

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE:

Uncovered

Vital Voices

The effect of the cost of living crisis on small charities

In partnership with the Bank of England



Introduction

Heart of Bucks' 'Vital Voices' events are community forums that give a platform to small, grassroots organisations in Buckinghamshire, and help them connect with influential people on key issues to create change and make a difference.

This event, *The effect of the cost-of-living crisis on small charities*, focused on the challenging economic situation of recent years.

We welcomed Sir David Ramsden, the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England and his team as our guests to join the conversation and listen to concerns and insights from the local charities and community groups. Heart of Bucks were joined by representatives from:

Aylesbury Homeless Action Group	Daytop Multicultural Centre
Aylesbury Youth Action	Oasis Partnership
Aylesbury Youth Motor Project	One-Eighty
Caribbean Community Lunch Club	Southcourt Baptist Church
Community Impact Bucks	Wycombe Homeless Connection

We were kindly hosted by the team at Buckinghamshire New University, at their Community Wellbeing Hub in Aylesbury.



Photo: (L-R) Sir David Ramsden, Deputy Governor Bank of England, Henry Allmand, CEO Heart of Bucks, Korri Lenney, Policy and Insight Manager Heart of Bucks



Key Insights

Children and Young People (CYP)

The need for financial education, specifically financial literacy, has never been more important. The current climate which our CYP are growing up in is heavily focused on the cost of living crisis. This means our CYP are being exposed to financial strains at an early age and must be aware of how to handle this if they are to hopefully remove themselves from the poverty cycle.

How Charities Operate

It was identified that there are challenges around interactions between banks and charities/community groups. There is a need for banks to have a better understanding of the business model of charities and how they operate in comparison to companies

Asset Based Approach

Our county is rich with assets that can help us tackle local challenges such as the cost of living crisis. The knowledge and availability of these assets must be shared across our networks so that we can move towards an asset-based approach rather than a deficit-based approach. A preferred method of support is a collaborative approach that embeds our local assets to tackle local concerns.



Photo: Guy Redshaw

An aerial photograph of a village in Buckinghamshire, showing a winding river, rolling green hills, and a cluster of houses with red-tiled roofs. The sky is clear and blue.

Key Insights

Affordable Housing

The lack of affordable housing is a major concern for residents and local organisations in Buckinghamshire. Frozen welfare benefits, alongside private rental increases, have meant that our most deprived communities are unable to afford their homes, resulting in considerable debt. More social housing and an increase in welfare benefits is key if this situation is to improve for Buckinghamshire residents.

