

# LBTH: Responses to the Cost of Living Crisis

Scrutiny Committee 29/01/24



# The national context – Compounded crises

## Cost of living:

- Households in London with the second lowest incomes currently seeing a 27% increase in the cost of a weekly shop compared to March 2020
- Price cap currently at £1,928 per year, up from £1,179 in March 2020

## Impacts of Covid-19:

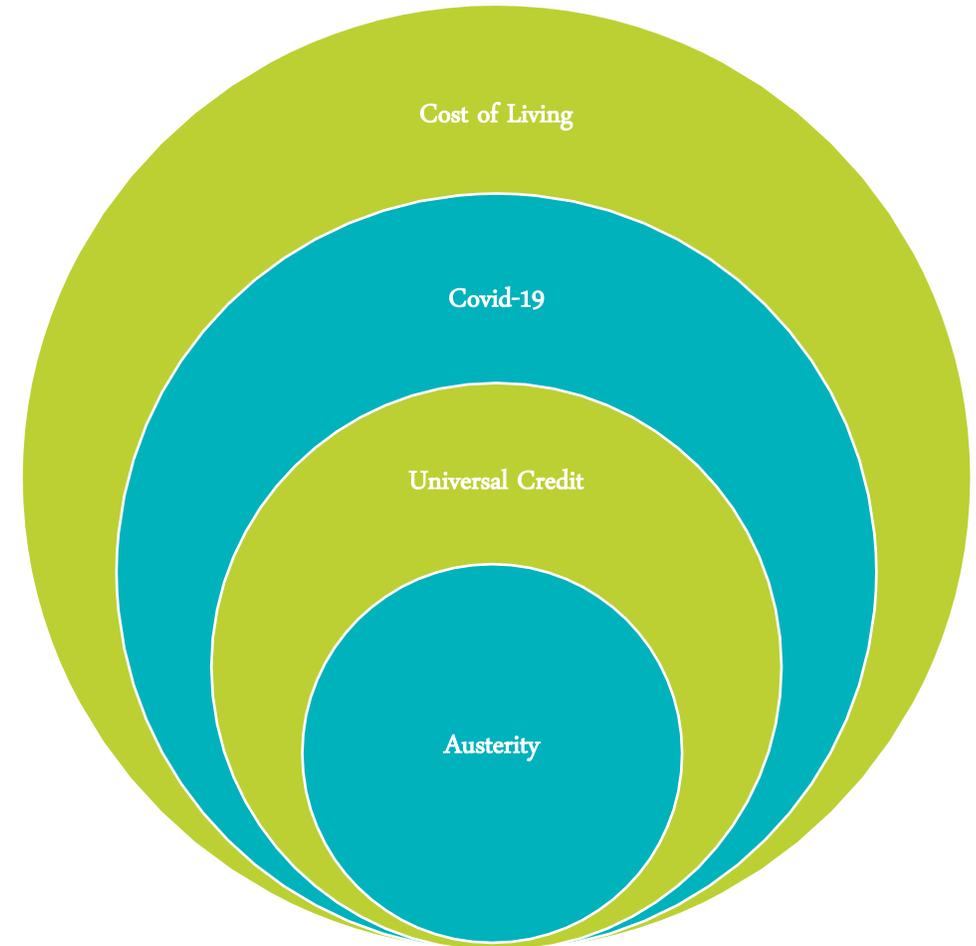
- Bangladeshi community most likely group to report loss of income during pandemic

## Universal Credit

- Administrative errors, 5 week wait & arrears, digital-by-default delivery, two child limit

## Austerity

- Benefits caps and freezes



# Cost of Living: Unique challenges

Challenges in tackling the Cost Of Living Crisis play out both nationally and locally

- Barriers to access – language, technology in particular among key cohorts
- Limited resources – financial, human and assets
- Limited actionable resident data and hesitancy in providing data from in-need cohorts
- Communicating support effectively can be complex – particularly to people who have not needed LA intervention before



# Our approach

- Prioritise ease of access to crisis support where possible
- Deliver cash first solutions as a preferred option
- Utilise Household Support Fund to maximise impact of central government resource
- Empower existing programmes to deliver more broadly
- Expand provision for groups experiencing longer term hardship
- Deliver simple, effective and accessible comms



# LBTH Responses to the Cost of Living Crisis

## Cash first interventions

- 38,500 payments given out across 2023 - £4.3m of direct intervention
- Used council resources, knowledge and data to target key cohorts acutely impacted by CoL
- Utilised LIFT dashboard to identify those at highest risk of falling into serious debt and financial insecurity
- Able to impact large cohorts and extremely vulnerable people in smaller cohorts



# LBTH Responses to the Cost of Living Crisis



## Cash first interventions

### Cohorts supported

- Pension Credit Claimants
- Healthy Start Eligible families
- Families with FSM eligible children
- Housing Benefit recipients
- Residents with High Energy Use Medical Equipment
- Young Carers
- In-work financially insecure residents
- Residents receiving higher level disability benefits
- Working age adults and pensioners in the worst income to expenditure bracket



