



## **Cost of Living Crisis Assembly 2 – Report**

### **Introduction**

On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023, Together Liverpool held a second Cost of Living Crisis (CoLC) Assembly. The purpose of this Assembly was to build on the conclusions that were drawn from the first assembly. This second Network of Kindness Cost of Living Assembly was an opportunity to hear from three Network of Kindness members about how they're responding to the crisis in their local communities and to shape how we will respond in our own local contexts.

### **Contributors**

1. Warm Spaces: Rev Jack Shepherd, Upholland & Dalton:
  - In order to support the Parish, Jack and his team produced a survey to determine how they would respond to support and help the community
  - The survey identified that people were concerned about the impact of the CoLC on single parent families and those who are vulnerable due to illness. In addition to this, many were concerned about the lack of information surrounding the CoLC
  - Jack's team have collated information about warm spaces and food provision across Skelmersdale and published this on social media. Jack has been particularly involved in a warm space at Oak House which provides a hot meal and hot drinks
  - As well as this, Jack organised a warm winter coat campaign which collected coats, hats, scarves etc. to provide warm clothing for those who needed it
  
2. The Opening Doors Project: Gayle Connor-McCreith, Founder and Co-ordinator:
  - As there are no community centres in the local area, Gayle approached St. Nathanael's, Walton about starting a youth club for children and young people. As a result of this, other youth clubs and play schemes began to emerge
  - This project recognised that many of the local families were living in poverty. In order to alleviate this, Gayle and her team established projects and community groups that were family focused and include food. As a result of the pandemic, The Opening Doors Project also established ways to help and support the isolated elderly such as crochet, arts and crafts
  - As a result of CoLC, Gayle and her team have decided to continue to run these projects and activities as this is what the local community have asked for. As a result,



a strengthened community has formed and those at St. Nathanael's have a reduced sense of fear and anxiety

3. Compassion Acts: Richard Owens, CEO, Southport and Formby:

- This project runs food banks, pantries and warm spaces, men's groups, community hubs throughout Southport and Formby
- The purpose of Compassion Acts is to intervene in the poverty and mental health cycle which has been amplified by the CoLC
- As a result of the CoLC, Richard has noticed that many middle-class people now recognise that poverty is not isolated to those who are unemployed. The CoLC has reduced the othering that those in poverty have faced in the past as now people in this community have more awareness about poverty and food insecurity
- Richard and his team have worked with the local council to provide vouchers for warm coats. From working with the local community in Southport and Formby, Compassion Acts wants to move 'from charity to solidarity'

Summary of Group Discussion

As part of the assembly, we discussed the following questions: What have you heard from the different contributors that's made you think or you'd like to see in your community? How are you currently responding in your area and has the CoLC impacted on it? How might you develop it?

These are the key points that arose from our discussion:

- Participants were struck by the emphasis on acting in solidarity with our community, placing listening at the centre of their work and the need to build stronger partnerships and relationships.
- Some community groups and churches are working collaboratively which is increasing their impact in the communities.
- Challenged by thinking of ways to reach groups that are often left behind by churches such as men in the 20-30 bracket.
- Flexibility and adapting our way of working is essential to the way in which we respond.
- That the Cost of Living Crisis is impacting people at virtually every level of society.