

BASW England Coventry and Warwickshire Branch present:

Report on Survey Findings: Impact of Cost-of-living Crisis on Social Workers and Students across Coventry & Warwickshire

Introduction

This report presents an analysis of survey responses from social workers and students living, studying or working in the Coventry & Warwickshire area, regarding the ongoing cost of living crisis and its implications. The survey aimed to understand how rising living costs are affecting financial stability, wellbeing, and professional circumstances among social workers and students.

The survey was launched on 9th February 2024 and was closed to further responses on 10th March 2024. A total of 34 responses were received.

Methodology

The survey collected responses through an online platform, gathering data from social workers and students across various demographics across the Coventry and Warwickshire area. The questionnaire covered aspects such as the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on financial stability, employment circumstances, wellbeing, and the ability to provide support and care.



Demographics

The survey included responses from social workers in direct practice (SWDP), social workers in leadership roles (SWLR), and students. SWDP and SWLR represented the majority of respondents, while students formed a smaller subset of the sample.

Social Workers in Direct Practice (SWDP): **50%**

Social Workers in Leadership Roles (SWLR): **38%**

Students: **12%**

Key findings:

- 1 Impact on Likelihood of Dropping Out:**

A notable proportion of respondents (30%) reported that they knew of someone who had dropped out of their course.
- 2 Financial Impact:**
 - The majority of respondents (55%) reported a high to very high impact on their financial stability and ability to meet basic needs.
 - Many respondents expressed being more likely to cut down on food or go hungry due to the crisis (63%) with some already having had to access food banks or having to rely on other types of support such as emergency loans.
- 3 Employment Circumstances:**

A majority of respondents indicated considering or having already made changes to their employment circumstances, such as moving to agency working due to increased pay (56%).
- 4 Wellbeing:**

Responses regarding overall wellbeing varied, with a notable portion indicating poor to very poor wellbeing, stress levels and work-life balance (41%).
- 5 Ability to Provide Support and Care:**

A considerable number of respondents agreed that the crisis is negatively impacting their ability to provide effective support and care to the individuals and communities they work with.
- 6 Need for Support:**

Respondents expressed a need for various forms of support, including financial assistance, better wages, and support with managing workload and caseloads.

“Support with the cost of fuel for travelling as the allowance currently issued by the government does not meet the rise in fuel costs.”

“Support with council tax as a social worker - I am really struggling to pay this and receiving bailiff letters.”
- 7 Suggestions for Professional Organisations:**

Many respondents suggested that organisations such as BASW should advocate for better wages, lobby the government for recognition of financial pressures, and provide support with workload management.

“Ensure social workers know all the financial support they can get.”

“Carrying on working with unions to fight for pay rises.”

“Ensuring working conditions and pay are fair and help support social workers throughout the crisis.”

Conclusion

The survey findings underscore the significant impact of the cost-of-living crisis on social workers and students, affecting their financial stability, wellbeing, and ability to provide effective support and care. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive support measures and advocacy efforts from professional organisations and policymakers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended by respondents that as the Professional Association for Social Workers BASW England with the support of the Coventry and Warwickshire Branch should:

- Advocate for better wages and financial support for social workers and students.
- Lobby the government for recognition of the financial pressures faced by social workers and students.
- Provide support with workload management and caseloads.
- Establish networks and resources specifically tailored to support students in navigating the challenges posed by the cost-of-living crisis.

Next steps

Based on the above recommendations we should explore engagement with local politicians, council officers and local press to highlight the findings of the survey and to press for the changes social workers feel are needed at a local and national level to support them through the cost-of-living crisis.

To take action in relation to the findings of this survey get in touch with your local BASW branch. Please email: baswcovandwarks@gmail.com