

Child Poverty

The Increased Cost of Living



The Cost of Living

During the summer of 2022 the Youth Forum looked at the increased cost of living and the impact that this would have on children and young people in Somerset.



Things to think about

What we need to know about poverty

- Inflation
- Consumer Price Index
- Interest rates
- Child poverty

How are children and young people affected by the following cost rises

- Food
- Shelter
- Transport
- Energy
- Clothing
- Education
- Healthcare
- Childcare
- Entertainment

Case Study

- Youth Forum with given a case study about an average family and the impact of the increased cost of living
- We then discussed the impact to the young people in the family
- This then expanded to the real world impact of the cost of living increases on young people



What is the impact of the increasing cost of living on young people?

The variety of impact on different groups of people. For example for people with SEND. The impact may be greater due to electricity required to power equipment such as hoist or powered wheelchairs. In addition, the requirement to run diesel vans

Social isolation due to not being able to see friends

Losing friends

Feeling left out but family and friends

They could lose possibilities of following careers they wanted to go into in the future

Being left to fill in the gaps and potentially making the situation worse mentally than in reality

Worse mental health, less sports/time with friends

Cut back on recreational activities

It's something people need to be aware of at all levels, because it doesn't just impact adults

If they don't go to their extra curricular activities they may lose determination to keep following a career

Scared because things are being taken away but could also be more scared knowing why

Likely to develop mental health issues due to the more frequent isolation from friends

More time at home with family

Becoming angry with parents because they are not being told what's happening

It's something to think about now, rather than later on

Might feel like an outcast because all their friends are doing stuff but they can't

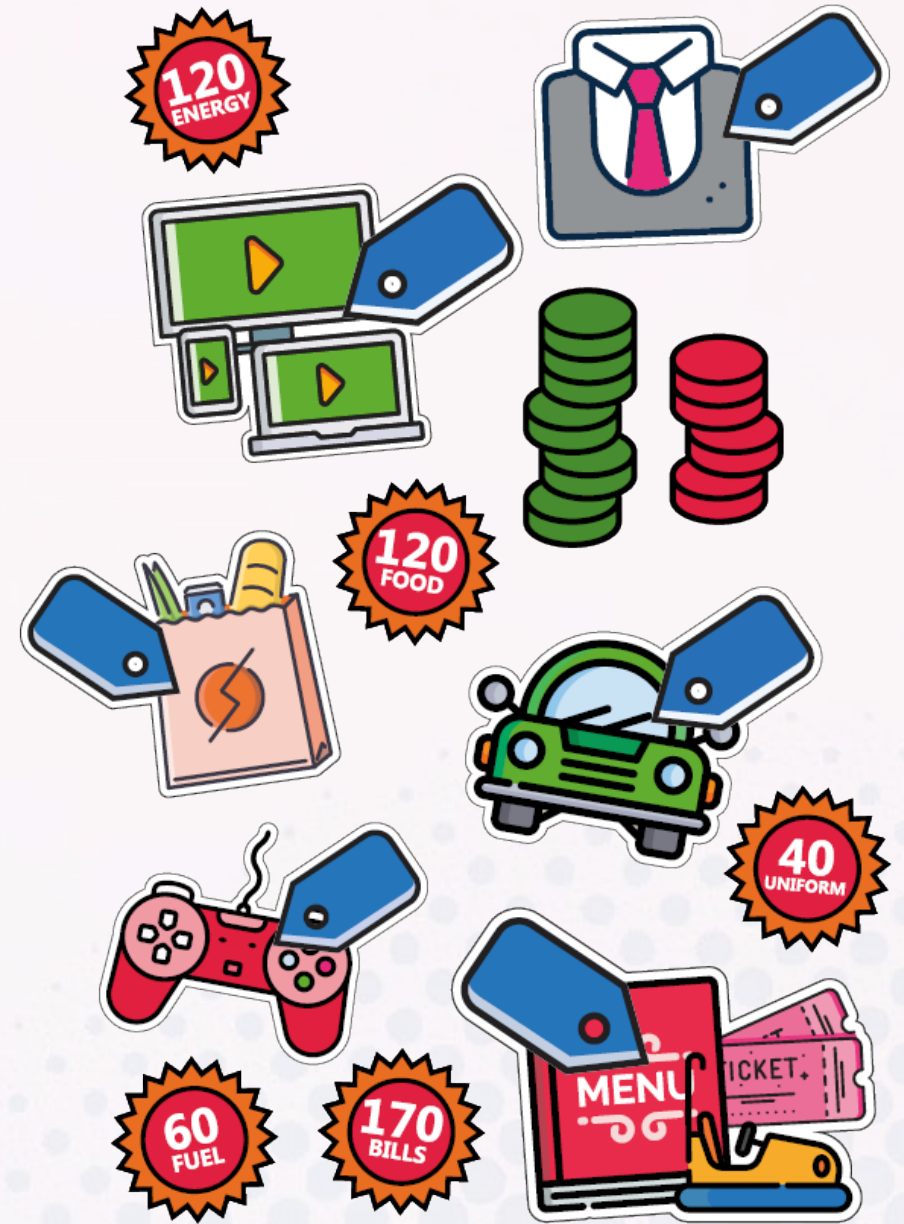
They could develop trust issues with their parents if they notice a change in lifestyle but aren't being told why

