

## How East Sussex councils joined forces to unlock over £1 million in unclaimed benefits

### LIFT case study

#### At a glance

1 in 5 children in a low income household

£162 million of support unclaimed each year

1 county council bought LIFT for 4 districts

1 partnership model

3 campaigns in 6 months

Over £1 million secured for 320 residents

### The challenge: Bringing together data for a regional view of need

East Sussex is home to some of the most deprived areas in England, with one in five children growing up in a low income household. Yet, across the county, over £162 million in benefits go unclaimed each year, often due to stigma or a lack of awareness about available support for essentials like bills, rent and food.

While councils were eager to help, a major challenge stood in the way: data was fragmented. Benefit eligibility data sat across different district and county council systems, making it difficult to see the full picture of need or run joint campaigns effectively.

### The first step: Eastbourne's success with LIFT

Eastbourne Borough Council took action in 2023 by adopting Policy in Practice's LIFT platform. Their goal was to tackle pensioner poverty and child hunger.

Using LIFT's data driven insights, Eastbourne launched two successful campaigns that helped:

- 42 pensioners claim £151,346 in Pension Credit and Cost of Living Payments
- 36 families claim £15,400 in Healthy Start support

These results were promising, but more needed to be done across East Sussex. Other district councils were also seeing rising financial pressure on services due to the cost of living crisis.

Meanwhile, at the county level, the lack of a clear, joined up view of poverty trends prevented East Sussex County Council from identifying region wide solutions.

Recognising LIFT's potential, an officer from Eastbourne championed the approach to East Sussex County Council. If used across the region, LIFT could provide a data led way to identify at risk residents, increase benefit take up, and support residents at scale.

## The solution: A county wide approach to maximising support

LIFT, from Policy in Practice, is an intelligent analytics platform for local authorities to help you link your data, maximise your residents' income and reduce your costs.

East Sussex County Council procured LIFT for four district councils, enabling:

- A **joint, data led strategy** to tackle poverty and recover arrears
- A **partnership model between the county and districts**, with regular planning and shared insights
- **Targeted monthly campaigns** to help people get unclaimed benefits

## How it worked

### 1. Building a collaborative partnership with help from policy experts

To ensure success, Policy in Practice's client services team helped set clear roles and responsibilities. Since client services managers have used LIFT within local authorities themselves, they were best placed to:

Facilitate monthly planning sessions where:

- Districts and boroughs could share insights and align messaging
- Provided best practice guidance and hands on support
- Helped councils maximise LIFT's insights to drive action

### 2. Launching regional campaigns to maximise residents' income

With access to combined datasets and LIFT's expert policy engine, councils could better identify residents missing out on support.

From August 2024, the councils launched 3 major coordinated campaigns:

1. **Healthy Start:** Identifying 1,000 families eligible for £280 per year in food and vitamin support
2. **Pension Credit:** Supporting 119 pensioners to claim £384,700, plus £23,800 in winter fuel payments following the Chancellor's announcement
3. **Attendance Allowance:** Identifying 3600 pensioners eligible for an average of £5,300 per year to help with essential costs

Each campaign was designed to proactively help residents maximise income in response to changing policies and rising living costs.

### 3. Strengthening communication to maximise reach

To ensure residents heard about the support available, the county council's communications team played a key role.

A **multi channel approach** was used, including:

- **Targeted social media ads:** Facebook, Nextdoor)
- **Traditional outreach:** food banks, family hubs, libraries
- **Media partnerships:** BBC South East Today, Sussex Living

By aligning messaging across all councils, the campaigns had greater reach and impact.

### The impact: Over £1 million in support accessed for 320 residents

Between August 2024 and January 2025, three main campaigns helped 320 households claim over £990,800 in financial support.

Breakdown of campaign results:

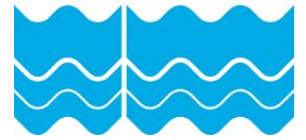
1. **Healthy Start:** £30,100 claimed by 70 families
2. **Pension Credit:** £742,150 claimed by 200 pensioners
3. **Attendance Allowance:** £218,600 awarded to 50 pensioners
4. **Winter Fuel Payment:** £40,200 awarded to 50 pensioners

The early results demonstrate the power of data led, collaborative action in improving financial resilience for residents across East Sussex.



### How councils in East Sussex County unlocked over £1 million in unclaimed benefits for 320 households





“The early results demonstrate the power of data led, collaborative action in improving financial resilience for residents across East Sussex.

“The LIFT platform enables East Sussex County Council and the District and Borough Councils to gain insight into the impact of cost of living pressures and design local campaigns to ensure [residents] are receiving the financial support they are entitled to.

“Between August 2024 and January 2025, LIFT data driven joint campaigns have been developed to target a wider range of support to vulnerable residents. The support provided by Policy in Practice has been central to the successful coordination and motivation of all partners, [enabling us] to make the best use of data available to tailor local communication campaign activity.

“Undertaking a county wide collaborative approach to data analysis has brought additional strategic benefits as teams from across organisations learn together, share best practice and align interventions with local needs. Together we have adopted a proactive approach to tackling the challenges of the cost of living through targeted prevention.”

*Paul Bolton, East Sussex County Council*

## Key takeaways for other local authorities

The success of this partnership in East Sussex shows how data driven collaboration can:

- **Increase benefit take up** and financial resilience
- **Improve debt recovery** while supporting vulnerable residents
- **Enhance efficiency** through joint working between district and county councils

By breaking down data silos and working together, councils can ensure that more residents receive the support they're entitled to, ultimately improving wellbeing and financial security across communities.