

26th May 2022

Wales Race Forum – Cost of Living Crisis: Issues Raised

Impact of the Crisis on Individuals

- People don't know about the provision that is available.
- There is taboo around accessing food banks and other support
- Those who are not linked in with services are really struggling
- Financial difficulties result in a rise in levels of domestic abuse
- Women can be particularly affected as many black and minority ethnic women are on low wages and zero hours contracts meaning they struggling to pay essential bills; big impact on staff; lots on 0 hrs contracts;
- Insufficient childcare means that black and minority ethnic women are often prevented from taking action which will help them to progress – such as English classes / learning new skills.
- Concerns raised that the situation will be worse in winter.
- Many in black and minority ethnic communities pay bills in cash rather than by direct debit meaning that they don't automatically receive some of the financial support they are entitled to.
- Since the pandemic we have seen a change in the services available / charity shops are closing for eg meaning opportunities for people are disappearing.
- Concerns about the impact on children. Suicides and self-harm is rising amongst black and minority ethnic children. The help line reported 4 times more calls last Christmas than the previous year.
- There is a danger – not helped by UKG – of people becoming scapegoats which can lead to hate crime and racism

Impact of the Crisis on Organisations

- Many more people are approaching third sector organisations for support which puts additional pressure on existing services.
- The crisis has had a severe impact on the voluntary sector which wants to be a good employer. Fixed budgets mean organisations are stuck
- Workload is increasing but salaries are not. Any increase in salaries would result in a reduction in services.
- Organisations are needing to do more as the needs of people accessing their services become more complex – they need to bring about change in the way they deliver services in their communities.
- Some organisations are not that well equipped - food parcels have become the norm but people need more.
- Organisations are finding it difficult to recruit much needed staff because of low wages. This puts additional pressures on the sector.
- There is little support for third sector staff
- The numbers of people wanting to take part in physical activities – which is good for mental health - is increasing – there are waiting lists.
- Funding for activities such as Healthy Bodies: Healthy Minds runs out in March and there is concern how they can be supported
- If poverty increases, we address the urgency and not the cause.

Examples of good practice

- Some organisations are reaching out into their communities to ensure people remain engaged in a practical way and have something to look forward to
- Setting up a free gym in the park has brought people together and given them structure and a feeling of community.
- When it was found that Muslim clients were receiving diet inappropriate foods in their food parcels, faith groups approached the food banks. The Swansea Muslim Community Service provided food that would be appropriate for all communities

How can Welsh Government help?

- It is important to channel information on the support available to key contacts
- A media campaign to "prepare for the winter" - with all the details of local organisations and support available
- Ask mainstream services like gyms to offer places / space for community activity etc
- Get a community momentum around this but with WG support?
- Lots of organisations would engage in building a community response to the crisis if it was centrally coordinated
- The free bus pass scheme for Asylum seekers has finished and many are struggling
- WG could use the Anti-racist Wales Stakeholder Bulletin to provide a signpost to information available.
- The WG website isn't the right place to get information out. Information via local trusted organisations and individuals is needed.
- The Wales Race Forum provides an effective route for circulating information about government support schemes
- The WCVA needs to be thinking how they can accommodate smaller organisations
- Some organisations have very large buildings – what can we do to support co-production? This is something that could be done quickly if there is a will.
- More help is needed with mental well-being – help lines / practical support
- Need to be aware of the risk of hate crime and racism and develop a counter narrative including positive messages.
- The problem isn't poverty – it's greed and that needs to be challenged
- WG has a policy coming into effect – a race equality policy rather than anti-racist policy. WG needs to ask what anti-racism means and incorporate action to address that.
- There is an advocacy role for WG and the sector

To Note: The Cost of Living Crisis Team are also following up with some Forum members individually.