

The People's Plan

**Plaid Cymru's ten-point plan for
tackling the Cost-of-Living crisis**

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From sky-rocketing energy bills, real terms cuts to wages, rising food and fuel prices and cruel cuts to welfare, the cost-of-living crisis is pushing thousands of households across Wales into further poverty.

With inflation at over 10%, the cost of living is increasing at its fastest rate in 40 years—all on the Tory government's watch.

Under the Prime Minister's shambolic and shameful premiership people are being forced to choose between heating and eating.

And all the while, the Labour Welsh Government is looking on and standing on the side-lines, unwilling to use the tools at their disposal to mitigate against the worst effects of the cost of Westminster crisis

Many public sector workers in Wales have suffered a real term cut in wages of 15 per cent in the last ten years. People are working more hours for less money, and they are saying that enough is enough.

On Your Side

Plaid Cymru is on your side. We are out there every day in communities across Wales, fighting on behalf of the people we represent, giving hope and leadership in these dark times.

Plaid Cymru is on the side of those fighting for fair pay, leading the charge to ensure no child goes hungry in school, standing up for renters and campaigning to cut energy bills, and for universal free school meals for children in our schools.

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Doing nothing is not an option.

The Westminster and Welsh Governments must act now to relieve the pressures that are forcing people into poverty.

The Westminster Government has the most levers and we list five priorities for the actions it should take. But the Welsh Government can also act, and we put forward a further five priorities that it could action immediately.

The Welsh Government's budget is insufficient and under further strain which is yet more evidence that Westminster will never serve the needs of Wales. But it still has levers it can pull. It can provide certainty for tenants facing rent increases or eviction and we set out our priorities for these. It also has tax varying powers that used progressively can yield extra revenue to finance targeted support. The Welsh Government should also produce an Emergency Budget for the current financial year to reallocate and reschedule some of its present plans to refocus priority on tackling the cost of living.

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What the UK Government should do

1. Boost Benefits

Provide an immediate uplift of £25 to Universal Credit and commit to uprating all benefits in line with inflation from April next year.

2. Slash Energy Prices

Cancel the October price hike, restore last winter's significantly lower price cap of £1,277 a year, and extend the price cap beyond the six-month limit for households and businesses.

3. Help the Off-Grid

Provide a voucher to purchase 1,000 litres of home heating oil for the 19% of households in Wales that are off the grid for natural gas. An equivalent amount should be paid for those who use LPG or other fuels.

4. Raise the National Living Wage

The Government's mandatory minimum wage for those over 23—the National Living Wage—should be raised to the level of the Real Living Wage. There should be a similar increase in the National Minimum Wage for those under 23.

5. Lower duty for car-dependent families

Expand the rural fuel duty relief scheme to communities that are poorly served by public transport, cutting spiralling fuel costs to families with no alternative to travel except by car.

What the Welsh Government should do

1. Freeze rents and ban evictions

As an emergency measure the Welsh Government should introduce a rent freeze in the private rental sector and a ban on evictions this winter as a first step to a system of rent control.

2. Subsidise public transport

Rail fares should be frozen for 2023, with more off-peak tickets sold at half-price, and bus fares should be capped at £2.

3. Provide fair pay in the public sector

The Welsh Government should provide front-line public-sector workers with pay-rises over the next two years that at least keep pace with inflation on current projections, using its income tax powers in a progressive way where necessary.

4. Extend free school meals in secondary schools

The Government should move to expand its universal school meals policy to all secondary school pupils, starting with all those children whose families receive Universal Credit.

5. Increase Educational Maintenance Allowance to £45

Raising the Educational Maintenance Allowance by £15, and uprating the eligibility thresholds in equal proportion, will return its value in real terms to its original level when first introduced almost two decades ago.

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Delivering the Plan—a Team Wales Approach

In tackling the cost-of-living crisis Government needs to take stock and learn from the way it dealt with the Covid pandemic. It should pool cross-government and cross-party collective intelligence to devise innovative thinking and collective action. Sadly we cannot rely on the UK Government to make the right decisions so the Welsh Government must use all its powers to shield the people of Wales from Westminster's failure to act.

The Welsh Government should immediately produce an Emergency Budget and an Emergency Cost of Living Plan to implement the measures in our People's Plan.

Plaid Cymru is ready to work with the Welsh Government to turn these ideas into practical action through the Co-operation Agreement process. We think this spirit of co-operation should be widened further in this time of crisis, pooling collective efforts as we did during the pandemic. The Welsh Government can facilitate this by:

1. Supporting local 'Gold Command' structures, bringing together all the key agencies including local government, focused on dealing specifically with the cost-of-living emergency.
2. Using data to identify those most at risk down to individual household level and shield the economically most vulnerable, offering tailored packages of financial relief, debt advice and access to food and warmth.
3. Creating a Technical Advisory Cell to generate and rapidly evaluate ideas on how to prevent hypothermia, hunger and homelessness.
4. Asking UK Government to convene a Four Nation Cost of Living Summit.
5. Inviting Opposition parties, citizens and stakeholders to propose ideas to Welsh Government with a commitment to incorporate constructive proposals in an Emergency Budget and Cost of Living Act.