

Cost of living support – response to Q4

As set out in the Borough Plan 2030, the council is committed to making Lambeth a place that we can all call home, and addressing poverty and the cost of living crisis is a crucial part of that mission. The council has launched a Tackling Poverty action plan to reduce the impact and incidences of poverty in the borough. This action plan was developed with community partners and is owned by the whole borough. Full details of the action plan, as well as support for residents impacted by increases to the cost of living, can be found on the council's website: www.lambeth.gov.uk/costofliving

The Council provides a range of support for residents to reduce their costs, maximise their incomes, manage their debt and build their financial resilience. This support includes, but is not limited to:

- A team of Financial Link Workers providing support to residents in outreach settings and through referrals with key stakeholders (including health services, no recourse to funds services and housing teams). All residents can access support from the Financial Link Workers by emailing costofliving@lambeth.gov.uk. Residents may also access support by attending a drop-in surgery or calling 0207 926 5059.
- The council partners with local and national organisations specialising in energy and water advice. These services provide residents with support to reduce their bills, install energy saving measures, provide fuel vouchers where appropriate and help residents move to social tariffs. Residents can access this support by contacting the council's Financial Link Worker service.
- The council also worked last year with Thames Water to automatically enrol eligible residents onto social tariffs to improve their financial situation and will continue to explore opportunities to do this with other energy providers.
- Financial support for families in receipt of income-based Free School Meals during the school holidays at a rate of £10 per child, per week of the school holiday.
- Expansion of Free School Meals, including holiday support, to include all families living in the borough with children at a Lambeth primary school who are in receipt of Council Tax Support and/or Discretionary Housing Payments.
- Free period products available in public community settings in the borough and sent directly to residents most in need.
- An application-based Emergency Support Scheme for low-income residents struggling with an emergency or crisis, including financial crisis.

- Targeted support to residents recognised as being most in need including lone parents, disabled residents and residents with mental ill-health.
- Income maximisation campaigns to ensure residents are accessing support that they are entitled to including Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance and Healthy Start campaigns as well as adopting an auto-award approach to Free School Meals and some social tariffs.
- Commissioned advice agencies in the borough, providing impartial advice around welfare benefits, debt, housing, legal and immigration advice through a mix of one-off advice and ongoing casework. In addition, there is also an advice network coordinating all organisations offering advice to residents.
- The council's welfare rights service, 'Every Pound Counts', provides support to residents in need. Offer benefits advice for residents with a serious long term health condition and works to maximise residents' benefits as well as offering debt and money advice.
- The council also became the first local authority to partner with national debt charity, StepChange, providing a direct referral route for residents. This partnership has increased the number of residents supported with their debts at an early, preventative stage and reduce the need to access local advice services to ensure residents with multiple needs who require more in-depth, face-to-face advice are able to access this support quicker to prevent debts rising.

To ensure vulnerable households are able to access the support available, the council works closely with partners including voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) organisations, healthcare providers and education settings to promote the support available and provide direct referral routes to these services including schools, children's centres and mental health services into the council's Financial Link Worker service. As poverty disproportionately impacts some cohorts of residents (including lone parents, residents with disabilities and Black and Asian households), the council works particularly closely with organisations providing support to these residents. The council also uses data (including Housing and benefits data) to provide direct, targeted support to low-income, vulnerable households.