Pay Inequality

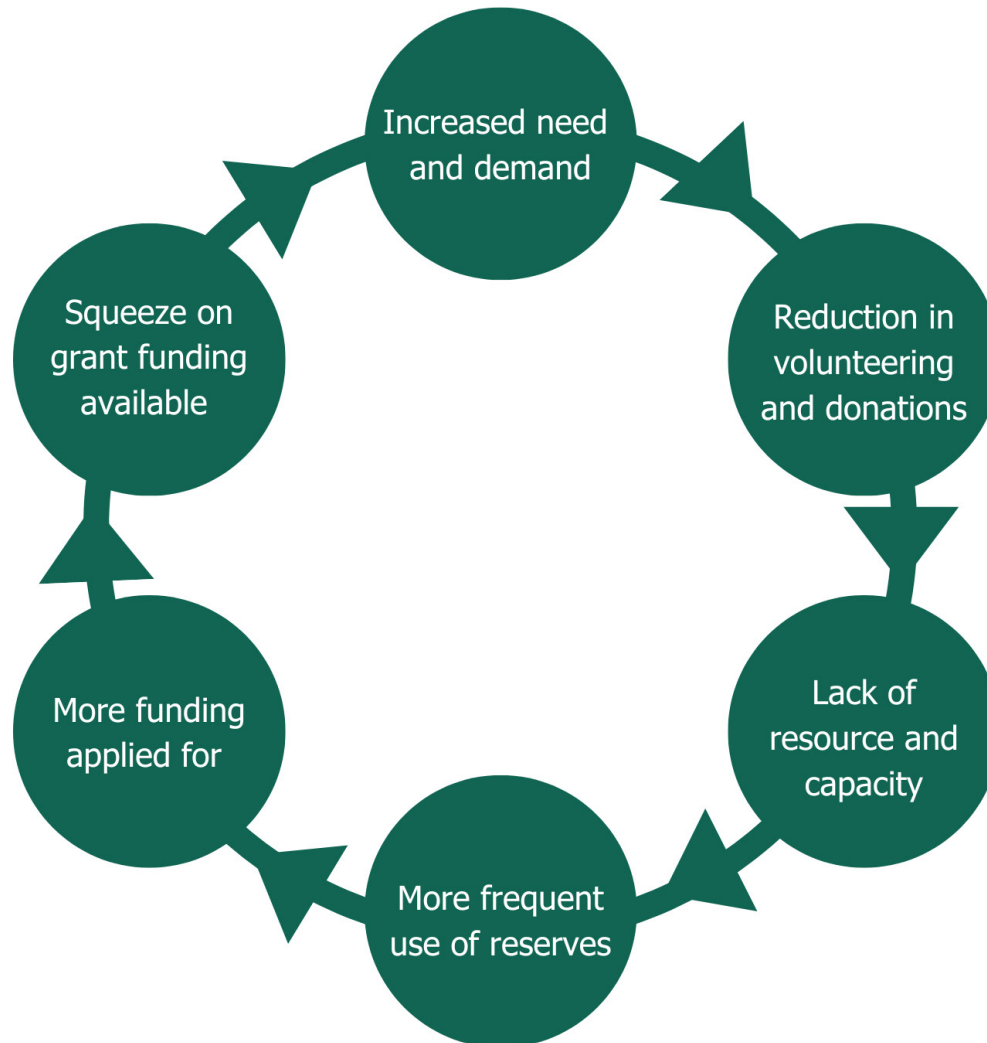
The pay gap between Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector employees and non VCSE roles is widening due to organisations being unable to increase wages yearly with inflation. This exacerbates the effects of the cost of living crisis on those who are trying to help members of our community who need the most support. It is concerning that staff in the local VCSE sector may seek employment elsewhere as it becomes unaffordable to work for grassroots charitable organisations.

The 'Cost of Living Crisis Loop'

It has been highlighted that there is a repetitive cycle that involves the VCSE sector, philanthropy and grant making, which means we are not meeting the needs or demands of the community. For example, the COL crisis has meant a reduction in volunteering, a lack of resource and capacity, more frequent use of reserves and more funding applications, resulting in a squeeze on grant funding available.

Cost of Living Crisis Loop

Funders and charities



Voices of the Community



Susie Besant
CEO, One-Eighty

“It was a privilege to be one of the amazing and impactful groups invited to discuss the real and devastating impact of the cost of living crisis on small organisations and the people we serve. I am in awe of the amazing people who, like my team and I, go above and beyond to support their communities every day. I hope that our collective voices will influence policy and decision makers to listen and act.”

Voices of the Community



Paige Fox-Rendle
Director of Youth
Volunteering
Aylesbury Youth Action

“The community forum created a platform for like-minded people to share their passion for social action within the Buckinghamshire community. It was a humbling experience hearing the stories shared amongst the group, and it felt like a valuable opportunity for us to relate to one another and our shared challenges.

Meeting Sir David and his team gave me hope that the Bank of England is taking steps to support what our grassroots charities are trying to do - create safe environments for the community. I found it most interesting when the group shared their personal experiences. The vulnerability in the shared space allowed for these raw conversations to impact profoundly, and the result of the forum will have a lasting impact on me.”

Voices of the Community



Sir David Ramsden
Deputy Governor of
the Bank of England

“It is vital for the Bank of England to engage with communities across the UK – we can’t make informed decisions without this input – so I’m very grateful to Heart of Bucks Community Foundation for bringing so many charities together for this event and for hosting us.

We discussed the challenges the charity sector in Buckinghamshire is facing across the board in keeping pace with the rising demand for their services, and the many innovative ways organisations are working to support local communities. Thanks to them, we gained insight into their sector and the work they do.”

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Thank you to all the charities and groups that took part in our Vital Voices community forum:

[Aylesbury Homeless Action Group](#)

[Aylesbury Youth Action](#)

[Aylesbury Youth Motor Project](#)

[Caribbean Community Lunch Club](#)

[Community Impact Bucks](#)

[Daytop Multicultural Centre](#)

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Helping grassroot charities be heard

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