Cost of living crisis – what’s the impact on disabled people?

Report by Inclusion Scotland

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Disabled people are already much more likely to be living in poverty in Scotland. Poverty means not having enough money to buy basic things.

The country is facing a cost of living crisis. This means people are having to pay more for things like food and petrol.

The cost of living crisis is very hard for disabled people because lots of disabled people already don’t have enough money.
Lots of disabled people could be in a very bad situation if prices keep going up. People might not have enough food or might not be able to put their heating on.

Inclusion Scotland did an online survey from 29 August 2022 until 26 September 2022.

The survey asked disabled people about what things they can’t buy anymore or are cutting down on because they are too expensive.

We also asked what disabled people are most worried about for the winter.

168 people answered the survey questions.
This report is a short summary of what people told us:

1. Disabled people are going without or cutting back on essentials.

2. Disabled people are going without or cutting back on things they use to help their disabilities and health conditions.

3. Disabled people are worried about the winter.

4. Disabled people need help with the cost of living crisis.
5. The cost of living crisis is bad for disabled people’s mental health.

Inclusion Scotland is doing work to tell people in power about how difficult the cost of living crisis is for disabled people.

Inclusion Scotland will use the things people told us in this survey to try to get more support for disabled people at this difficult time.

1. Disabled people are going without or cutting back on essentials

Over three quarters (77%) of people answering the survey said they were going without or cutting back on essentials.
The essential things people said they were going without or cutting back on were:

Heating – 83%

Food – 57%

Clothing – 51%

Travel (including petrol for a car) – 50%

Cleaning products for home – 33%
2. Disabled people are going without or cutting back on things they use to help their disabilities and health conditions

Almost two thirds (64%) of people answering the survey said they were going without or cutting down on things they use.
to help their disability or health condition including:

- **Heating to manage pain**

Someone said: “Not having heating on and not using electric blanket or hot water bottles, all of which I would normally use to manage pain.”

- **Food (including for special diets)**

Someone said: “I only eat once a day and cannot afford to buy some food products that I should be eating.”
• Electricity to charge equipment like electric wheelchairs

Someone said: “Wheelchair charging, feeding pump charging,”

• Items for personal hygiene, cleaning and washing

Someone said: “cutting down on showers”

• Therapy and exercise activities

Someone said: “Cutting down on exercise classes because it is too expensive”
• **Medication and other health services**

Someone said: “I'm also unable to buy some over the counter medications I rely on for health issues”

• **Social activities (sometimes this is because people can’t afford the cost of travel). This makes people feel alone and sad.**

Someone said: “I feel much less able to go out socially which helps with my isolation and anxiety. It's kind of encouraging me to stay at home constantly and setting my mental health issues back”
- Assistance/aids

Someone said: “assistive technology that helps with my memory and planning (I can’t afford a new laptop to run the software), braces for my joints, new mobility aids to replace my old ones.”
3. Disabled people are worried about the winter

People answering the survey said they are worried about these things during winter:

- **Dying**

  Someone said: “Easy question, freezing to death or becoming so unwell because of the cold and being unable to afford using medical equipment so I end up in hospital.”

- **Not having enough food and heating**

  Someone said: “Not being able to eat”
• Not being able to use equipment like machines to help them breathe

Someone said: “Keeping the house warm enough and having enough to cover the basic electricity costs for charging hoists/feeding pumps”

• Having bad health because of not having enough food and heating and other essential things

Someone said: “I'm terrified we won't be able to effectively heat our home this winter. I have a chronic illness that is severely affected by cold temperatures.”

• Not being able to pay bills, gas/electricity being cut off, getting into debt:
Someone said: “Not being able to pay bills and having people chasing us at home for money.”

- **Family members**

Someone said: “My elderly disabled mum being cold”

- **Losing homes**

Someone said: “Having to ask to go into a nursing home as I can't keep warm.”
• Not enough food to buy and power-cuts

Someone said: “Food shortages and extortionate pricing. Power cuts”

• Not being able to wash and dry clothes

Someone said: “How we can get our clothing and bedding dry once washed - will we have to resort to not washing clothes and bedding until Spring.”

4. Disabled people need help with managing the cost of living crisis

People answering the survey said that these things would help them to manage the cost of living crisis:
Freezing or reducing energy bills – 94%

Getting more money in disability benefits – 67%

Freezing or reducing other bills – 53%

Getting more money in other benefits – 46%

Freezing or reducing council tax – 30%

Free or reduced public transport – 19%
Some ideas people had were:

- Giving disabled people free equipment, aids and support;
- Giving free food parcels;
- Reducing rents;
- Reducing the price of petrol;
- Giving money to people who need to use machines for their disability.

5. The cost of living crisis is taking its toll on disabled people’s mental health

During the Covid-19 pandemic disabled people had a very hard time because our needs were not given enough attention.

Many disabled people are still dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Disabled people don’t have enough energy to deal with another crisis.
Disabled people are worried about the cost of living crisis and how they will cope during the winter. This worry is bad for their mental health and is making lots of people sad.

People said:

“I am so scared.”

“It’s just ruining my life”

“It is a worry, especially for people with a learning disability. How are we going to live when we don’t have money to spend on our bills at home?”
Contact us

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