

Together for Teignbridge

Supporting communities through the cost-of-living crisis



Communications and engagement plan

Background

More and more people are expected to come into hardship this year and next, due to the rising cost of living, due to several factors:

- The impact of Covid resulting in a surge of demand for goods and services
- A sharp rise in inflation of over 10% and due to rise further
- Increase of around 19% on the average house price in Teignbridge
- Lack of availability and affordability in rental and retail properties across the district
- Likely rise in mortgage rates because of the Bank of England responding to the inflation rise
- The rise of fuel prices, due to the situation in Ukraine reducing supply from Russia and the impact of Brexit
- Low wage increases set against a backdrop of a lower wage in Teignbridge compared with the national average.
- Lack of capacity in the community and voluntary sector and a need for people to self-serve.

These factors are likely to have an impact on people in a number of ways:

- Economic impact – more families and individuals falling below the poverty line; and businesses becoming unviable due to increase in costs
- Health impact– people will be affected by the cost / availability of good quality food, lack of heating due to increased fuel bills; and poor mental health due to money worries, social isolation due to lack of money, and poorer quality housing
- Social impact – likely increase in domestic violence and abuse due to shortage of money; risk of social disorder and lack of community cohesion.
- This is likely to be compounded with the onset of winter.
- There is still some stigma about asking for help or claiming support, particularly among those who have not done this before.

Campaign Objectives

This campaign sets out to achieve three specific goals:

- To reduce the stigma associated with asking for help, particularly among people who have never needed financial support before.
- To encourage people to seek help before it's too late.
- To signpost to the network of support available across the district; providing consistent messaging and working across services to ensure nobody is missed out.
- To deliver direct support to people who are most affected through council tax relief; hardship funds; housing support and advice and preventing homelessness.

- The secondary aim is to provide a network of support, through Teignbridge CVS, the Devon council's network (Team Devon) and CAB, to ensure pathways of support are clear and effective.

Insights

Teignbridge data

Finance and debt

The last round of the HSF (Household Support Fund) closed in July after we spent our allocation of £122,000.

- ✓ £107,90 spent on food
- ✓ £3,800 on energy
- ✓ £5,150 on essentials linked to energy
- ✓ £2,086 on wider essentials
- ✓ £276 on housing costs

We had 509 applications in total:

- ✓ 345 households with children
- ✓ 388 receiving Council Tax Reductions
- ✓ 275 with someone with a disability
- ✓ 176 repeat applications

Housing and Homelessness

1121 applications on Devon Home Choice currently:

- 499 1 bed need
- 299 2 bed need
- 215 3 bed need
- 108 4 bed + need

There were 28 allocations in August and 28 new applications.

64 new homelessness assessments in August (the average is 68)

3 Top presentation reasons:

- Loss of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy,
- Family and Friends no longer willing to accommodate
- Non-violent relationship breakdowns

28 Referrals were received notifying us of somebody rough sleeping in the Teignbridge Area in August. We have a commitment to accommodate and support all verified rough sleepers.

There were 54 new placements into temporary or emergency accommodation in August. This is higher than the average of 30, and demonstrative of a recent rise in acute homelessness.

Fuel poverty

12.1% of households are living in fuel poverty. It is likely that more households will become fuel poor due to rising fuel costs.

We work with partners to improve the energy efficiency of homes to reduce fuel poverty.

Health and wellbeing

Domestic violence

96% of survivors responding to a Women's Aid poll have seen a negative impact on the amount of money available to them because of cost-of-living increases.

Two thirds (66%) of survivors say abusers are now using the cost-of-living increase and concerns about financial hardship as a tool for coercive control, including to justify further restricting their access to money.

Almost three quarters (73%) of women living with and having financial links with the abuser said that the crisis had either prevented them from leaving or made it harder for them to leave.

Mental health

Concerns about the impact on people's mental health, we often speak to people who have suicide ideation that being in financial crisis has been the thing that tipped them at that time to feeling like they want to end their life

We need to understand the equality impact of the cost-of-living crisis – which protective characteristics are being disproportionately affected upon.

The creative concepts will be tested by Teignbridge CVS with voluntary and community groups through informal discussions and workshops.

Audience

The combination of factors affecting people nationally will mean that many people will be facing hardship for the first time. They may not know what support is available to them or even how to find out about it.

Key themes

- Housing and homelessness
- Energy and fuel poverty
- Food
- Health and wellbeing
- Money and Debt

These themes are likely to affect people from all walks of life, but particularly:

- Younger couples and singles and young parents starting out on lower wages and unable to afford rent or mortgage.
- Unpaid carers who are looking after a friend or family member who wouldn't be able to cope without their help
- People who have large mortgages or rents compared to their salaries
- Financially stretched older people, people with disabilities and pensioners
- Small businesses, particularly those who are highly dependent on energy for cooking, heating or powering machinery

Campaign

Together for Teignbridge – supporting communities through the cost-of-living crisis - covers the range of key themes and uses the graphic of hands creating in a heart to illustrate the Together for

Teignbridge message. This will link to the Teignbridge Together website which is a collection of partners involved in delivering on the ground support.

