

Tackling poverty and facing the financial cliff edge

Purpose of today's discussion

- Update SCPB on poverty and financial cliff edge
 - Current situation
 - Actions to respond to the financial cliff edge
 - Poverty Summit
- Update on the development of the tackling poverty action plan
- How this could/should be owned and delivered at citywide level?
- What do we want to ask of our organisations?

Context

- 35.5% children in Sheffield (34,822 children) were in poverty *before* the pandemic (this is up from 29.9% or 30,713 children five years ago)
- Demands on food banks increased four-fold during the initial part of the pandemic.
- The number of people who are on Universal Credit have doubled to 44,000
- Rent arrears and other debts have increased substantially
- Tenants in private-rented accommodation, people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, refugees and asylum seekers, women, people with disabilities and health conditions, and younger people (both adults and children) have all been disproportionately negatively affected by the financial impacts of the pandemic.

Poverty & Income stream of [Covid-19 Rapid Health Impact Assessment](#)

Context

- March 2020: SCC Cabinet approved [Tackling Poverty Framework 2020-30](#), re-stating its commitment to tackling poverty and agreeing to develop an action plan.
- Pandemic poverty response
 - Food boxes for urgent support, and worked closely with Citizens Advice to refer to food banks
 - Helped food banks access supplies
 - Public health grants for VCF organisations to support immediate extra costs
 - C19 Emergency Hardship Grants, self-isolation payments, Council Tax Support liability reduced by £150
 - Supporting Vulnerable People group and [information for people being made redundant](#)
- [State of Sheffield 2020](#): how people in the city have been affected by and responded to the pandemic

Food poverty Cross Party Scrutiny Working Group recommendations

- Prioritise development of Tackling Poverty **Action Plan**
- **Challenge stigma** around asking for help and **make support accessible**
- Accelerate **mapping of food support in the city** and encourage community pantries and social eating projects
- Develop mechanisms to **help people get the support they're entitled to**
- Identify where internal **political and organisational leadership** sits on poverty, food poverty and food insecurity

Financial cliff edge

- Financial cliff edge has started to have an impact:
 - UC has reduced by £20 a week (48,750 claimants in September). There have been some small improvements in the amount of money that working UC claimants can keep but this doesn't help those who can't work
 - Cost of living, including energy bills, continue to rise and expected to increase in 2022
 - Private sector rents are rising at the quickest pace since 2008 and rent arrears are increasing.
 - Debt support in the city will reduce significantly and we expect help to claim UC to reduce too (both currently provided by Citizens Advice Sheffield)
 - We haven't seen the huge increase in redundancy that we had feared earlier in the year – however, the jobs available are generally insecure and low-paid so will not be addressing the increasing in-work poverty in the city
 - EUSS hasn't led to a spike in people not at recourse to public funds (yet) and there hasn't been a significant increase in people using food banks, but some food banks are seeing a steady increase in demand

Citywide Leadership

- Financial cliff-edge meetings under Sheffield City Partnership Board endorsed a 9-point action plan, subject to further prioritisation:
 1. Create citywide fund to continue C19 hardship grants
 2. Improve Council debt recovery processes
 3. Address poverty drivers created by housing e.g. affordable 1-bed properties
 4. Increase benefit take-up and reduce stigma, including communications
 5. Increase capacity of VCS organisations
 6. Reduce Council procurement burden on VCS organisations
 7. Make sure that people know where to get support (signposting/referrals)
 8. Longer-term sustainability: systems review to understand where it is exacerbating people's problems
 9. Prevention: campaigns and interventions to stop people falling into homelessness and debt

Financial Cliff Edge meeting

We have further grouped our response into three areas in order to provide more focus:

1. *Increase business/philanthropic giving / make the most of all the resources in the city.* Links to the Sheffield Business Together work, SYCF and high net worth individuals. Can use this group to identify projects/causes that will make a difference in the city and encourage 'wealth makers' to contribute to those.
2. *Welfare benefits.* This has included making the most of frontline worker conversations over the next few months to address financial wellbeing and direct people towards the right services. Also citywide messages to reduce stigma about seeking help, and to make the most of networks to e.g. reach private sector landlords with information about how they can support their tenants. Cat Arnold is leading this workstream because it links very strongly with other, more internally-focused, work on poverty/the financial cliff edge.
3. *Housing.* Specific issues around addressing the housing drivers of poverty. This might include work linked to national calls for a fund for tenants in arrears, communications to private landlords and tenants, work to increase knowledge of housing rights, and issues around the availability of affordable housing. National Shelter are planning to do a 'deep dive' to understand housing poverty issues in different areas including Sheffield which will help to inform some of this workstream; other aspects link to workstream 2 (welfare/benefits).

