

## **Appendix 1 - Middlesbrough Council cost of living communication and engagement plan**

**November 2022**

### Summary

The Council and its partners offer a wide range of support and advice for people contending with the increasing cost of living. An engagement plan is needed to ensure those most in need know what help they can access.

### Challenge

In the recent past the Council has struggled to make direct payments to those entitled to support. Using the example of the Council Tax Energy Rebate, thousands of people didn't apply to have the payment transferred to their bank account. In these instances the payments, as per government guidance, were instead applied to council tax accounts.

Some of the most deprived wards in the town had the lowest uptakes. This highlights the challenges of engaging with certain communities.

### Approach

This engagement plan has two separate aims:

1. The Council will directly target the wards and communities that are most exposed to the economic situation
2. The Council will also target mass audiences, seeking maximum exposure with the intention of creating as much awareness as possible.

### Audiences

- All Middlesbrough residents
- Residents living in target wards and communities
- Middlesbrough Council staff (for their own use and for signposting purposes)
- Members
- Businesses

### Channels

#### **Website**

The cost of living section on Middlesbrough.gov.uk will be the main source of information. Promotional materials will signpost people there and to dedicated phone lines within the Council's resident and business support service.

Frontline staff will also be advised to use the website information as a resource when interacting with members of the public.

The website will have information on the main themes of **food, warmth, money, health and transport**. It will also be categorised by **household composites** so people can access the information relevant to their circumstances.

## **Other channels**

- Traditional media
- Social media featuring short series of videos/fact sheets/links to website content
- Dedicated e-newsletter/s to c.35,000 email addresses
- Print material to target wards and for staff
- Poster and other outdoor sites in targeted locations
- Internal communications to Council staff and potentially to staff in large partner organisations via a communications toolkit.

## Key messages

- Help is out there and our biggest fear is people aren't coming forward
- We've struggled to give people money they were entitled to
- We need people to help us spread the message
- Visit this website/phone this number to find out how we can help you.

## Evaluation

Visits to the website will be compared to numbers before the reorganisation/increased promotion.

Levels of referrals/applications for help can also be assessed.