



East Suffolk Community Partnership Board

Report from the Tackling Inequalities Task and Finish Group

June 13, 2022

Introduction and Background

1. At the December Board meeting, it was agreed that the Board should maintain its focus on its three current priorities - Social Isolation and Loneliness, Sustainable Transport and Travel and Mental Health and Wellbeing - and establish a Task and Finish Group focussing on Tackling Inequalities.
2. The Tackling Inequalities Group was tasked to focus on four key areas - Young People, Ageing Population and Older People, Income Deprivation (all age groups) and Groups vulnerable to Covid-19/left behind in Covid Recovery.
3. The Task and Finish Group includes representatives from Community Action Suffolk, Suffolk Community Foundation, Britten Pears Arts, Norfolk and Waveney CCG and East Suffolk Council. It has now met twice, and at the first meeting it was agreed that the initial focus of the group would be on the Income Deprivation priority, but the widest possible focus on the various dimensions of the emerging and deepening Cost of Living crisis.

Cost of Living increases

4. The 'cost of living' is the average amount of money that individuals need to be able to cover basic living expenses, such as food and housing. The cost of living is rising across the board – housing costs, energy and water costs, fuel and food have all risen rapidly in price over recent months.
5. The impact of these rises, combined with the residual impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on individuals, families, communities and the voluntary sector is likely to hit hard, particularly in Winter 2022/23. Inflation continues to climb, and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia has further increased pressures at a local and national level.
6. Suffolk County Council has produced a Cost of Living Profile which can be found at: [Making-ends-meet-the-cost-of-living-suffolk.pdf \(healthysuffolk.org.uk\)](https://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/making-ends-meet-the-cost-of-living-suffolk.pdf). This is accompanied by an interactive dashboard which will be updated as more information becomes available.

Tackling Inequalities Task and Finish Group

7. The Task and Finish Group, supported by staff in the Communities Team at East Suffolk Council, has identified four key areas for action:
 - Money
 - Food and Essentials
 - Energy and Fuel
 - Housing
8. Over the course of its meetings, the group has established the key challenges in relation to each of these four themes, identified existing activity to address these themes and proposed new ideas for action. These will be presented and discussed at the Board meeting.
9. A partner workshop was held on Monday 31st May at Halesworth Golf Club to enable co-design of the emerging programme and provide an opportunity for wider discussion and prioritisation. The workshop included representatives from Access Community Trust, Citizens Advice East Suffolk, East Suffolk Council, Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG, Lowestoft Rising, Suffolk Community Foundation, Suffolk County Council and MP Peter Aldous. The outcomes of this workshop session will be considered at the Board meeting.
10. The emerging programme is ambitious and far reaching in that it includes more than 60 projects/activities, in addition to a wide range of activities that will provide the foundation of the programme, for example a campaign, a programme of roadshows across our market towns this summer and a web portal bringing together a range of useful information in one place.
11. More than £300,000 of funding has already been secured for specific elements of the programme:
 1. £196,000 from East Suffolk Council for two new Financial Inclusion Officers for two years
 2. £42,000 from the ESC Covid Recovery Fund towards three food projects – Community Pantries, Community Fridges/Freezers and Comfort Food
 3. £18,000 from ESC Councillor 2021/22 Enabling Communities Budgets for Comfort Food
 4. Up to £55,000 from ESC Councillor 2022/23 Enabling Communities Budgets towards the overall East Suffolk Cost of Living programme.

Outcome Proposal – Tackling the Rising Cost of Living in East Suffolk

12. Attached as Appendix 1 to this report is the Stage 1 Outcome Proposal developed on the basis of the discussion at the Task and Finish Group meeting, an internal ESC workshop for staff from key services and the partner workshop held on 31st May. This sets out a proposed programme of projects (both crisis intervention projects and prevention and early intervention activity) to help mitigate the impact of the rising cost of living in the District. This will reinforce and supplement the projects set out in the Suffolk Tackling

Poverty Action Plan considered at the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board in early May 2022.

13. Of the 65 projects in the proposed programme, 2 have already been fully funded (Financial Inclusion Officers and Comfort Food) and 24 do not currently require any funding. This leaves 41 projects which require full or part funding. As outlined in paragraph 10 above, at least £291,000 has already been secured to support the programme. A potential additional minimum £50,000 could be available through a Business Rates Equalisation Reserve at East Suffolk Council, depending on end of year outturn.
14. The proposal to the Board is therefore that £100,000 be approved towards the programme to be allocated by the Task and Finish Group based on the priorities identified at the workshops held in May 2022 and on the basis of co-production with people who are experiencing challenges meeting the cost of living increases (including through the proposed Connect roadshows). This approach will provide the flexibility to allocate the funding where it will achieve greatest impact.
15. The Task and Finish Group will continue to meet – additional Board members would be very welcome to join the group – and will report back to the September Board meeting. It is worth noting that Felixstowe Peninsular Community Partnership have identified the Cost of Living increases as one of their revised priorities and that the Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth Community Partnership and Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham Community Partnership are both already delivering work around this theme.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1) Consider and approve the outcome proposal attached as Appendix 1 to this report which requests the allocation of £100,000 to the emerging East Suffolk Cost of Living programme**
- 2) Receive a report on progress at the meeting to be held in September 2022.**

Nicole Rickard, Head of Communities

East Suffolk Council, on behalf of the Task and Finish Group