

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gaunless Gateway Big Local Hosts Summit to Address Cost of Living Crisis in Bishop Auckland, County Durham

Bishop Auckland, County Durham — September 1, 2023 — Gaunless Gateway Big Local, a community-driven organisation, took a proactive approach to addressing the pressing issue of the cost of living crisis by hosting a summit in Bishop Auckland on September 1, 2023. The event was a resounding success, uniting the community in a concerted effort to address the challenges faced by residents in the area.

The event, aptly titled the "Cost of Living Summit," aimed to provide a platform for the local community to voice their experiences and concerns regarding the ever-increasing cost of living. Recognizing the need to understand the real stories and struggles faced by individuals and families, Gaunless Gateway Big Local launched a comprehensive listening campaign ahead of the summit.

Through this campaign, Gaunless Gateway Big Local, working with Tall Trees Mysteries had the privilege of hearing the heartfelt stories of those affected by the cost of living crisis. These stories were skillfully transformed into four relatable characters, each representing a unique perspective on the challenges faced by individuals and families in the community.

The summit brought these characters to life, as they gathered at a symbolic bus stop to share their personal experiences. Moments of both laughter and hardship were shared, serving as a poignant reminder that the cost of living crisis affects individuals from all walks of life. Gaunless Gateway Big Local was committed to ensuring that the true, often unseen, challenges faced by people in the community were brought to light.

One of the key takeaways from the summit was the recognition that the cost of living crisis not only affects those in receipt of benefits but also working individuals who have found themselves trapped in a system where the slightest misfortune can lead to financial instability and poverty. This revelation underscored the urgent need for collective action to address the systemic issues contributing to this crisis.

The summit attendees, including community members, local leaders, and concerned citizens, worked together to brainstorm practical solutions to mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis. Additionally, discussions revolved around potential policy changes and interventions that could provide much-needed relief to those affected.

As a result of the Cost of Living Summit, Gaunless Gateway Big Local is committed to pursuing initiatives aimed at tackling the cost of living crisis head-on. This includes

advocating for policy changes at the local and regional levels, as well as launching community-driven programs to provide immediate assistance to those in need.

The Bishop Auckland summit was the inaugural event in a series of gatherings supported by the Cost of Living Alliance, a collaborative initiative dedicated to addressing the cost of living crisis. The stories shared at local summits will be featured prominently during the National Citizens Assembly on Cost of Living and Climate, scheduled for February of next year.

Nick Gardham, Co-initiator and Co-convenor of the Cost of Living Alliance, expressed his thoughts on these local summits, saying, "These events are designed to cast a spotlight on the unheard stories of those profoundly affected by the current cost of living crisis. While our country may experience economic ups and downs, it is imperative that these downturns do not disproportionately impact those with the least means. These summits give people a platform to share their stories, which can then be amplified through the National Citizens Assembly, where their voices can influence the policies that shape our future and protect our communities against economic shocks."

The Bishop Auckland summit marks a significant step toward understanding and addressing the cost of living crisis, setting the stage for more local and national discussions to create meaningful change.