



Policy in Practice

Practical steps you can take to  
tackle place-based inequality

Deven Ghelani

Wednesday 5 July

# £19 billion of income related benefits and social tariffs goes unclaimed every year

 Policy in Practice

## Missing out: £19 billion of support goes unclaimed each year

Policy in Practice finds that the total amount of unclaimed income-related benefits and social tariffs is now £18.7 billion a year

Alex Clegg, Deven Ghelani, Zoe Charlesworth, Tylor-Maria Johnson



policyinpractice.co.uk April 2023

**Beat the pollen!**  
Experts' top tips to avoid symptoms of hay fever

**Duwayne Brooks on his friend Stephen Lawrence**

Monday 1 May 2023 13:20 From £1.57 for subscribers

# The Guardian

Newspaper of the year

## Households missing out on £19bn in benefits

**Exclusive**  
Patrick Butler  
Social policy editor

Millions of UK households are collectively missing out on at least £19bn a year in unclaimed welfare benefits, at a time when many are forced to use food banks or run up debt as they struggle with rising living costs, according to new estimates.

Lower income households are not claiming benefits and other support for which they are eligible, according to a study by the consultancy Policy in Practice. Some families could be forgoing as much as £4,000 a year.

The sheer complexity of the benefits system, lack of public awareness of the available support and fear of being perceived as "benefits scroungers" all contribute to the high level of unclaimed or under-claimed benefits, says the analysis.

It estimates that 1.1 million households are eligible for but do not take up the main working-age benefit, universal credit, resulting in £7.5bn going unclaimed each year. Nearly 3 million families do not claim council tax support (£2.9bn), while 1 million miss out on nearly £2bn of support for water, energy and broadband bills.

"It is shocking that 23% of benefits and support is unclaimed at any time, let alone during a cost of living crisis," said Deven Ghelani, director of Policy in Practice. "Missing out on eligible benefits could be the difference between households keeping their heads above water and feeling they are drowning," he added.

Benefits scroungers told the Guardian they typically secured fairly small extra payments for clients of £10 to £20 a week, which would nonetheless have a transformative effect. "It can mean the family can eat properly, put the heating on, get the bus, take the children to school, all the things we take for granted," said one adviser.

But the study found that even bigger sums were not

**Angry birds**  
Warm spring weather brings cheer (for some)

News Page 14 →



▲ A blue tit and a bullfinch have a disagreement. Today's weather is set to be bright for most regions tomorrow.

Search for:

'£19bn unclaimed benefits'

to download the report.



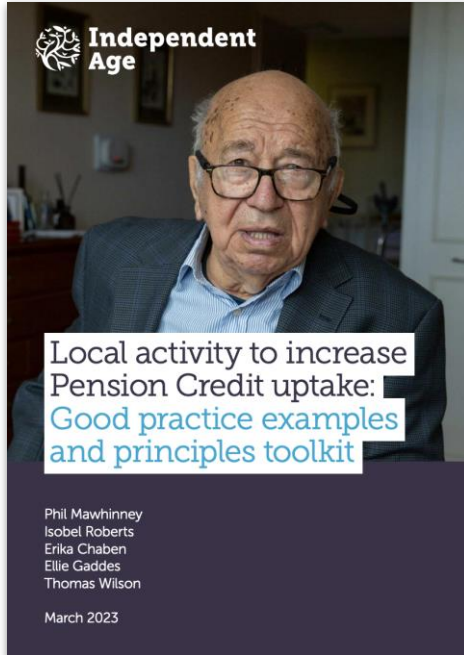
# Agenda

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1. £19bn goes unclaimed each year and it can make a huge impact on the wellbeing of your lowest income households
2. Local authorities can use data to know which households are struggling, and who is missing out, to better target support
3. See the impact of take-up campaigns in Cornwall, London and your local authority
4. Get involved with Health Foundation and Nuffield backed research on the link between the wider determinants of health, and the cost of health and social care



