* Recognition that in rural areas poverty may be hidden
* Using issues such as Climate Change to tackle issues of poverty (recycle, reuse)
* Social Justice Ambassadors (Youth) group has been established.
* Young people wanted to get their voices heard.
* Group made up of young researchers. Working with High Schools and Primary Schools and have distributed their findings within schools.
* Looked at housing, roads, and schools amongst others.

**Impact**

* Have empowered young people who have been at the heart of the project. Now started using PB as part of the project.

**Midlothian (Family Learning)**

* Using activities to engage local people in a range of issues, discussing ideas, and their experiences to inform polices.

**LACER Funds**

* Working with ‘Trusted Partners’
* Developing strong working relationships with the TSI
* Developing Food Pantries with local residents and developing work with volunteers

**Angus**

* Looking at hidden poverty, perhaps more affluent but still not accessing support that would help with Cost of Living issues.
* Working with people from other nations (Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Syria) but trying to balance these initiatives with continuing support for local people.
* Trying to ensure that groups are not excluded (Gaelic speakers in Fife)

***What is reasonable to expect of CLD practitioners in addressing the cost of living crisis?***

* Need to encourage the people we work with to make use of local democratic processes and support them to develop knowledge and skills to engage.
* Work with people to support them to investigate why they have been thrust into situation where they are in poverty rather than reacting to the situations that they are in.
* Support people to challenge existing structures and ask why it is happening?
* Help them to get their voices heard and make changes to the delivery of service provision.
* CLD staff could support groups to undertake campaigning work.
* Work with CLD Standard Council to support CLD staff to be enabled to focus on COL issues.
* Engage with people in the spaces where they are – find time to go to them or engage with them about COL when participating in other activities.
* Further development of work with and support for volunteer.
* Highlight and promote the work that *is* being undertaken to address COL – with elected members, colleagues, network members.
* Highlight the impact that budget cuts will have on COL

Address barriers to supporting communities, such as:

* Recognition that people can get caught up in cost-of-living issues and that it may be difficult to get them to find the energy to engage in activities that will address COL.
* Similarly, when CLD practitioners are facing service reviews, budget cuts their energy to engage with local communities may be sapped or they are feeling insecure
* May be difficult for CLD practitioners to engage in COL initiatives when they are asked to support work (that is not necessarily their role) in other departments.
* CLD practitioners face pressure on their time and resources.
* They are also subject to service reviews; changes in management staff (may not have CLD experience or any knowledge of the ethics or ethos of CLD work).
* Many experienced CLD practitioners have left the service and therefore knowledge, skills and ethos of service delivery has been diluted.
* There is a requirement for recognition and value and support at a National level for the role and important of CLD approaches and need for continued recruitment and maintenance of CLD staff levels (Local Authority).
* Budget cuts will have a detrimental impact on the ability of CLD practitioners to be able to carry out work with local communities.
* Increased focus on employability may also dilute approaches to CLD work – Could promote more of a focus on personal development, confidence building, understanding of issues, taking time to develop knowledge and understanding rather than making it about a narrow curriculum focus of getting into employment.