SCC response to the financial cliff edge: short-term actions...

- Use frontline conversations over next few months to talk about financial inclusion, focusing on those we know are struggling right now
 - Provided briefings to frontline staff, including People Keeping Well, early years, social workers, housing associations, etc, supported by a short written briefing about the changes and the sources of support
- Citywide communications with similar messages, including private sector landlords/tenants
 - We have developed a new [website](#) alongside the ‘Worrying about Money?’ [leaflet](#).
- Support voluntary sector organisations who are stretched to breaking point and will be supporting people who fall over the cliff edge
 - VCS recovery fund
- Protect financial support for individuals where possible in the light of the continuing crisis.
 - Household Support Fund, HRA money to support DHP, continue to provide CT hardship scheme, Holiday Activities and Food, Free School Meals vouchers during holidays

The One-Year Plan committed to running a Poverty Summit

- Poverty summit was held 15 October. Speakers were Cllr Abtisam Mohammed, Greg Fell, Debbie Mathews (Manor and Castle Development Trust), Gulnaz Hussain (Firvale Community Hub), Tarun Bhakta & Tracey Nathan (Shelter) and Cllr Terry Fox
- Video of the speakers [here](#)
- Summary of the discussion [here](#)

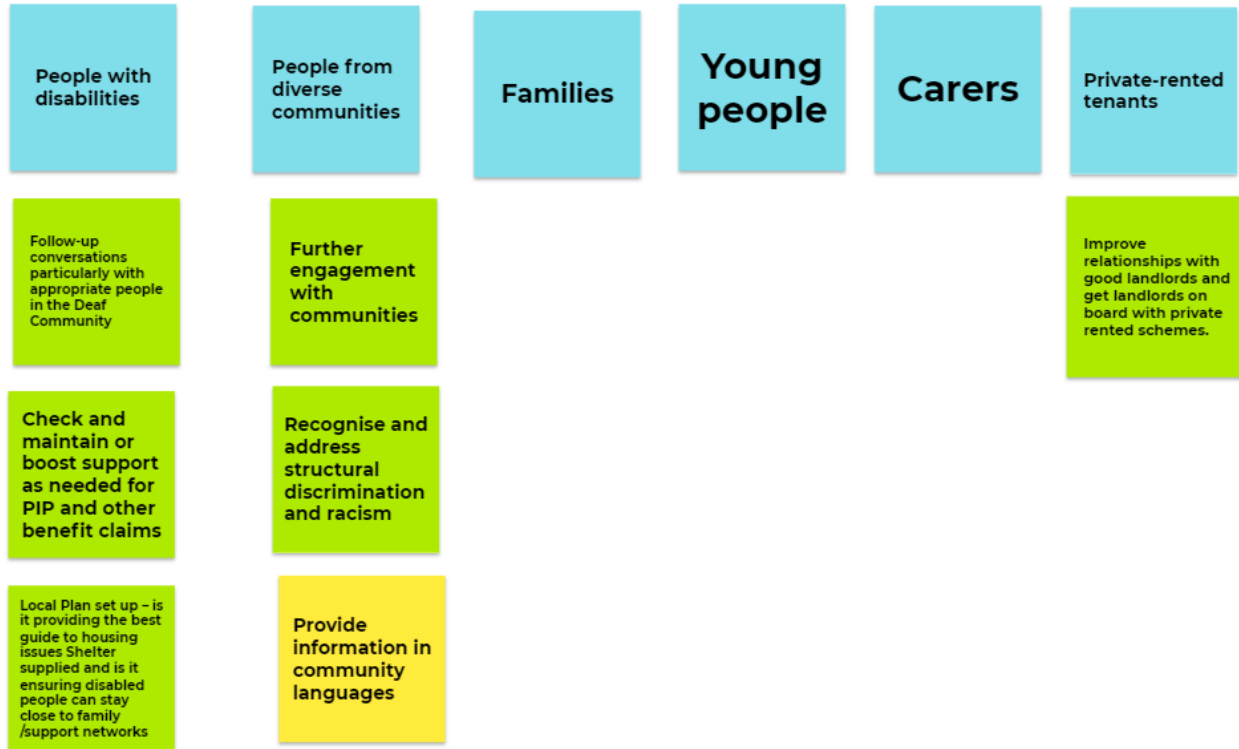
Developing the poverty action plan...