# The implications of unclaimed benefits



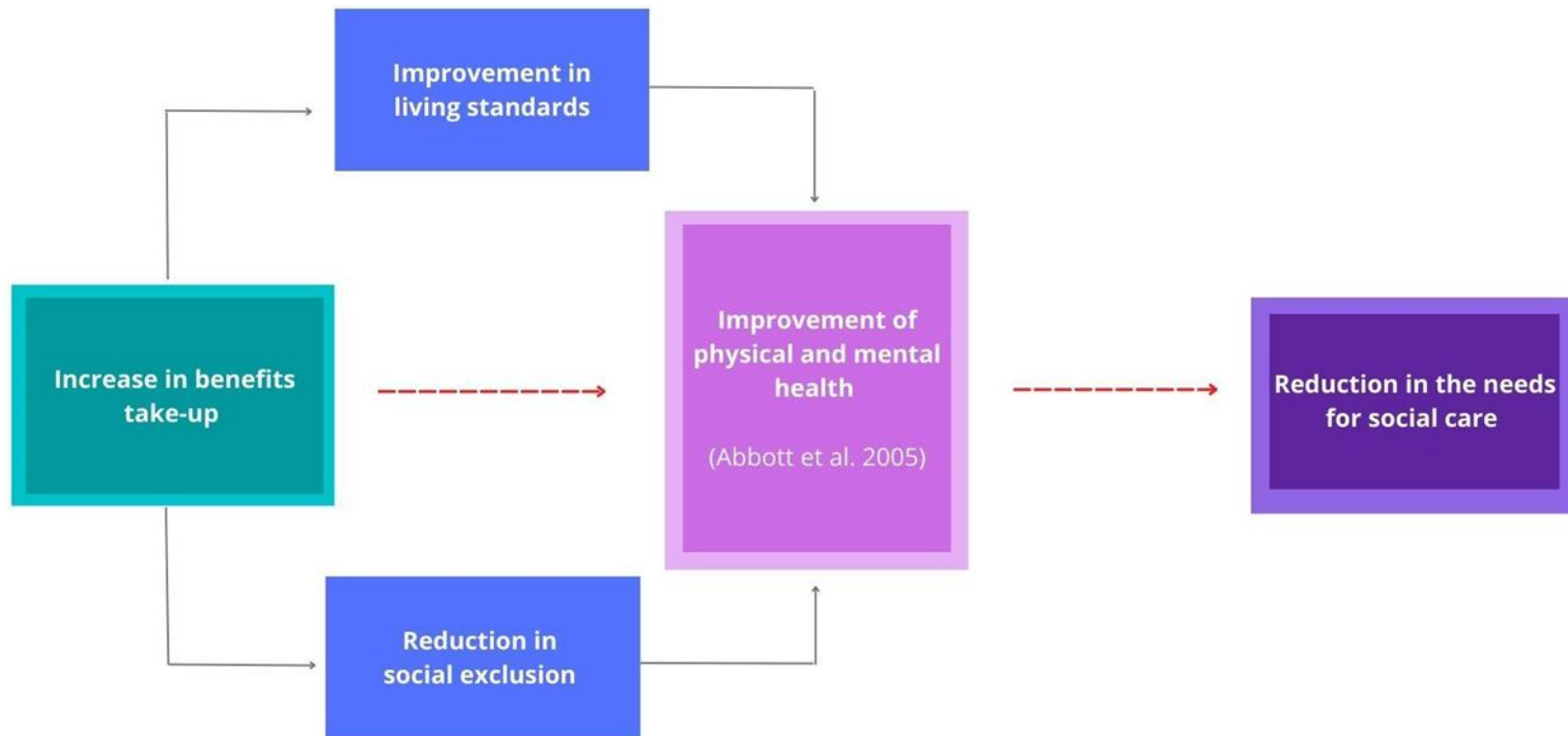
Independent Age study estimates how much extra spending is associated with the income difference that would be caused by take-up of Pension Credit by all eligible non-claimants:

- **£66 million** spent on social care
- **£313 million** spent on primary care
- **£4.5 billion** spent on additional NHS care

There are potential public savings of about £4 billion, much more than the £2.2 billion it would cost the Treasury in benefits expenditure if everyone eligible claimed PC.



# How increasing benefits take up can reduce the need for social care



# Impacts councils are seeing from the crisis

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“Increasing numbers approaching us, and homelessness, from the Private Rented Sector”

“A lot more people who are working full time are seeking help”

“Local charities and organisations seeing decreases in cash and physical donations”

“Issuing more food, and fuel vouchers, more people struggling to pay rent”

“People are looking for a route out of poverty... looking for a route to financial stability”

“The outreach work has been almost a blessing to them”



# What can councils do about it?



# Councils have visibility over the lowest income households in their area

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	<b>Total households</b>	<b>Means tested benefits</b>	<b>Pension age on benefits</b>	<b>Working age on benefits</b>	<b>Total on HB / CTS</b>
UK	28.2m	8,332k	1,377k	6,955k	5,413k
Local Authority (Avg)	85,500	25,000	4,172	21,075	16,403
Low Income Families	4.9m	864k	291k	573k	864k
LIFT average	92,500	16,305	5,497	10,809	16,305

Councils have data on one in five households across the UK through their Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support datasets. These are the lowest income households in your local authority.