I think this is an important thing to be thinking about right now as this is happening across everywhere

Wondering if they are different or is happening to others too

Cost of Living Game

- Every team is given a set of Cost Cards and a set of tokens to use as currency to buy the cards.
- On the first round they can afford everything
- On the second round the price increases and they can afford two thirds of the items.
- On the third round their tokens decrease by a third and they can only afford one third of the items.



Findings

So many jobs that young people can get are minimum wage. It can be just liveable at the moment. But at certain ages young people can't get jobs or even afford to get to jobs.

Young Person,
Youth Forum Summer Event
August 2022

Electric bill for the equipment for daily life - powered wheelchair, hoist, feed pump, lighting, and other equipment.

Young Person,
Youth Forum Summer Event
August 2022

With increased prices, landlords will have to suffer increased costs and have to raise the rent.

Young Person,
Youth Forum Summer Event
August 2022

Transport is getting more expensive, so we can't get to places and do things.

Young Person,
Youth Forum Summer Event
August 2022

Increased criminality. You put your children first, so if you get desperate you might do illegal things.

Young Person,
Youth Forum Summer Event
August 2022

“With costs going up, it means that people like me in a position with storage heaters or y’know, things like that. It’s hard because the electric it costs to run them is already through the roof but with the cost of living rising and the cost of energy rising it’s gonna be even more expensive to the point where I wouldn’t even have the possibility of turning the heating on this winter. I mean I definitely won’t this winter, there’s no way on earth because I just can’t afford it”



