

Staffordshire County Council

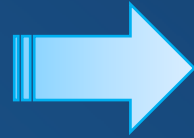
Cost of Living: Progress Update

October 2023

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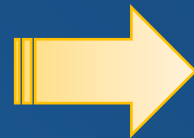
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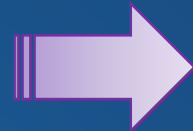
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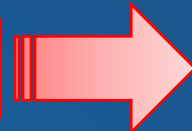
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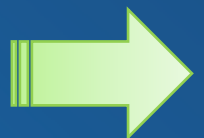
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Campaigns & Programmes

Here to Help Campaign

- **Here to Help Campaign was launched** in October 2022 which established.
- Provided a "**Here to Help Hub**" van supporting residents in Newcastle & The Moorlands providing a range of Cost of Living support.
- Provides an **online benefit checker** for residents to check if there is any additional money they are entitled to claim.
- Provides residents with information on their **nearest local free food bank** or wider food provider.
- Provides advice to residents on **securing free sanitary products**.
- Provides advice to residents to apply for **free school meals**.
- Provides signposting to the **Holiday Activities & Food provision** available from the Council.
- Provides advice to residents on **Eating Well on a budget** and signposts to Staffordshire Connects Service
- Provides advice and **signposting to residents to help with applying for Pension Credit** via the DWP
- Provides advice and signposting to **help residents who are carers and any additional income** they may be entitled to.
- Provided advice to residents on **government provided Cost of Living payments**.
- Provides advice to residents to help them **secure social tariffs** for their home broadband to enable cheaper access to the internet.
- Signposts to advice agencies to assist households **struggling with debts** to seek debt advice.
- Provides advice to Businesses to access **help with energy costs**.
- Signposts to **free NHS health checking services**
- Provides advice to help residents to **secure free seasonal flu jabs**.
- Provides advice on **helping residents to stay more active**.
- Provides advice to residents to help them **secure free gym passes**.
- Provides information for residents on **accessing local support via the Staffordshire Connects** online community directory.
- Continues to **promote cost of living activities and actions being undertaken by local community groups** and commissioned partners.
- Between October and June – Here to Help webpages have been **visited by over 21k people with 71k total page views**.





Here to Help Campaign

- Campaign has been promoted via social media with **57 messages** on our corporate social media channels which **resulted in 1600 clicks and reached over 83k people.**
- The campaign has received mentions in **171 media / press stories** highlighting support for residents. **81% of stories were positive.**
- Has been promoted to those who are **digitally excluded** with **over 18k leaflets being printed** and distributed via food banks, community hubs, libraries, police & fire, and rescue.
- **14,147 residents received a special My Staffordshire e-mail** focussing on the Cost of Living
- **4,704 internal employees also had a special cost of living e-mail** sent to them.
- A dedicated Cost of Living area has been set up on Staff Space which has been **visited by 1,662 colleagues.**
- A dedicated group has also been established on Yammer internal social media channel which to date has **170 members.**

Holiday Activities & Food Programme

- Has provided **free activities and food** for low income families during school holidays.
- As of March 2023 - HAF has **50 providers** across the County.
- As of March 2023 - HAF has provided **138,746 free places** for activities.



Staffordshire Connects Directory

- Provides signposting to a range of **Cost of Living support services** via the online directory including:
 - **Money** Advice Services
 - **Housing** Advice Services
 - **Food** Support
 - **Furniture Banks**
 - **Home Energy** Advice
 - **Legal** Advice
 - **Employment** Advice
 - **IT / Internet** Support

Funding & Resources

Household Support Fund – 2022/2023

The Fund has provided **204,813 food vouchers** since October 2022



Funding from the Household Support Fund has so far assisted **138,431 households** with cost of living support.



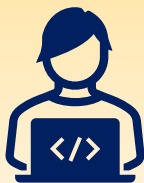
The Fund has provided **187,737 food vouchers** to support families during school holidays.



The Fund has provided **214,595 Utilities Vouchers**



The Fund has been able to support **8,977 people** through **direct enquiries** to the Household Support Fund e-mail.



Funding has enabled the supply of **1400 slow cookers** to vulnerable residents in Newcastle as well as advice on how best to use the items and budget.



Households getting Council Tax Support received a **£125 voucher** to help with the cost of food or fuel.



The fund has continued to work in partnership with **Beat the Cold & Staffordshire Community Foundation** to provide **Winter Warmth Project**



Household Support Fund – 2023/2024

Staffordshire County Council has been allocated an **additional £11 million** to for the Household Support Fund for 2023/24



The Fund will provide **£120 per eligible child** via supermarket e-vouchers throughout 2023/24.



The Fund Will **provide £200 per child leaving our care** and moving into adulthood via supermarket e-vouchers throughout 2023/24



Households may also benefit from an **additional £65 supermarket voucher** plus £20 per additional dependant via the Professionals referral scheme.



The Fund Will continue to provide funds in partnership with **Beat the Cold & Staffordshire Community Foundation** to provide **Winter Warmth Project**



Members Community Fund

In 2022 MCF applications had a value of **£1 million to Community organisations to support residents** in their local area with challenges such as the cost of living



Into 2023 MCF's remit is to provide assistance to Community groups providing support to residents including assisting with cost of living pressures.

Community Recovery Fund

Approved 51 applications and paid out **£186,000 to VCSE groups** supporting residents with the challenges of the rising cost of living and recovering from the Pandemic.

Warmer Homes Scheme

£5.6m scheme which has so far **installed over 450 heating solutions** saving residents and estimated £650k on their heating bills and made 91% of those homes more energy efficient.

