

# Cost of living events OBA

Feb/March 2023

Health and Wellbeing Team

There are 103,400 children in Northern Ireland living in poverty, almost 1 in 4 (NICCY, 2022). During the Covid pandemic parents have lost jobs, been on reduced hours, on furlough etc. In recent times with the cost of living increase families who were already struggling have been pushed further into poverty.

Children in poverty are twice as likely to leave school without 5 good GCSEs (NICCY, 2022). They are also more likely to suffer poor mental health and have fewer years of good physical health.

As prices of groceries and toiletries increase, families are finding it increasingly hard to provide for their children. The cost of living is rising faster than people's income. (The Children's Society 2023)

# Background

In the Northern Area Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Locality Planning Groups (LPGs) poverty and money management has come up as a enduring issue. We had carried out a number of actions over the last three years to alleviate this need including offering emergency grants, sourcing digital devices to alleviate loneliness and support school work and staff and parent training around money management. During the current cost of living pressures this became a more urgent priority for families.

The Antrim Ballymena CYPSP LPG decided to create a task and finish group to carry out to support families with the cost of living crisis. This group decided to run a cost of living event with a focus on staff in the morning with speakers around cost of living topics and a cost of living information fair for parents in the afternoon called Every Family Counts. This was carried out in Ballymena and in Antrim in February and March.

This activity aligned with CYPSP Outcomes, in particular:

- Economic and environmental wellbeing

# How much did we do?

We organised Cost of living networking events with speakers around cost of living topics. This was carried out in Ballymena and in Antrim in February and March



Topics at morning events: debt management, money management, loan sharks, hygiene banks, food banks, baby banks, council services, community advice services and healthy low cost food

80 staff attended the morning networking events

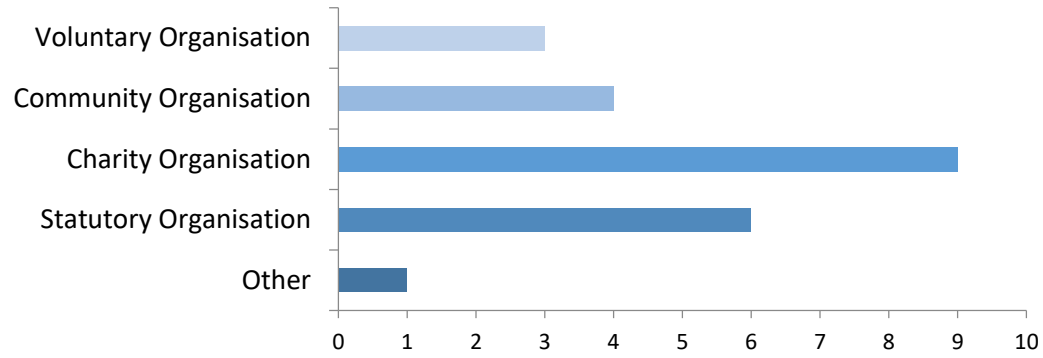


9 speakers at each event

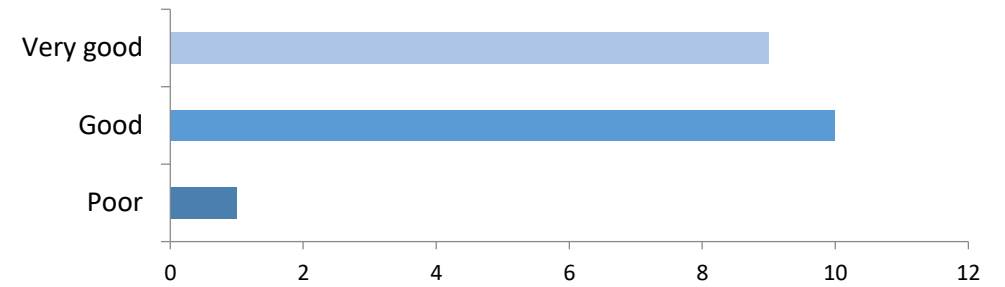


# How well did we do it?

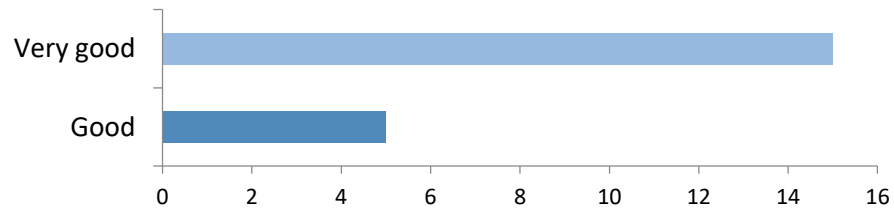
## Who do you work for?



