

Item	Date		
	15/09/2025		
Title	For		
Poverty sub-group update	Information		
Present			
Councillor Catrin Davies - Cabinet Member and Equality Champion, CCC (Chair) Ann Ireland – Revenues, Benefits and Financial Assessments, CCC Carys Huntly - Equality and Inclusion, CCC Hazel Lloyd-Lubran – CAVO Juliet Morris - Ceredigion Citizens Advice Louisa Adams - Ceredigion Family Centre Network, Plant Dewi Mark Gleeson - Lifelong Learning and Skills, CCC Sara Rees – Senior Public Health Practitioner, Hywel Dda Health Board Taniya Jones Jarrams - Integrated Triage & Assessment Services, CCC Timothy Bray – Partnerships and Civil Contingencies, CCC Rob Starr - Performance and Research, CCC Sarah Griffiths, Through Age Carers & Community Support, CCC Mari Jefferis, Parenting & Family Support, CCC Meinir Paske, Childcare Business Support, CCC			
Key Points discussed at sub-group meeting: 22/07/2025			
<b>1. Plant Dewi Family Centre Network coordinator - presentation.</b>  All Ceredigion Family Centre services are free. They offer courses to support families - GroBrain, Baby groups, Baby yoga etc. They also offer a 'Baby Bundle' scheme. The number of baby bundles provided to families has already increased this year, probably due to low income, increased living costs and mental health.  There has been an increase in families using washing machines in family centres for their own personal laundry. Low income and the cost of living are believed to be the cause of this.  Many of the centres are only open 3 days a week due to funding issues, however there is a need for the centres to be accessible 5 days a week.  <b>Actions:</b> LA and CH to discuss funding schemes for furniture and white goods. LA and HL-L to discuss funding and ideas for income streams for Plant Dewi. LA and JM to discuss signposting to Citizens Advice.			
<b>2. Free School Meals (FSM) and School Essential Grant (SEG) report</b>			
Academic Year	FSM numbers	SEG numbers	SEG amount paid
2022/23	1,897	1,463	£339,050*
2023/24	1,895	1,330	£175,950
2024/25	1,791	1,268	£166,300
* There was an increase in the SEG payment per pupil in 2022-23 (£225 per pupil under 11 and £300 per pupil aged 11+). It reverted to £125 per pupil under 11 and £200 per pupil aged 11+ from 2023-24 to present.			

UK government have removed the threshold for SEG. This means that anyone receiving Universal Credit can receive SEG. It's hoped that Welsh Government will follow suit.

It's noted that the Council's Revenue, Benefits and Financial Assessments team handle SEG, Council tax reduction and FSM applications. This helps to promote relevant grants to eligible families.

**Action:** CH and AI to discuss further promotion of SEG.

### **3. Rural Poverty – interim findings.**

Rob Starr's report included the following:

- According to the Wales Centre for Public Policy there is growing evidence that poverty is a persistent and increasing problem in rural communities in Wales.
- 28% of Ceredigion LSOA are in the 'most deprived 10%' in the Housing Domain of WIMD (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation).
- Ceredigion's return travel time to access services on public transport is far higher than the Wales average (Powys is higher).
- Ceredigion has experienced a higher average price for all property types than the Wales average for the past 10 years.
- Private housing rental costs have risen significantly over the past 3 years, along with the rest of Wales.
- Far fewer households in Ceredigion are on mains gas compared to the rest of Wales.
- Earnings by place of residence are below the Wales average.
- Ceredigion still lags behind the Wales average in terms of Broadband Coverage.

**Conclusion:** there is a strong argument that rural authorities should receive greater support due to the unique challenges that we face in delivering services. The challenges remain as relevant today as they have at any time. Evidence of some aspects of rural poverty and in-work poverty are hidden within the WIMD. These findings will be included in the next PSB Assessment of Local Well-being.

**Action:** the Rural Poverty report to be circulated when complete.

### **4. Connecting Communities to boost financial wellbeing.**

This 6 month project ended in June 2025. It involved visits to Warm Welcome Spaces and Food Banks and a series of 'Let's Talk' engagement events. The aim was to improve communication and co-production between Poverty sub-group members and community groups.

**Findings:** many of the community groups do offer information about poverty related support, however many volunteers are nervous to discuss financial matters with service users. The project resulted in the following recommendations:

- Sustain and expand community engagement

- Enhance volunteer confidence and training
- Develop long-term collaborative systems
- Address food bank use and stigma
- Support youth engagement

## 5. Monthly Cost of Living Bulletins

Members discussed topics for future bulletins. The following were suggested – Multiply courses, School Essential Grant, grants and support to help people in wintertime who have suffered bereavement or serious illness, promotion of upcoming ‘Tech for Everyone’ events to help increase digital skills in the community.

**Actions:** members to contact CH with ideas for future bulletins. CH to contact SG to maximise opportunities to work with Community Connectors.

## 6. Energy Advice Providers – update.

The energy advice providers have committed to three pledges:

- Sign up to Ceredigion Information and Advice Network (CIAN) - *done*.
- Work towards the creation of a leaflet or template to inform the public – *in progress*.
- Commit to attending in person events as a group - *joint energy advice sessions are scheduled in Aberystwyth, Cardigan and Aberaeron*.

**Action:** CH to continue to work with the Energy Advice Providers to achieve a coordinated service across Ceredigion.

**Date of next meeting:** 21 October 2025 10am – 12pm

**Reporting Officer:** Cathryn Morgan, Equality and Inclusion, Ceredigion Council