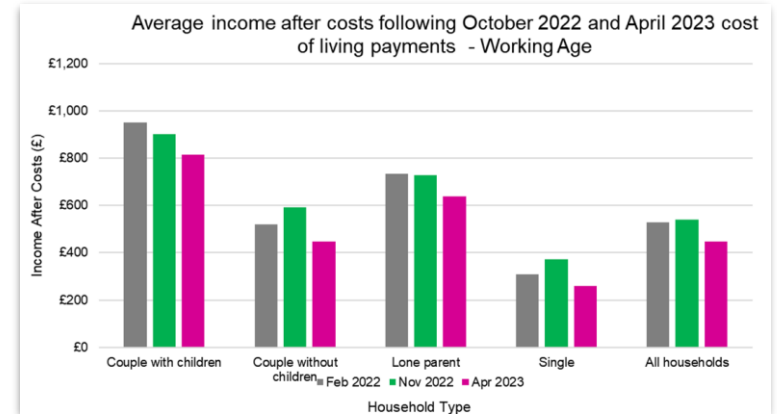


# Which households are unable to make ends meet from month to month?

	<b>Low income</b>	<b>In cash shortfall</b>	<b>% in cash shortfall</b>
PIP average	16,305	1,776	10.9%
Cornwall	69,124	2,742	6.6%

Over one in ten low income households face a cash shortfall from month to month.

Low income households are £81 per month worse off on average compare to a year ago.



# Many people don't access all the support they could

	Share of £19bn	Universal Credit	Pension Credit	CTR*	FSM*	Healthy Start	Water
LIFT average	£61.2m	£23.4m	£5.5m	£8.9m	£2.5m*	£0.5m	£2m
Cornwall	£149.5m	£46.8m	£19.9m	£23.5m	£6.1m*	£4.7m	£5.3m

+ FINANCIAL RESILIENCE + DEBT
+ UNIVERSAL CREDIT
+ WELFARE REFORM
**X BENEFITS TAKE-UP**
+ OTHER GROUPS

**736** household(s)   
**1,439** children   
**£285,343** CTR/Rent arrears   
**£3,163** DHP award in FY

**CENTRAL GOV - TAKE UP**

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

**OTHER BENEFITS - TAKE UP**

**Map type**



# How much are you missing in your local authority?

	Share of £19bn	Universal Credit	Pension Credit	CTR*	FSM*	Healthy Start	Water
LIFT average	<b>£61.2m</b>	£23.4m	£5.5m	£8.9m	£2.5m*	£0.5m	£2m
Cornwall	<b>£149.5m</b>	£46.8m	£19.9m	£23.5m	£6.1m*	£4.7m	£5.3m

The £19bn figure excludes unclaimed Personal Independent Payment (or DLA) and discretionary support schemes such as DHPs and the Household Support fund.

The table doesn't show unclaimed energy and broadband support or child benefit and carers allowance, and the unclaimed amount for Free School Meals is roughly double the amount shown when the pupil premium is factored in. The CTR value is an estimate that can be adapted to take into account your local scheme.



# See how much Pension Credit goes unclaimed in your local authority

<https://policyinpractice.co.uk/pension-credit>

## Unclaimed Pension Credit: value by local authority

Search: Birmingham

Local Authority	Estimated unclaimed Pension Credit	Pension age households claiming Housing Benefit	Number of Housing Benefit households eligible for Pension Credit and not claiming	Expected take up from a data-led Pension Credit campaign	Value of Pension Credit take up per year	Value of passported benefits* per year	Economic impact in 1 year	Lifetime value (to 82 years)
Birmingham City Council	£30,914,808	20,351	1,119	373	£1,007,375	£245,874	£1,253,248	£7,519,491