Front Line Service Activities

Library Services

Have provided a **Pre-Loved Uniform Market (PLUM)** in some areas which has saved families an estimated **£60,000** since 2020.



Have provided **Community Help Points** for residents where Cost of Living Advice can be accessed.

Have provided **Warm Spaces** in Libraries where residents could go to save them having to heat their own house as well as **access support and advice**.

Have provided **free WIFI**.



Facilitate the **Council's DONATE IT** scheme and distribute IT equipment to eligible enabling them to access work, training, financial support and more.



Some Libraries have **IT Buddies** who can help people to get online, access cost of living support and apply for benefits / financial support.

Have provided Provide **free Baby rhyme times** so new parents don't need to pay.



Libraries provide **free access to COBRA** which provides business resources for residents who might be looking to start their own business.

Have provided Provide a range of **free e-magazines and e-newspapers** where SCC pay the subscription costs, so residents don't have to - saving them money.

Have provided **free public access PC's** in all Council and Community Managed Libraries

Children's Centres

Have **collected and distributed toys at Christmas** to help parents struggling to afford presents.



One centre has established a "**Community Table**" to offer free supplies and food to parents struggling to buy things as well as providing advice on further support.

Have engaged with the DWP and **provided a place for benefits drop** in sessions for families to attend and get advice to maximise their income / address benefits issues.

Into 2023 Children's Centres are working on providing **free toothbrush and oral hygiene packs** to families who are vulnerable or on lower incomes under the "**SMILE**" project.

Have been working with an organisation called Period Power to **provide free sanitary products** to women in their areas under the "period poverty" agenda.

Have been Link families in with **uniform and baby banks** which provide free pre-loved clothing for families who are struggling to afford to buy new.

Have Provided "**back to basics**" **sessions run by volunteers for families** where financial support and advice is provided and explained.

Family Hubs

Deliver & Administer the **Household Support Fund** for the County.

Have **donations of food** through the People's Pantry which distribute to families in need.

In 2023 there will be **Family Hub Coaches** who will be providing 1:1 and group workshops around budget management.

Provide **information, advice and signposting assistance** to families needing support with their finances.

Public Health Team

Have Provided **free weight management classes** via Everybody Health Staffordshire and Better Health Staffordshire to vulnerable individuals who aren't able to afford to pay for the gym.

In October 2022 Public Health & Everybody Health Staffordshire worked with **1200 residents under the "Stoptober" programme** to help them to quit smoking and promoted the money saving potentials of it.

Trading Standards Team

Trading Standards Teams have provided **advice to businesses and residents** to be **aware of financial scams** as the Cost of Living pressures increased.



Trading Standards have continually engaged with residents to make them **aware of postal & e-mail scams** over 2022 to stop criminals exploiting the cost of living crisis.

Trading Standards Joined the **#SleighNoToLoanSharks campaign** encouraging residents not to turn to loan sharks to pay for presents at Christmas and provided advice on alternative support available.



Community Learning Service

Provided **free adult learning courses** to enable residents to up-skill and enhance their career prospects and secure higher paid employment.



Secured £4.2m from "Multiply Scheme" to **deliver free numeracy courses** including budgeting advice to help manage the Cost of Living pressures.



Armed Forces Support

Communications promoted the **"Here to Help"** website and **support available to the Armed Forces Community** to ensure they were aware of information available to meet the Cost of Living pressures.

The County Council has provided funding support to community groups supporting Armed Forces Veterans via the **"Veterans Foundation Grant Scheme"** - £14m has been provided since 2016.

Support for Businesses

Skills & Employability Team

Have provided **free advice and support to businesses** to help manage the cost of living pressures by providing advice to **manage and reduce energy costs** in 2022.

The team have initiated the **"Start & Grow Scheme"** which is aimed at people looking to start or grow their own business to face the cost of living pressures.

Have established skills programmes for businesses to help up-skill their workforces - initiated the **"Restart"** and **"Skills Bootcamp"** schemes which workers could utilise to improve skills.

Provided advice via the **Staffordshire Means Business scheme** with elements such as a **Redundancy and Recruitment Triage service** to try to assist people into alternative jobs where there has been redundancy.

Staffordshire
Means
Business



Provided assistance to businesses under Staffordshire Means Business with regards **free workplace health checks** for workers.

Business Enterprise Support Team

Have provided support to the **Business Start-up Hubs in Libraries** by providing free advice via Coaches from Business Enterprise Support (BES) team.



SEND Transport

Support has been provided by the County Council to our SEND Transport providers via an additional **£1.89m in March 23 to offset the cost of living** pressures those companies are facing.



Staffordshire Business Environment Network (SBEN)

In 2022/23 SBEN helped **33 businesses to cut their energy costs** via use of "Low Carbon Business Evolution" Project grants.

In 2023/24 Businesses will be able to benefit from free support from SBEN to continue to **cut their carbon emissions and reduce energy costs** to assist with cost of living pressures.

Internal Collaborative Initiatives

Has provided advice to residents via the **Staffordshire Connects online directory** which has its own Cost of Living support pages.



The Council has established a **Cost of Living Partnership Group** with representatives from each local authority in the County and meets to share and discuss best practice to help residents meet Cost of Living issues.

The **Staffordshire Centre for Data Analytics (SCDA)** has established a Cost of Living Data Project to use data sets to enable better targeting of households at risk of being vulnerable to Cost of Living pressures ongoing.



Staffordshire
CENTRE FOR DATA ANALYTICS