

Tackling poverty: Practical steps to increase incomes and support families this winter

Wednesday 25 September 2024

Housekeeping

- Audio check
- Please ask questions throughout
- Short survey
- Aim to finish by 11.45
- Slides and recording will automatically follow
- Connect with us on X [@policy_practice](#) and LinkedIn

We empower people

A woman with a large afro hairstyle is looking at a laptop screen. Another woman is standing next to her, also looking at the screen. The background is a solid green color with a faint circular graphic element.

Policy

Missing out: £23 billion of support is set to go unclaimed in 2024

[Read our analysis](#)

Practice

Our clients are closing the unclaimed support gap with data

[View our Better Off Platform](#)

Agenda

- **Tackling poverty: the national context with Rachael Walker**
Strategies for increasing incomes and supporting families this winter
- **London Borough of Redbridge case study with Jane Smith and Trevor Isles**
How targeted Discretionary Housing Payments reduced temporary accommodation
- **Overview of the LIFT platform with Adam Kenny**
How LIFT can be used to identify vulnerable people and target support
- **Discussion**
Questions and answers with our panel

Today's speakers



Sophie Kaye
Senior Marketing Executive
Policy in Practice



Rachael Walker
Director of Policy
Policy in Practice



**Jane Smith and
Trevor Isles**
London Borough of
Redbridge



Adam Kenny
Head of Business
Development
Policy in Practice

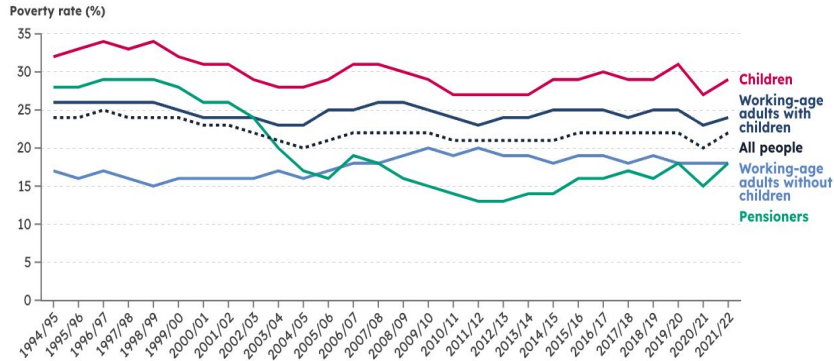
The national context

Rachael Walker



One in three children live in poverty in the UK

Children have consistently had the highest poverty rates, while **pensioners** along with **working-age adults without children** now have the lowest



(JRF, 2023)

The role of the taskforce is to oversee the development and publication of an ambitious cross-government child poverty strategy to reduce and alleviate child poverty. The aim is to improve children's lives and life chances now and address the root causes of child poverty in the long term. GOV.UK, Sept 2024

440,000 families and at least **1.3 million** children are currently subject to the two child limit. DWP/HMRC April 2024

470,000 children are missing out on **£245 million** in Free School Meals

Schools are missing out on **£600 million** in pupil premium funding

Local authorities can use data to identify pupils missing out and auto-enrol them on to Free School Meals

£2.1 billion in Pension Credit goes unclaimed

Winter Fuel Payment

 Department for Work & Pensions



880,000 pensioners are not claiming their Pension Credit
Policy in Practice, April 2024

130,000 pensioners are missing out on Pension Credit by less than £10 a week. Policy in Practice, Sept 2024

The Winter Fuel Payment was paid to **11.6 million** recipients in winter 2023/24. **3.3 million** were over the age of 80

1.4 million people claim Pension Credit today. **880,000** are missing out on **£2.1 billion** in Pension Credit and now around **£200 million** in Winter Fuel Payments

So far, we have put more than **£250 million** in ongoing Pension Credit into pensioner's pockets

London Borough of Redbridge

Jane Smith and Trevor Isles



Tackling poverty by addressing rent arrears and financial instability

Trevor Isles, Rent Former Arrears and Credits Manager

Jane Smith, Benefits Manager - Interventions and Support



Ambitious for Redbridge

Key challenges

The increasing number of families in temporary accommodation

Accommodation Type	No. Households
B&B	499
Long Lease	227
Council Licence	2
Council Non Secure	70
Hostel	157
Leased	1124
Nightly Let	795
TA Modular	87
Grand Total	2961

