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### DEVASTATING IMPACT OF COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS ON DISABLED PEOPLE REVEALED

**A new report published today by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and Glasgow Disability Alliance paints a deeply concerning picture of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on disabled people.**

The report presents the views of disabled people living in Glasgow alongside a scoping review of emergent evidence from across the UK on how the crisis is impacting the lives, health, and wellbeing of disabled people.

The crisis has worsened poverty and financial insecurity, making it increasingly difficult, and for some impossible, to live a healthy and reasonably enriched life. It is of great concern that for many, the crisis has created a struggle to meet basic costs including an inability to heat homes and going hungry or eating a nutritionally deficient diet. Being cold and going hungry was reported as directly compromising the management of health conditions, disrupting medication routines and worsening a range of symptoms, including pain management. Worryingly, being unable to afford to charge essential assistive equipment, such as powered wheelchairs, hoists, and nebulisers, was also reported.

Such deepening poverty is difficult to escape, even on a temporary basis, and the associated stress was described as being seriously corrosive to mental health and wellbeing.

In addition to these health, wellbeing and condition management impacts, participants reported that there is now significantly less opportunity to undertake hobbies and pastimes, to socialise, or to participate in their community – all vital for leading reasonably fulfilling lives. This has further eroded mental health and resulted for too many in an inescapable feeling of being forgotten or left behind by wider society. The evidence review conducted as part of the research indicates that these devastating impacts on disabled peoples' lives are observed across the UK, but that the issue has as yet not received adequate academic or policy attention.

The report also highlights the significant additional and hidden costs of disability, which are not well understood across wider society. Disability charity, 'SCOPE', estimates that in 2023, on average, disabled households (with at least one disabled adult or child) need an additional £975 a month to have the same standard of living as non-disabled households. This 'disability price tag' is comprised of higher costs associated with, for instance, specialist equipment and extra usage of everyday essentials including energy and accessible transport.

Alongside the direct impacts on their own lives and health, the wider impacts of the crisis on society and health services in particular were recognised. As one disabled participant reported: *"There are many costs to this which I've not seen in the news or heard people speaking about. What price are the NHS paying for this? I have definitely seen my GP much more, because of stuff we've spoken about, being cold, being stressed mainly for me, and how that impacts my [condition]. So, the crisis will be costing the NHS millions. If the disability payments are raised, we would also be spending more within the economy. It's this [false] idea that if we get more money, we'd be squirrelling it away. No! We'd be spending more on the basic things we actually need – food, clothes, energy and so on, assistive things. The money doesn't go down a black hole, it goes back into the economy and everyone benefits."*

The findings are hugely concerning, demanding immediate and disability-prioritised policy and practice responses at all levels of government and across public services. Although mitigating the immediate impacts of the crisis is vital, the underlying historical vulnerability and inequalities experienced by disabled people, including the disproportionate impact of over a decade of UK austerity policies and the COVID-19 pandemic, must also be addressed.

The report calls upon the UK Government to provide an adequate level of social security to enable disabled people to live healthy lives and to compensate for the extra costs of disability. Maximising access to existing social security is also essential, as is reducing societal barriers to fair education, employment, and civic participation. The Government working with energy providers to legislate for a discounted gas and electricity tariff for disabled people would also be hugely welcomed.

**Chris Harkins**, lead author of the report and Public Health Programme Manager at GCPH stated, *“Over one in five UK citizens are disabled, and within Glasgow, the figure is almost a quarter among working age people, rising to 64% in those over 65 years of age. Disability is part of being human, almost everyone will be disabled temporarily or permanently in their lives. Yet, disability in many ways remains a peripheral issue in society – a ‘them and us’ dichotomy based on stigma, discrimination, and disinterest.*

*“For disabled people living in Glasgow to have unheated homes, to go hungry, and to have severely restricted opportunities to socialise and participate in their community paints a bleak picture of our society in 2023. Moreso, living like this is a direct violation of their human rights. These conditions are a direct result of policy choices, primarily a decade of austerity policy which we know has been devastating to the health of disabled people and lower income households. In terms of local and national government, disabled people must be considered a priority. As this report makes painfully clear, urgent action is essential.”*

Reflecting on how escalating costs are impacting on them, this disabled **research participant** stated, *“In this cost-of-living crisis I feel the guillotine above my head all the time, I feel it so vividly. Things [finances] were always tight before, and even through COVID, but this is different. I can’t get by, everything is so much more expensive, so much more. I have no room to move. It feels like you are condemned to a joyless life being disabled in this crisis.”*

Co-author **Tressa Burke**, CEO of Glasgow Disability Alliance, said *“Historically, policies at both national and local government level have failed to have the correct understanding and analysis of the interrelated nature of the barriers, stigma and exclusion which cause disabled people to experience poverty and inequality. Policies have not only failed to tackle disabled people’s poverty – they have increased poverty and widened inequalities.*

*“Glasgow Disability Alliance has over 5,500 members who are reporting all time high poverty and burgeoning costs. This is creating panic, lack of choices and sense of control, leading to a sense of hopelessness and despair in many cases. People who have never struggled with mental health are describing major impact on their sense of wellbeing due to being faced with impossible choices: not just between eating and heating but also being unable to charge essential lifesaving or enhancing equipment like nebulisers or powered wheelchairs – undermining health and mobility. In some cases, people have used their mobility PIP to pay for a car but now aren’t able to afford to put petrol in it, restricting social contact with family and friends and access to services.*

*“All of this requires urgent attention and immediate policy priority leading to actions. GDA understand what needs to be done and we urge Scottish Government and Local Authorities to work with us, listen and act before it’s too late and more disabled people die”.*

**Notes:**

1. A copy of the full report '[The impacts of the cost-of-living crisis on disabled people: a case for action](#)' is available on the GCPH website.
2. Chris Harkins and Tressa Burke quoted in this PR are available for interview by contacting Jennie Coyle below.
3. [Glasgow Centre for Population Health](#) is a partnership between NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Glasgow City Council and the University of Glasgow funded by the Scottish Government. With a core focus on improving health and reducing inequality, it aims to understand the patterns and causes of poor health and health inequality in Glasgow and Scotland; identify and evaluate policies and practical actions for improvement; and inform, influence and support local and national action and policy change.
4. [Glasgow Disability Alliance](#) is a disabled people-led organisation, controlled by its 5,500+ members. It is the largest groundswell of disabled members in Europe and a leading example of a grassroots community of identity driving improvements to disabled people lives in parallel with wider changes to policies, services and society.

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