



## SHROPSHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD Report

<b>Meeting Date</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> November 2023			
<b>Title of report</b>	Citizens Advice Shropshire report “ <b>When the Safety Net Fails</b> ” Experiences of navigating local support services during the cost of living crisis			
<b>This report is for</b> (You will have been advised which applies)	Discussion and agreement of recommendations	x	Approval of recommendations (With discussion by exception)	Information only (No recommendations)
<b>Reporting Officer &amp; email</b>	Jackie Jeffrey, CEO Citizens Advice Shropshire <a href="mailto:jackiejeffrey@cabshropshire.org.uk">jackiejeffrey@cabshropshire.org.uk</a>			
<b>Which Joint Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy priorities does this report address? Please tick all that apply</b>	Children & Young People	x	Joined up working	x
	Mental Health	x	Improving Population Health	x
	Healthy Weight & Physical Activity	x	Working with and building strong and vibrant communities	x
	Workforce	x	Reduce inequalities (see below)	x
<b>What inequalities does this report address?</b>	<p>This reports considers the wider detriments of health and those underlying causes that contribute to health inequalities in Shropshire.</p> <p>It addresses all areas of HWBB priorities as much of the learning is about barriers people face accessing services when in crisis.</p>			
<p><b>Report Content: Please expand content under these headings or attach your report, ensuring the three headings are included.</b></p> <p><b>1. Executive Summary</b></p> <p>Over Winter 2022/23 we surveyed people in Shropshire to find out how they were coping with the cost of living crisis. The people we spoke to told us they have to make tough choices with their money all day, every day, with no room for errors. For those we spoke to, this balancing act was often impossible. It was common for people to have gone without essentials such as adequate shelter and food.</p> <p>When we talk about the ‘safety net’ we are referring to systems of government programs designed to provide a basic level of support to those facing financial hardship. This includes welfare benefits, for example, Universal Credit, and Personal Independence Payment. The safety net also covers benefits administered on a local level. An example of this is Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing Payments. Increasingly, the voluntary sector is playing a big role in catching people when this official safety net fails. This report explored learnings from our research on the local support system in Shropshire, along with recommendations for how we can work together to best support residents facing financial crises.</p> <p><b>2. Report Recommendations (if any)</b></p> <p>When the report was published in June 2023 we were already working at pace and some of these recommendations have been developed and are ongoing pieces of work. I will highlight these in my presentation.</p> <p><b>Partnership working.</b> Shropshire needs a coordinated approach if we are to support our residents effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our local system needs to effectively triage those seeking support.</li> </ul>				

- Shropshire’s key forum for partnership working, the Social Taskforce, must continue and be adequately resourced.
- Ongoing training for staff and volunteers to ensure they feel confident in helping people to navigate the system.
- Data sharing between organisations to help proactively identify local residents who may need support.
- Shropshire needs a coordinated approach if we are to support our residents effectively

**Support system design.** Local services should be designed to protect people’s dignity and help individuals to come forward for support.

- Local services should be designed to protect people’s dignity and help individuals to come forward for support.
- There should be multiple points of entry to access support.
- There must be alternatives to digital, and some face-to-face support available in each town.
- Services should be trauma-informed and raise awareness of the challenges and stigma caused by financial difficulty.
- Review and improve the design of application systems for local support to ensure it is distributed fairly.
- Clear and transparent criteria for local support schemes and simple and accessible forms are particularly important.
- There should be a preference for a ‘cash first’ approach when delivering local crisis support.

**Recognition of the value of the local voluntary sector.** The voluntary sector plays a vital role in local support systems, but resources are needed to be able to do this.

- Invest in building trusted relationships across sectors.
- Clear communication and recognition of the expertise, professionalism and reach of the sector will help to make sure that all players in the local support system feel like equal partners.
- Identify funding for local advice services. Local advice services bring more money to the local economy by encouraging uptake of underclaimed benefits. They also save other services money by preventing people from falling into crisis and costing the local system more in the long-term.
- Funding for the voluntary sector needs to be future proofed, to ensure the sector is able to recruit and retain the skilled staff it needs.

**Advocating for ‘big picture’ change.** While there is much change that can be effected at a local level, it is important to make sure the wider context of the challenges we face is not forgotten.

- Local leaders and decision-makers should advocate for changes in the funding formula for rural areas to ensure it accurately reflects the needs of a rural population and the additional costs of delivering services in rural counties.

### 3. Main Report

See Digital link <https://www.cabshropshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/When-the-safety-net-fails-Full.pdf>

Or see Appendix A – When the Safety Net Fails, Report

#### **Risk assessment and opportunities appraisal**

(NB This will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental

consequences and other Consultation)		
<b>Financial implications</b> (Any financial implications of note)		
<b>Climate Change Appraisal as applicable</b>		
<b>Where else has the paper been presented?</b>	System Partnership Boards	SHiPP
	Voluntary Sector	x
	Other	Healthy Lives Steering Group, Social Task Force & SHiPP
<b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b>		
<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b> Portfolio holders can be found <a href="#">here</a> or your organisational lead e.g., Exec lead or Non-Exec/Clinical Lead		
<b>Appendices</b>		
Appendix A – Report “When the Safety Net Fails” Citizens Advice Shropshire		