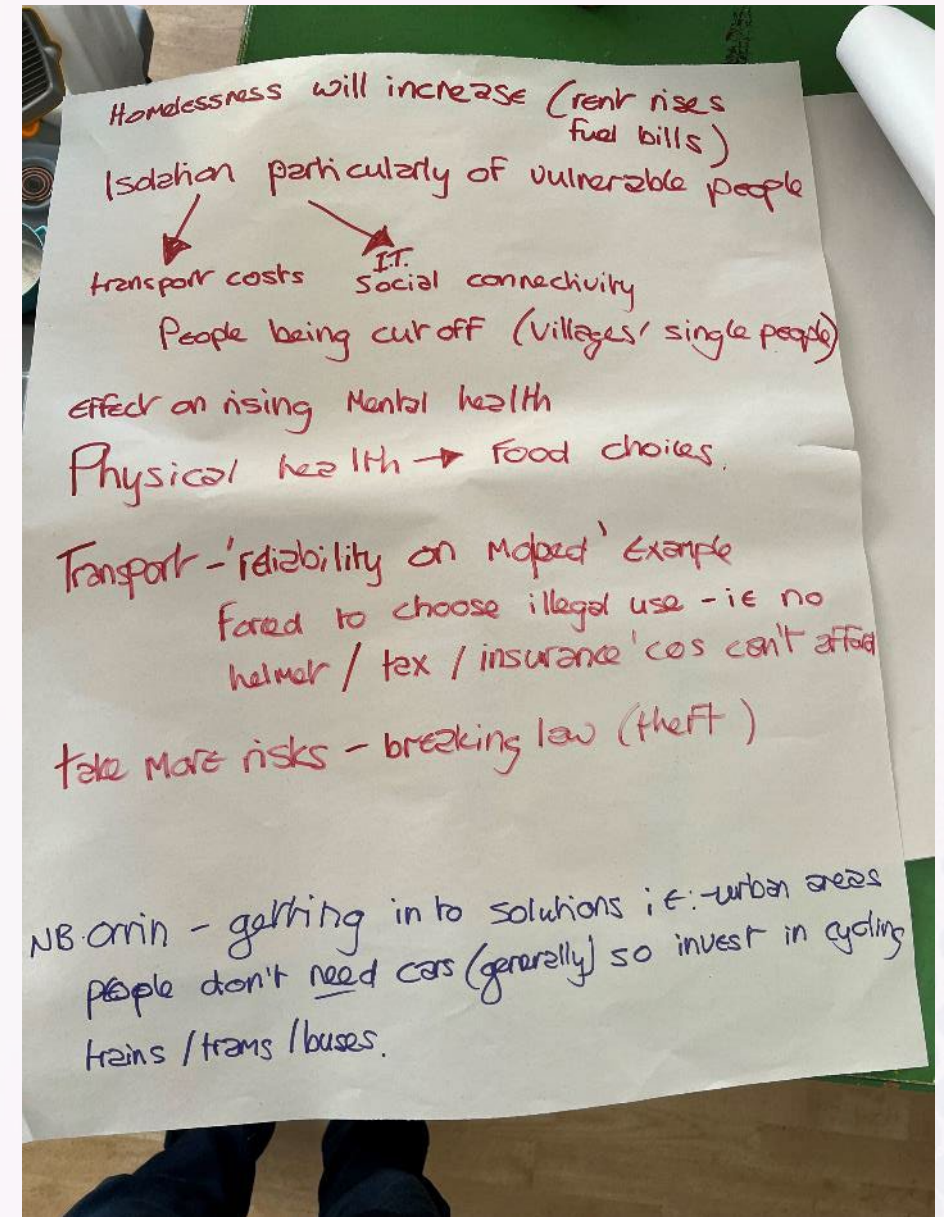
“The cost of living will impact children and young people with physical difficulties because they require to charge hoist systems, electric beds and electric wheelchairs.”

