



PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

Quantifying the Cost of Living Response

SLT Lead:

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Policy context:

The report deals with information requested by the Sub-Committee.

SUMMARY

The cost of living crisis is still affecting residents of Havering. To help as many people as possible we joined up with our colleagues in the NHS (National Health Service) and VCS (Voluntary, Charitable Sector) groups to produce a joint strategy. This strategy was to get help and support to people before they needed it and to try and make it easy to find and get help. We did this primarily through our marketing strategy.

We can show that a joined up, coordinated, marketing strategy does result in more help and support for residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no formal recommendations merely, next steps and continuation of what works.

The next steps are:

- Build up our 'marketing' infrastructure to allow quicker analysis and learning
- Understand why the use of Mosaic data and targeted communications did not generate as many interactions as expected
- Start to build our response for this winter, starting in July
- Produce a better, more coordinated response, across more organisations, with better branding of each organisation to leverage 'brand' recognition

REPORT DETAIL

The full report is contained within our dynamic dashboard: [Marketing Strategy Outcomes dashboard](#). I encourage you to draw your own conclusions. You need a onesource login to access i.e., it can only be shared with internal people or people connected to the project. You may need to request access the first time you logon. Work is ongoing to open this up to the wider public.

The overall arching objectives of the marketing strategy were:

- One source of help
- Link to existing things, do not duplicate work
- Bring help to those that need it, when they need it
- Driven by data
- Adapt through trial and error
- Get everyone to do two things:
 - Increase income
 - Reduce energy usage

What this meant in practice is that we used different methods to drive people to a single source of information. The information was contained on one website. The main area of work was to get people to that one source of information. In terms of getting people to go to our website, we found that:

- Drip marketing campaign worked best
- Targeting help worked well to defined groups of people
- At the heart, Havering Housing's email newsletter, got more interaction than Living.
- Including words connected to cost of living crisis in email newsletters led to more engagement
- Texting gives an immediate, large interaction but maybe not a high quality of engagement
- Roadshows did not give the type of engagement we wanted, turnout was very low
- Warm Spaces, which were set up under the principles of Placed Based Services, reached groups of people we may have missed just through our electronic approach

We learned that:

- People click on links contained with emails and texts
- Central Governments approach of not sending links in texts and asking people to search for a certain phrase online does not generate as many as a link, by a factor of 10.
- People finding their own way to website and searching for help generates a higher quality interaction.
- However, over the course of the strategy period the quality of interactions increased. It feels we were reaching the right groups of people overtime.

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- Texts generates a lot of engagement, but the quality of that engagement is low so should be used strategically.

The outcomes were:

- We increased the numbers of visits to our website by 103 visits a day.
- Since the start of the marketing strategy, we increased the number of applications for Housing Benefit and Council Tax support by 4 applications a week.
- Since the start of the marketing strategy, we increased the number of applications to the discretionary/Household Support Fund by 23 a day.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: None at this stage as the report is just for noting

Legal implications and risks: None at this stage as the report is just for noting

Human Resources implications and risks: None at this stage as the report is just for noting

Equalities implications and risks: None at this stage as the report is just for noting

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None at this stage as the report is just for noting

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Cost of Living Strategy is here: [Cost of Living Strategy - Public Summary.pdf](#)

The Marketing Strategy is here: [Cost of Living Crisis - comms plan](#)

The Marketing Dashboard if here: [Marketing Dashboard](#)

I have developed an experimental 'chatbot' or virtual agent to keep you up to date with the strategy in real time. You can ask questions and it will answer them, as best it can. I am still working on developing it to become 'smarter'. We will be experimenting on using a virtual agent to keep the many different partners up to date as we progress this project and any future project.

[Demo website - Cost of Living | Power Virtual Agents \(microsoft.com\)](#)

All the above links may need you to request access for the first time.