Total HH in TA:	2961
Single, no children	518
Couple, no children	117
Family households (2+ members)	2326



Key challenges

- Threefold increase in the level of rent arrears post Covid-19
- Twofold increase in the number of Council residents in arrears
- Use of commercial hotels
- Increase in the number of resident moving onto Universal Credit
- Increase in the number of households struggling financially due to the cost-of-living crisis



Proactive use of LIFT: step 1

Identifying households in arrears

- Over 1,200 households identified for targeted support
- Focus on those at risk of homelessness

Combining datasets for a clearer picture

- Utilised LIFT's expert policy engine
- Analysed residents' debts, tenure, and benefits eligibility

Filtering households in rent arrears

- Used LIFT to filter households most at risk
- Identified 1,289 households in council tenancies or temporary accommodation



Proactive use of LIFT: step 2

Letter mail out to residents

- Utilised LIFT data to identify residents in need
- Invited residents to surgeries for help with rent arrears

Event details

- Three events hosted in January 2024
- Each event lasted three hours
- Locations chosen for high footfall and good transport links

Staff involvement

- Internal staff from the Benefits Service and Rent Collection teams
- Ensured consistency with service provision

Administrative improvements

- Streamlined DHP application process
- Pre-populated forms for Council tenants
- Processing time for DHP applications halved



Proactive use of LIFT: step 3

- **Importance of DHP for Rent Payment**
 - DHP can be life-changing for those struggling with rent
 - Digitally excluded households face challenges in applying
 - Partial DHP awards as an incentive for further engagement
- **Use of Better Off Calculator**
 - Checks if households are claiming all eligible benefits
 - Compares current benefits to potential benefits
 - Income Maximisation
- **Debt Repayment Plans and Budgeting**
 - Referrals to Money Advice Network
 - Setting up affordable repayment plans



Tracking outcomes

Highlight 1

- Discretionary Housing Payments: average award of £2,500 per household
- 77 households who attended the events received Discretionary Housing Payments totalling over £197,000

Highlight 2

- While applying for a DHP, over £70,100 in support was identified using the Better Off Calculator for 44 households



Tracking outcomes

Highlight 3

- Over £572,900 collected in arrears, with no new arrears six months later. The events helped residents improve their finances through face-to-face interaction with Council Officers
- Across the cohort, rent arrears reduced by an average of £252 per household, bringing the total amount of rent arrears collected for the council to £536,800
- Households were also able to pay back £36,100 in Housing Benefit Overpayments
- Six months later, arrears have not increased for the residents in the cohort



Tracking outcomes

Highlight 4

- Since participating in the event, the number of households with negative budgets decreased from 21% to 18%
- Six months after the events, households are continuing to see an additional £195 in take-home income each month.

Highlight 5

- 17 households have moved out TA, saving the council over £300,000 in TA costs



Case studies

- **Mr. J's arrears were £1,265.85.** Called the Rent Service when he received the letter inviting him to apply for DHP. Due to his limited English, he needed help completing the online application. He was advised to attend the local drop-in event. He found the event very helpful with **DHP clearing his arrears in full**, and Housing Benefit is now covering his full weekly rent
- **Ms. M's arrears were £2,564.03.** She attended a local drop-in event. She lives with physical and mental health challenges. Since being awarded DHP to clear her arrears, she has been able to manage her health better as she is no longer living with the financial stress and **now has a credit on her rent account**
- **Ms. S arrears were £1,487.91** and she was in receipt of full Housing Benefit as well as keeping to a repayment plan to reduce her legacy arrears by £80 pm via direct debit. She attended a drop-in event after receiving an invitation. As a result of her visit, **DHP was used to clear her arrears in full** and helped her to manage her personal finances better. This is significant as she lives with her non-verbal disabled son





Low Income Family Tracker platform

used by 1 in 5 UK local authorities

Adam Kenny

policyinpractice.co.uk



Redbridge case study

Redbridge helped households maximise their income by awarding over £2.3 million in unclaimed benefits and support

£1.3 million in Discretionary Housing Payments
£750,000 in Pension Credit take up
£181,000 in Hardship Payments
£82,000 in Household Support Fund payments

The team was also enabled to collect £2.6 million in overpaid Housing Benefit in one year

