

## OVERCOMING COST-OF-LIVING CHALLENGES AND UNLOCKING SOCIAL MOBILITY

### Communities 1<sup>st</sup> - What We Stand For Policy Statement (1)

#### Introduction

In the face of escalating cost-of-living challenges that threaten the fabric of our communities, Communities 1st, along with its Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) member organisations, stands united in our commitment to fostering resilient, inclusive communities. The escalating financial pressures faced by individuals and families across our communities not only undermine daily living standards but also pose significant barriers to social mobility. We advocate for a society where equity, resilience, and community well-being are not aspirations but realities.

#### The Price of Inequality: Navigating Economic and Social Barriers

Our communities grapple with a complex web of cost-of-living challenges that extend far beyond the immediate strain on household budgets. Feedback from our member organisations paints a vivid picture: from the struggle to secure stable funding that ensures continuity of essential services, to the operational hurdles in delivering support to the most vulnerable. The rise in utility costs, housing insecurity, and the normalisation of emergency aid like food banks signal a deeper societal crisis. These challenges are compounded by systemic barriers that hinder social mobility, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality. It is within this context that our commitment to action is ignited, driven by an urgent need for comprehensive solutions that address both the symptoms and root causes of the crisis.

#### Our Pledge

Our commitment is to address systemic issues that perpetuate reliance on emergency services like food banks. As Communities 1st and our member organisations, we pledge to:

- Strengthen our partnerships to better address urgent needs and work together for long-term improvements in our community, leading to meaningful systemic change.
- Promote collaboration and innovative solutions that address the multifaceted cost-of-living challenges with effective, community-driven approaches.
- Advocate for policy reforms and funding models to tackle the economic pressures facing our communities, striving for a future where social mobility is accessible to all.

#### Our Ask of Decision-Makers and Influencers

To effectively support our communities amid the cost-of-living crisis, we call upon our politicians, senior leaders, and officers within governments, local councils, the NHS, and other public sector bodies to:

1. Collaborate with VCFSE organisations to create integrated networks leveraging public resources and community-based initiatives, to holistically address community needs.
2. Streamline funding processes making it easier for VCFSE organisations to access and utilise resources for community support services.
3. Invest in community infrastructure that enables VCFSE service delivery, including community spaces, digital technology, and transport access.
4. Support and fund programmes aiding those hit hardest by cost-of-living rises, focusing on health, education, and welfare for vulnerable and just-managing groups.