

Cost of Living Wellbeing Team

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The health equity ambition

Residents in Newham are disproportionately affected by cost of living pressures. Newham has the 3rd highest poverty rate in London. During the winter, people who live alone and have health conditions exacerbated by cold and damp are at particular risk of poor health if they are having to make choices between food and heating. Their health risks may be further compounded if they are spending a lot of time alone and feel isolated or disconnected.

The impact of the Our Newham Money Cost of living Wellbeing Team demonstrates that proactive support from the Council to targeted groups of people has led to identification of need and prevention of problems escalating. The team were also a powerful form of connection and contact.

The approach

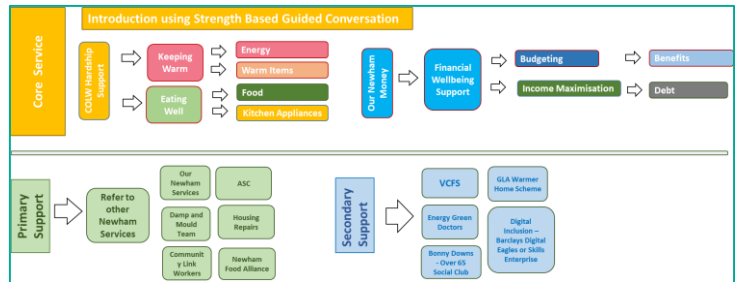
Using in-house data, the Council identified people aged over 75, living alone and on a low income using council tax data.

Using the Household Support Fund, a team of six cost of living wellbeing support officers was established. The team works within the Our Newham Money service to facilitate easy access to all welfare services. The team work 7 days a week 9am-8pm to ensure comprehensive support.

During the winter, the team contacts residents by letter, phone and through in-person visits. A strengths based needs conversation is completed and services are put in place, including immediate support (e.g. supermarket voucher or bacs payment to help with energy bills).

In addition, the team enables access to other key services including Our Newham Money; Housing; Damp & Mould Task Force; Adult Social Care; Community Link Workers; Bonnie Downs Community Centre; Age UK; Green Doctors & Praxis.

During the spring and summer months the team reached into the community and spent time at food banks and Newham's pilot Cost of Living One Stop Shop (now integrated into the Well Newham hubs)



Impact and outcomes

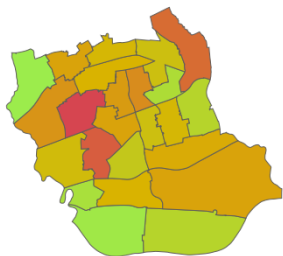
Over the last 6 months, the team has supported over 1300 residents - signposting and referring 544 residents to access other services and has provided £97,000 in direct Hardship Fund Support. The team has made over 4000 phone calls.

The first cohort of residents to be contacted were a targeted cohort of 2678 pensioners Age 75+ living alone on low income.

From May - August 23, the team focused on outreach, including 41 Foodbank visits and a number of outreach events to reach the most vulnerable in need of support.

By number of grants, more food grants have been given than anything else (fuel and then white goods and warm packs). By amount of funds, there have been more funds given for white goods than anything else.

Top 5 Wards



Ward	Awards
West Ham	30
Plaistow West & Canning Town East	27
Little Ilford	25
Green Street East	21
Stratford	20

Reflections and lessons

- We found the majority of the residents aged 75+ had digital difficulties and needed support to access digital services. They were in effect **digitally excluded**.
- A number of the residents were not aware of the service available to them due to language barriers.
- Residents didn't know what was available or how to access it. **70% of residents that the team worked with needed support and didn't know how to access it.**
- Doing home visits led to increased insight into the needs of residents and finding out a wider range of needs than was apparent over the phone. Residents opened up about challenges they face due to the pressures of the rising cost of living.
- The biggest concerns were: rising costs of food, rising energy bills, increased rental costs and the cost of home repairs.

This is a test of the idea – so what do we need to do learn fully from this as a pilot and further test its impact

