

# Faith & the Cost of Living Crisis Summary of discussion

May 2022



**The Multi-Faith Centre**  
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# About the event

The cost of living is rising at a rate not seen in the last 30 years and is due to be further stretched with additional tax and other rising bills that are now starting to hit. This will become the steepest drop in living standards that many in our city have faced within living memory and will hit the most vulnerable hardest.

Faith communities in the city are on the front line and have a vital role in supporting those in need.

A Strategic Action Group has been formed to create a city-wide response and tangible actions that positively affect our residents and increase community resilience. As part of this work, The Poverty Commission and Faith Steering Group were asked to co-produce a joint initiative to mobilise the city's faith communities around this agenda.

On 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022 two online discussions were convened. These events brought together a number of voices from across the city's diverse faith communities. A full list of attendees can be found at the end of this document.

The event aims were to:

1. Highlight the impact of the crisis on communities & identify the impacts of over the next 12 months.
2. Introduce the work and priorities of the city's Cross-Sector Strategic Action Group.
3. Communicate what support is available for those in need.
4. Identify what faith communities can do to alleviate the impact and increase community resilience.
5. Identify the elements of a communications plan that removes the stigma of asking for help.
6. Create a coherent plan for what faith communities can do in partnership immediately and in the coming months to support vulnerable people.

This report provides a summary of those discussions. Key messages and themes have been highlighted and this report will help inform the work of the Strategic Action Group.

We would like to thank all our attendees for their generous contributions.

# The impact of the crisis in Derby

What types of issues are faith communities already seeing? What types of need are being presented?

- The Academy Trust responsible for St James, Hardwick Junior School and several other city schools reports a 10% increase in pupils accessing the Pupil Premium in the last three months. They have also seen a huge increase in pupils accessing breakfast clubs.
- Digital exclusion – drive to provide information and access to services online is leading to digital exclusion in some communities.
- Existing poverty will get worse, particularly as we head towards winter and households start using gas and electricity again. They will really struggle.
- Disabled people tend to be exceedingly isolated within the community. They don't find it very easy to talk about their needs amongst able-bodied people. And so, they tend to keep an awful lot back, including food and fuel poverty.
- Electricity and disability are a big issue. Stairlifts, motorised wheelchairs and many, medical aids rely on electricity. Without electricity most disabled people cannot function.
- The cost-of-living crisis is compounding mental health issues and health inequalities that are already more prevalent in certain areas of the city.
- The crisis is no longer affecting the same people such as the unemployed, disabled etc – lower middle-class households are now also struggling with bills.

# What are the barriers to helping those in need and how can they be overcome?

- Better representation of Black Churches is required, because for decades they have been at the frontline of tackling poverty hidden amongst their congregations and the wider Black community.
- Stigma in asking for help, particularly amongst the elderly and Muslim communities. For many, not being able to provide or take care of family is a cause for deep shame and embarrassment. For others it simply does not occur to them that they can and should ask for help. For others they do not know how to ask for help or where to look.
- Access to information will be crucial – where do you even start looking?? We need a sort of ‘grand list of help and services’ that people can turn to in times of need.
- Pay is falling behind prices. In-work poverty needs to be highlighted. We need to work with business and unions to highlight people in work are increasingly in poverty and choosing between heating and eating.
- Impact of crisis on places of worship and faith organisations. Increased heating bills and reduced income from donations from their congregations may have an impact on those they are seeking to support.
- Costs of dealing with Covid makes some places of worship and faith organisations less able to offer support for the cost-of-living crisis. Financial reserves are already stretched.
- For a disabled couple living on benefits and with a carer, they could be left with £7.50 per week to live off after bills are paid, and that is before the crisis coming in. That is the situation that people are in now and it is going to get an awful lot worse because many are unable to communicate their needs well. What is going to happen to those who are notoriously difficult to communicate with?
- Lack of up-to-date central database of faith organisations and key contacts.
- Access to funds -are there any funds that can be accessed via the Levelling Up agenda, particularly in relation to faith and community infrastructure and issues related to poverty and deprivation.
- Will there be sufficient capacity in the city to ensure that people can get help when they ask for it? If faith communities are signposting people to services and the capacity is not there, or the person gets put on a waiting list, they will not go back, and they will end up in deeper crisis.
- How do we ensure that access to support is in the public domain, without it being taken advantage of?

- Access of information for people whose first language is not English.
- Knowledge/information sharing of National schemes to combat the crisis- where do people go to access?