There will also be sub graphics that cover each of the themes. This could be tips and advice on reducing food bills or making your home more energy efficient; help on how to get support when you're in arrears on your mortgage; or signposting to services that can help with general financial worries.

The hands graphic will illustrate 'helping hands', and 'lending a hand' so that when someone is back on their feet, they can work at a local food bank or volunteer for CAB to help someone else who is struggling. This is a way to destigmatise asking for help and giving people a way to feel ok with asking for support they don't feel they are 'entitled to'.

This will also work to bolster volunteers into the key community and voluntary sector organisations that are struggling to deliver with limited capacity.

The hands join together to illustrate all the organisations that can help people in difficult circumstances.

Campaign Badges and Formats



Theme Colours and Icons



Strategy

The campaign will deliver organic and paid for social media promotion, targeting key demographics including areas where there are high levels of social housing and HMOs, young families; and people on income support.

Older people and those with little access to digital will also be targeted through a newspaper, produced by Devon County Council on behalf of Team Devon; and a [‘Worrying about money’ web tool](#) and leaflet distribution via Teignbridge CVS.

Both will provide information advice and guidance to support the above topics, illustrated through case studies, money saving hints and tips and videos from some of the key agencies supporting people through the crisis.

The social media and leaflets will also signpost people, through the websites and a ‘decision tree’ to information and support that is relevant to their particular circumstances.

Stages:

Benchmark

Establish key benchmarking data by testing with representative focus group:

- What help is needed? Financial; practical (eg applying for grants, benefits); physical; emotional
- The barriers to accessing support: physical; emotional; digital; time; lack of information, stigma
- What will help overcome these barriers? Better signposting to information; access to digital; someone to talk to in person;

Test

Test assets with focus group and local CVS – how do they make you feel? What do they tell you?

Develop

Develop social media, digital and print assets, to include storytelling assets such as videos and testimonials, campaign branding and key messages:

- Together for Teignbridge helping each other out through a crisis
- Get help early if you’re struggling
- One place to get help to pay the bills, help with your food and keep the house and family going
- Help each other out – you can help others out too – volunteer, drop in on a neighbour, support a local charity if you can afford to.

Implement

A cost of living page which signposts to help and support available in their area. Ask orgs to check our cost of living website to make sure their info is on there.

Worrying about Money leaflet – being distributed to organisations across Teignbridge. This will be supplemented by a Devon-wide cost of living newspaper which will be delivered to all households, co-ordinated by Devon County Council.

Agreement over allocation of the next round of household support fund and co-ordinated messages on how to apply and timings of allocation.

A multi-channel media campaign across the Team Devon partners and the community and voluntary sector using a combination of organic social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram); digital content and e-newsletters.

YouTube videos featuring officers and CVS volunteers reciting case studies from people who haven't had to ask for support before – e.g., woman who was at risk of having her house repossessed who was put in touch with a solicitor who took up her case.

Work with local media partners to uplift the campaign and encourage regular features with tips for saving on bills; cooking low-cost healthy meals and reducing energy use in the home.

Example posts (for testing) keeping with the hand theme of the graphics

Together for Teignbridge

Organisations and communities are working together across the district to give people a helping hand through the cost of living crisis. (link to website)

Money and Debt

Worried about money? Advice and support is on hand if you're struggling to make ends meet.(link to website)

Housing

Worried about keeping a roof over your heads? Help is at hand – see our website for housing advice and support.

Food

Here are some handy ways to eat well on a budget. You can find out more about local food support on our website.

Energy and fuel poverty

Not sure how you'll keep your hands warm this winter? Advice and support on how to keep your energy costs down and get extra help with paying bills is on our website.

Health and wellbeing

If the cost of living crisis is feeling too much, make sure you reach out for support. Help and advice is available from a number of agencies, from the CAB to Devon Partnership Trust, who offer a stress counselling service. See our website for more details.

Volunteering

Want to lend a hand? Lots of local charities and organisations are looking for help to support people through the cost of living crisis. Find out how you can help. (link to website)

Evaluation

Campaign Metrics:

Outputs

Reach 13,000 residents through e-newsletters

Reach 16k social media followers through social media posts

Reach 15.5k residents across Teignbridge with targeted Next-Door ads

Reach xxx residents through assisted collection flyer posts

Outtakes

Increase awareness of services and support available for target audiences (100% increase in link clicks to teignbridge.gov.uk/costofliving)

Increase awareness of the importance of seeking help early to minimise hardship – increase in hits to application pages online; and reduction in calls to customer support

Encourage applications for support through Housing Support Fund and CTR fund

Outcomes

10% reduction in emergency housing requests / repossession orders

Phase 3 of Household Support Fund delivered in 4 weeks

5% increase in volunteers to CVS, CAB and food banks