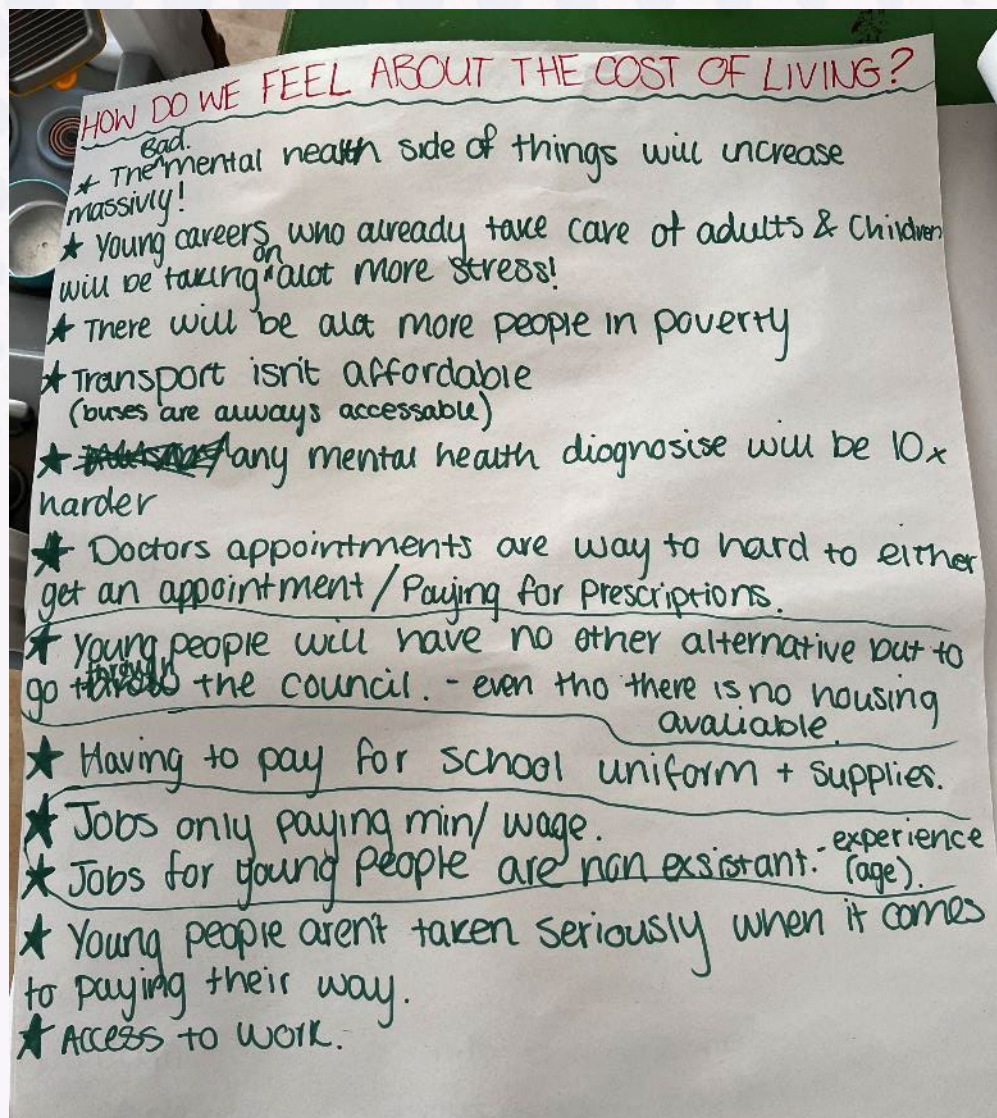
“The impact of the cost of living means that the economy itself is very fragile and trying to change one thing, whether that’s changing the price, can cause a chain reaction that could affect a bunch of other things and make it incredibly difficult to try and balance everything out, while trying to lower costs.”

“The rising cost of electric and water for a young person with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities might be that they spend up to an hour twice a day in the shower because of a sensory need and also dissociating in the process, therefore meaning that water and electric bills are higher than what they would normally be.”