# LBTH Responses to the Cost of Living Crisis



## Cash first interventions

### RSS

- Resident Support Scheme established pre-CoL crisis
- Served as by-application route for HSF support
- Expanded criteria to include access to food and energy
- More than £2m awarded between April 22 and October 23



# LBTH Responses to the Cost of Living Crisis



## Cost of Living Help

### Comms Campaign

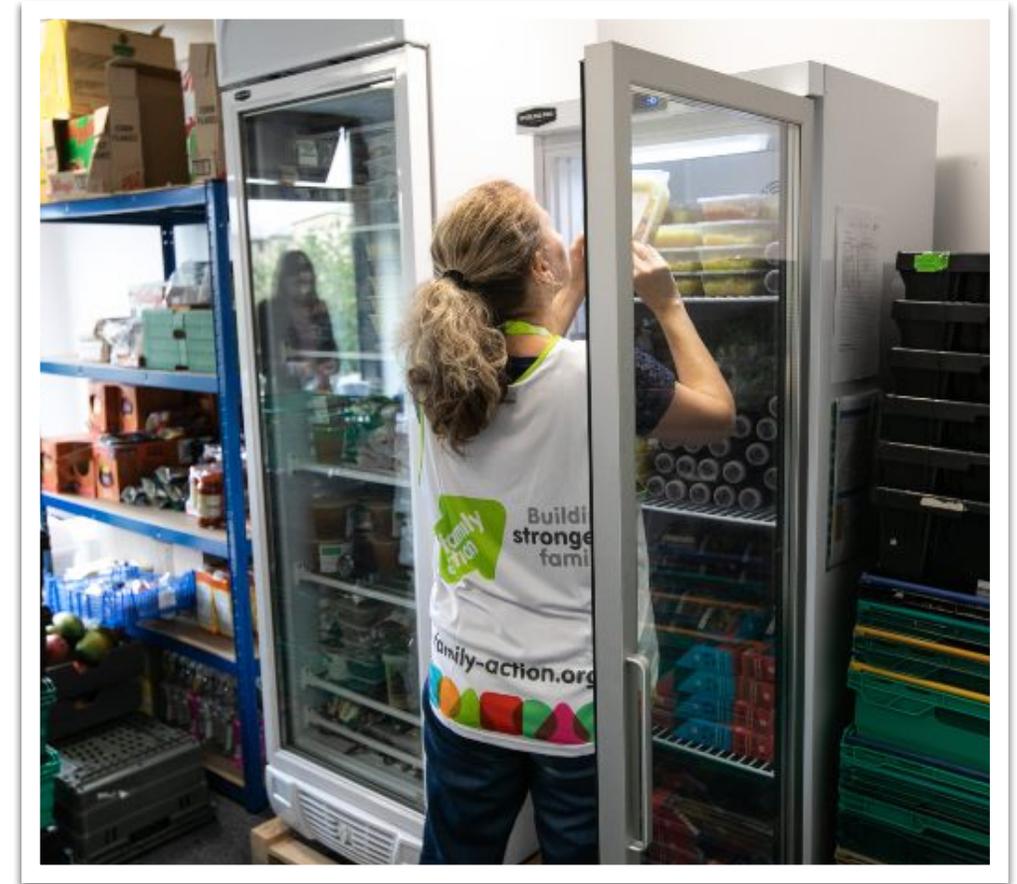
- High profile comms campaign to drive engagement with advice, signposting and support
- Booklet and webpage identifying support for specific needs (e.g. energy, food, employment, health and wellbeing)
- Campaign pushed through council buildings and libraries, housing associations, bus stops, refuse vehicles, Our East End
- Weekly articles in council newsletter to highlight support available
- Tackling disinformation, confusion over national and local support provision, barriers to access for those newly in need of support



# LBTH Responses to the Cost of Living Crisis

## Ongoing workstreams

- Food Store Network – Food aid and signposting supporting 2,503 residents across 6 sites
- Resident Support Outreach Team – income maximisation generating £396,889 in backdated benefits from April to December 2023
- LBTH Food Hub supporting more than 60 VCS organisations embedded in communities
- Pension Credit campaign creating additional £492,521 annual income for 125 residents
- HAF programme – food and activities in the school holidays, programme reaching 32% of FSM eligible children (up on 26% nationally)



# Future delivery:

## Challenges and Pressures



# Future delivery:

## Priorities

- Need to identify strategy for interventions going forwards
- Will government provide further funding?
- Particular need to set key cohorts and programmes for officers to prioritise
- Data led but dependent on embedded council knowledge
- Groups put at risk by CoL crisis:
  - Pensioners
  - FSM eligible children
  - Disabled residents
  - Residents in energy inefficient households
  - Residents with 5 + people in the property