# Getting the message out

Attendees were asked to discuss how to get the message out to those in poverty or at risk of getting sucked into poverty. They were also asked to consider how best to communicate with those in need:

- A dignified response & neighbourly action is required.
- There is a place for thinking about what we can do individually or what people in our congregations can do individually for friends and family. It's great we've got faith groups, but most residents have got families, friends and neighbours that they can be looking out for, making a meal for or inviting around in the winter when it is cold.
- We really need to encourage people to think about what they can do for their friends, neighbours and family. That is a more dignified response than visiting a foodbank.
- Create safe places within places of worship where conversations about debt and household struggles can be spoken about and without stigma.
- Free access to computers and knowing where these access points are will be crucial.
- Positioning of communications – ideas included:

“Whether you are young or old, a resident or business, we are all affected by this crisis.”

“We are all in this together.”

“Let's help each other out”

“What can I do for my friends, family and neighbours”

“Don't be afraid to ask”

- Ensure communications plans are positioned so that those who don't know how to navigate public services or have no previous experience of navigating welfare systems, can do so.
- Recognise that faith groups and organisations will be dealing with people with heightened emotional states. Messaging needs to be reassuring. Faith communities have a role to play in shaping these messages.
- Positioning/marketing of faith groups. Some members of the public feel like places of worship are only for marriage/death. Promote the additional services they offer.
- Be creative when looking at methods of communication – word of mouth still has significant value in a digital age. Community outreach 'door knocking', invitations to coffee mornings etc can all have high impact in breaking down barriers.
- Back to basics communication is still very valid, for example, flyer drops, posters on toilet doors.

# What should happen next?

- Mobilise a co-ordinated response to the crisis. Work in partnership with each other from across different faith sectors and those who are not currently represented in these conversations.
- Resurrect the Derby Advice Alliance.
- Longer lead-in times for the implementation, promotion, and delivery of hardship funds.
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund - ensure that it reaches the communities it is intended to help. Influence the city's investment plan for this fund.
- Build faith networks, relationships and databases
- Engage Black Churches and other faith groups that are not currently engaging in the cost-of-living crisis work and the faith steering group.
- Support faith groups and organisations to represent and engage their communities in expressing local needs and be part in designing the solutions to meeting those needs.
- Keep talking about this to family, friends, our community. Make it acceptable to talk about it.
- Promote all the services and funds that exist that people do not know about or even knew existed.
- Create networks to catch those people and consequences of poverty already in evidence in our neighbourhoods – homelessness, drugs, anti-social behaviour etc.
- Be considerate to the needs of children and young people. They will be even more powerless than adults to address the emotional and financial impacts of the crisis, but they will be affected just as much.
- Advocacy to address the issues upstream and stop people falling into poverty in the first place.
- Community gardens and 'grow your own' schemes.
- Faith is an 'added value' solution. Promote faith as a source of spiritual, emotional and wellbeing support.
- Engage with schools. Primary schools have a good understanding of what position families are in and what support they need

# Summary

Faith communities are a key part of civic life of the city and have a key part to play. It is about working in partnership, sharing the task, and recognizing that no one organisation has the ability to do everything that needs to be done.

The work we are trying to do needs to go beyond faith communities. We need to work with people of faith and no faith.

Communication needs to be carefully planned to ensure we are reaching the right audiences, we need to take into consideration language, digital poverty and reaching out to those that do not normally access services or Faith groups.

## List of attendees

Derby West Indian Community Association  
Multi Faith Centre  
Pakistani Community Centre  
Derby Muslim Burial Council  
St Giles Church, Normanton  
Sinfin Moor Anglican Church  
Derby Cathedral  
The Source Derby  
Derby City Vision  
Peartree Baptist Church  
Rachel Harrison  
Caroline Gill  
Derby Poverty Commission  
Food 4 Thought  
Simon Cartwright, Acting area Dean of Anglican Church Derby  
Broadway Baptist Church  
Sharon Murphy, Pioneer Minister Derwent & Chaddesden  
Joseph Chivayo  
Alison Henshaw  
Lesley  
University of Derby, Programme Leader Youth & Community  
Derby Vineyard Church  
Trinity Baptist Church  
Derby Black Lives Matters  
St Werburgh's Church  
All Saints Church, Ripley  
Metropolitan Thames Valley  
Derby City Council, Community Leadership Team  
Derby Refugee Advice Centre  
St James Centre  
Hindu Temple Geeta Bhawan  
Normanton Local Area Coordinator  
Diocese of Derby Disability and Access Inclusion Group