31,836 household(s)	21,540 children	£9,702,349 CT/Rent arrears	£83,951 DHP award in FY	199 household(s)	107 children	£122,849 CT/Rent arrears	£0 DHP award in FY
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RESILIENCE

Financial resilience now

Coping

Struggling

At risk

In crisis

Cancel Apply

Financial resilience 2023

Coping

Struggling

At risk

In crisis

Cancel Apply

POVERTY

In relative poverty

Yes

No

In food poverty

Yes

No

Show definitions

DEBT AND SAVINGS

CT arrears

Yes

No

Rent arrears

Yes

No

Rent or CT arrears

Yes

No

Housing benefit overpaid

Yes

No

Months in CT arrears

0 46

Months in rent arrears

0 158,294

Debt

£0 £13,281

Savings

£0 £333,241

Redbridge and other councils can identify:

- households financially at risk or in crisis now and in the future
- those that hit different metrics of poverty
- those in arrears for poverty

to give homelessness prevention support

Targeting families and households

DEMOGRAPHICS	EMPLOYMENT	INTERVENTIONS
Tenure <input type="text" value="Private tenant"/>	Barriers to work <input type="text" value="(All)"/>	DHP <input type="text" value="(All)"/> EHP <input type="text" value="No"/> CTS <input type="text" value="(All)"/>
Household Type <input type="text" value="Lone parent"/>	Hours worked <input type="text" value="(All)"/>	HSP <input type="text" value="No"/> Energy rebate <input type="text" value="No"/>
Age group <input type="text" value="Workin..."/> Age bracket <input type="text" value="(All)"/>	Earning below £9.97/hour <input type="text" value="(All)"/> £11.05/hour <input type="text" value="(All)"/>	GEOGRAPHY
Disability <input type="text" value="(All)"/> Carer household <input type="text" value="(All)"/>	CHILDREN & NON-DEPS	Postcode <input type="text"/>
Economic status <input type="text" value="Not in work"/>	Number of children 0 <input type="range" value="0"/> 9	Local authority <input type="text" value="Croydon"/> Ward <input type="text" value="(All)"/>
Self employed household <input type="text" value="(All)"/>	Number of non-dependants 0 <input type="range" value="0"/> 6	Filter HB Ref# <input type="text"/>
Council tax band <input type="text" value="(Multiple values)"/>	With a child between <input type="text"/> and <input type="text"/>	

- You can identify and target families and households with the highest rents to understand their household situation and the best way to support them
- You can filter on other demographics too

CENTRAL GOV - TAKE UP	Tax credits / UC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	SDP (HB)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Free school meals (FSM)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	NHS prescriptions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
	IS/JSA/ESA or UC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	SDP (DWP)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Free food vouchers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Eligible free childcare	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
LOCAL GOV	Pension credit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Pension credit - TV license	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Warm Homes Discount	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Water sure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
		<input type="checkbox"/> No		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> No
	DHP target group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes			Free TV license	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Disabled bus pass	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
			OTHER BENEFITS - TAKE UP					

✓ Affordability assessment

Name / account number: Sandy Lane

Postcode: NE1 4BR

Date of application: 14/03/2024

Reject application

Tenant does not meet requirements and affordability criteria for this address

Current total income (per month): £1,230.00

Total income potentially eligible for (per month): £1,690.00

Total outgoings (per month): £1,125.50

Disposable income Low

Vulnerability Low

Likely to need support to claim benefits? Yes

Rent as a percentage of total income 32%

Rent covered by housing benefit or housing element of UC
Percentage of rent due 80%

Income and affordability assessments

- Understanding whether a tenancy is affordable is crucial to tenancy sustainment
- Increasing a potential tenant's income and reducing their expenditure makes their tenancy more affordable

Discussion

Next steps



Take our very short survey when the webinar ends to:

- Give us feedback and ask further questions of our speakers
- Book a chat with the team

Register for our next webinars:

- London Challenge Poverty Week: Introducing RAPID: Measuring today's poverty today on Wednesday 16 October
- Removing roadblocks: How to simplify application processes for benefits and support on Wednesday 23 October

Thank you

- Jane Smith, London Borough of Redbridge
- Trevor Isles, London Borough of Redbridge
- Rachael Walker, Policy in Practice
- Adam Kenny, Policy in Practice