- Complex task, combining urgent/short-term actions with longer-term, more structural issues.
- In discussions so far there is often a wish to find top 3-5 actions that will make a difference, but it can be hard to pin down what those should be.

First stab at capturing actions according to theme...

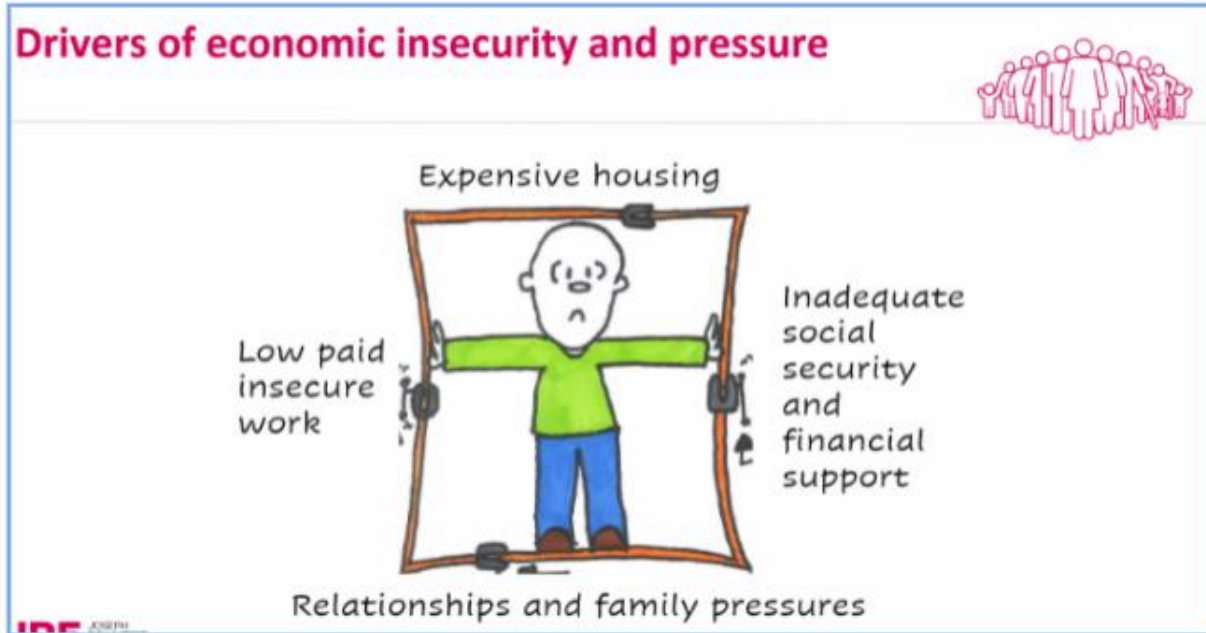


Not well populated yet, but actions are also being considered according to community of interest/circumstances:



An alternative way of thinking about this is to look at a 'typical' person and describe the pressures they are under; the forces that keep them trapped

This allows us to both prioritise our actions according to these forces, but also to more effectively communicate why and how we need to work together on tackling them



Recognising that some actions are SCC-focused:



Next steps...

- Continue to develop action plan in discussion with partners and communities
- Focus on some SCC-specific actions:
 1. Continuation of emergency hardship support, including Household Support Fund, and review of SCC hardship support
 2. Re-energise the Corporate Debt approach
 3. Support the VCF sector where possible, including through VCS recovery fund
 4. Build tackling poverty into wider strategies and approaches, e.g. city strategy; homelessness prevention strategy, new Smokefree campaign focused on disadvantaged communities
- Explore ways to harness the expertise of those with experience of poverty

Content questions

- Do the actions feel like they're in the right areas?
- What should be prioritised?!
- What is missing?
- What do we want to ask of our organisations in order to tackle poverty?

Questions...

How does the city own and deliver on this work?

- Existing Financial Cliff Edge working group under SCPB which includes VCF and private sector representation
- Do we want something new/additional as we move forward?
- How should this fit with the city strategy work? Vision and actions