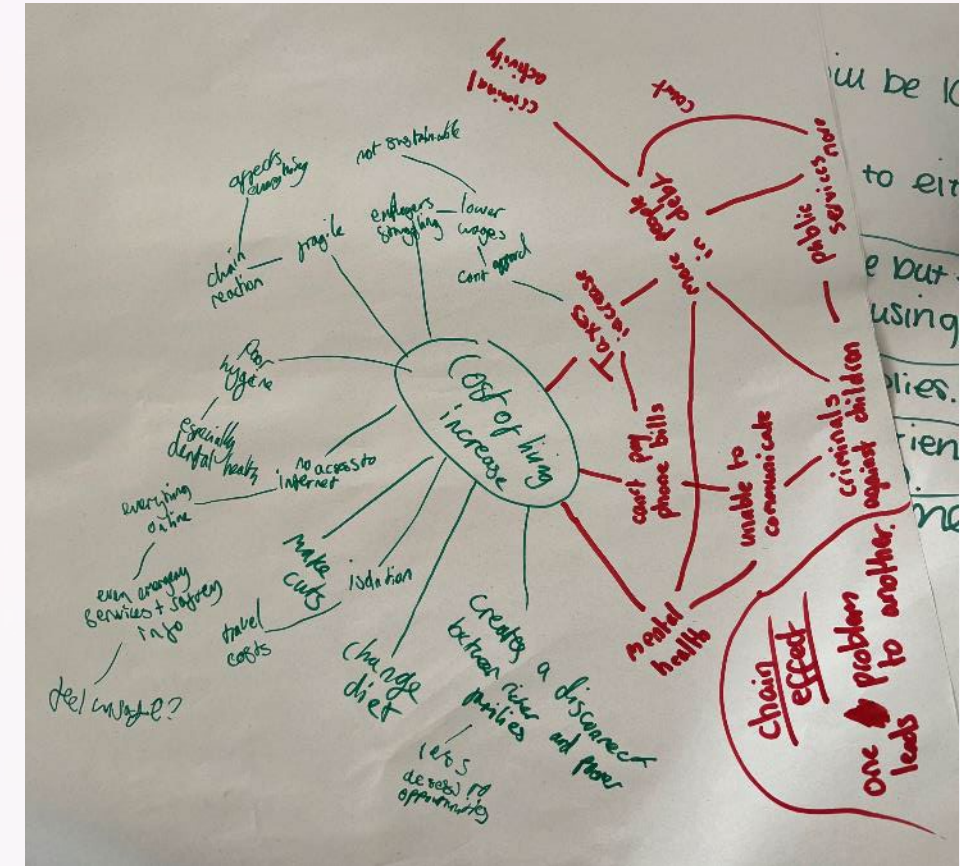
- Homelessness will increase – rent rises and fuel bills
- Isolation particularly of vulnerable people – transport costs and IT/social connectivity
- People being cut off – villagers and single people
- Effect on rising mental health
- Physical health and food choices
- Transport – 'reliability on moped' example – forced to choose illegal use – i.e. no helmet, tax, insurance because can't afford
- Take more risks – breaking the law – theft
- Finding solutions – i.e. urban areas people don't need cars generally so invest in cycling, trains, trams, buses.





- Bad mental health side of things will increase massively
- Young carers who already take care of adults and children will be taking on more stress
- There will also be more people in poverty
- Transport isn't affordable – buses aren't always accessible
- Any mental health diagnosis will be 10x harder
- Doctors' appointments are way too hard to either get an appointment/paying for prescriptions
- Young people will have no alternative but to go through the council – even though there is no housing available
- Having to pay for school uniform and supplies
- Jobs only pay minimum wage
- Jobs for young people are non-existent – experience/age
- Young people aren't taken seriously when it comes to paying their way
- Access to work

- Chain effect, one problem leads to another
- Creates a disconnect between richer and poorer families
- Less decent opportunities
- Change diet
- Isolation
- Travel costs
- Make cuts
- No access to internet when everything is online
- Even emergency services and safety information
- Feel unsafe
- Poor hygiene – especially dental health
- Fragile – chain reaction- everything changes
- Employers struggling – lower wages – not sustainable – can't afford
- Taxes increase
- Can't pay phone bills – unable to communicate
- More people in debt – criminal activity
- Mental health
- Relying on public services more
- Crime against children



Conclusion

After all three events, discussions and activities there were continued reflections on how hardships will push some people into making difficult, risky and sometimes illegal decisions in order to survive and protect their family.

In addition, there were concerns about the impact on those with SEND and those with specific energy requirements, employment opportunities, transportation and very significant concerns over the physical and mental health impact.

The cost of living crisis is something that young people are aware of with a lot of media exposure, whether that's from the news, TV shows or online. They may also overhear about it from their parents, carers or teachers or be aware of changes being made to their lifestyle. It's important that any communication about the rising cost of living is done responsibly and accurately.