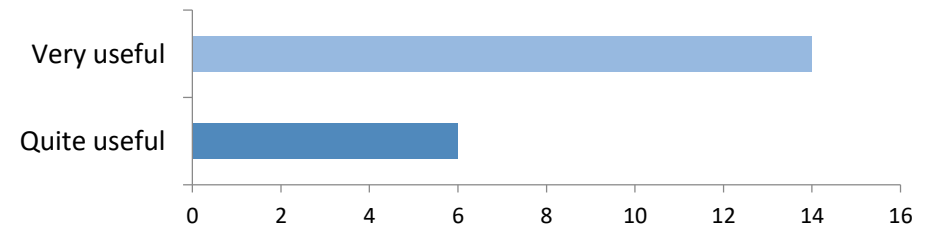
## What do you think of the venue?



## What did you think of the event?



## How useful did you find the information?



## Did you learn anything new?



- Information on the PSNI and money lending very useful.
- I learnt about what other groups are doing in the area and hopefully form some new partnerships
- Made several contacts with organisations to refer our members to who are having difficulties with debt, managing bills or buying food.
- I had heard about Money Helper before but had no idea how much information they have on their website and how beneficial it is to get this information to the general public. I also found the statistics reported by the Hygiene Bank very illuminating and have signposted one of the community groups to them.
- I gained further information relating to services available and greater insight to debt advice services
- The extensive role of the Community Advice Centre and detail of the services they provide. The role of CAP and the type of support they provide in relation to managing debt. The type of services provided by the local council
- The Money and Pensions Service - information that is available re this I was not aware of. I hope to meet up with Margaret McCloskey (from MaPS) in the near future to find out more.
- Learnt about the work of stakeholders
- Money Helper website
- I gained more knowledge on services that could potentially benefit members of our charity
- New networking partners
- Information about the work of a number of organisations I wasn't aware/fully aware of.
- A really loved all the speakers. Their information was so interesting and life changing for people in crisis. The food banks were particularly interesting and how they receive and distribute food to those in need.
- I learned a bit about the role of MAPS
- More about the money and pension service and what they offer especially in training
- Aspects of the Money Helper service. Existence of some of the local services
- A better understanding of some of support services available around money, debt and poverty - who they are and what they do.
- Referral process for other agencies. Support services available. Funding sources to benefit clients.
- All the companies that are able to help and assist if in need.

# Is anyone better off?

## Will you change anything in your work as a result of something here today?

- I am more aware of the services available and will pass the information to the teams in that area.
- Yes additional partners that we can work in conjunction with
- We are working on a Member Support page for our website and we will be displaying contact details for various organisations who can help our members with the Cost of Living Crisis.
- This will prompt us to share more on our social media.
- Make referrals to agencies I was previously unaware of.
- Networking opportunities have brought about more working together with other organisations
- I will share the information first and foremost with the members of the team so they too are informed of the services and support which is readily available in the community. I feel so much better informed having attended the cost of living networking event and actually feel empowered having gained this information and better able to support clients
- We may take on some new referral partners from the new organisations that I met
- Better awareness of stakeholders
- I will signpost others to the Money Helper website
- More signposting will now be available
- Updated contacts
- I will be able to signpost clients to services that I previously wasn't aware of
- I should be able to signpost some clients to help they may need
- Links with organisations
- Will strengthen connection with the Hygiene Bank in Ballymena. Will be more confident in signposting people in need around financial issues
- We have already availed of a funding source from Community Advice.
- Nutrition information was interesting and some of the financial details on the website re the money talk

## Any other comments?

- A well organised event with fantastic variety of speakers. Scones and lunch was also fantastic!
- Well run event with ample parking, good time keeping and engaging
- Lunch was fantastic!
- Due to the nature of the Showgrounds and the ongoing work it is quite a distance from the car park to Reception so it was a bit of a trek bringing the information for the stand However overall a good event
- It was an excellent event with helpful information which many more organisations would have found useful
- I found it useful as a practitioner to have a morning solely focused on the prevalent issue of finance, debt and poverty. It was good that it was in person and there was the opportunity to have conversations and make connections.
- Excellent, well organised and well delivered event.



## **What went well**

The wide range of organisations involved in the event. Networking opportunities.

## **What could have been better**

It's possible a different venue with or different activities/speakers or at a different time of day may have attracted more people to attend

## **Thanks**

Thanks to the Antrim Ballymena CYPSP LPG Cost of Living task and finish group, the chairs, the speakers, the information stand staff and all involved in the day.