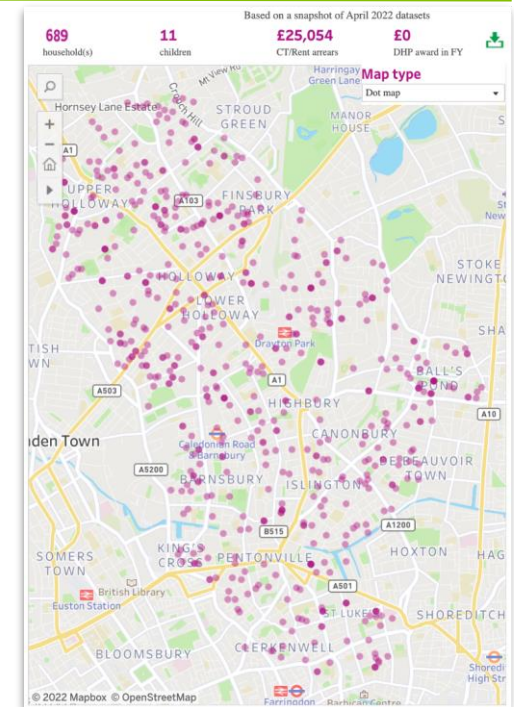
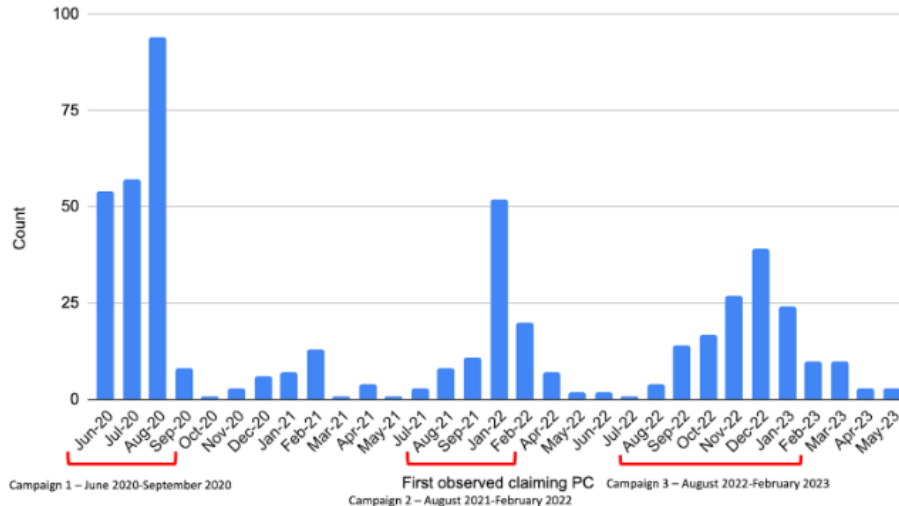




# 500 households now taking up Pension Credit in Islington

£1.6 million annually claimed in Pension Credit (£3,200 per household)

Pension Credit Claims by month




# LIFT landing page

## LIFT DASHBOARD

### Get the right support to those who need it most.


Welcome to the LIFTDemo Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) dashboard.

[Read more about LIFT >](#)  
[Join LIFT community >](#)  
[Demo videos >](#)  
[Email us >](#)



### STREET VIEW

View all your households on a map of the borough. Filter by over 40 household characteristics including financial resilience, impact of welfare reform and other family circumstances.




[-> Go to Street view](#)

Example action plans

<a href="#">Council tenants in arrears; ...</a>	<a href="#">In-work progression coho...</a>
<a href="#">Benefit cap exemptions</a>	<a href="#">Low barriers to work; hig...</a>

### LIFT SUMMARY

Get an overview of the key measures for all of LIFTDemo or for an individual ward in LIFTDemo. Information on cash shortfalls, policy reform and potential target cohorts.




[-> Go to LIFT Summary](#)

Similar headline analysis

<a href="#">The Residents Impact of welfare reform</a>	<a href="#">Household Finances</a>
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### OUTCOME TRACKER

Track households over time to identify the impact of your work for outcomes such as moving in to work or out of temporary accommodation. Differentiate between households recently in their situation and those who are long-term.



[-> Go to Outcome tracker](#)

Similar tracking analysis

<a href="#">Track your residents</a>
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### ADDITIONAL INSIGHT

Other dashboards are available to explore current areas of policy focus, as well as do deeper analysis on core themes. Hover over arrow for description.

- [Experian Financial Resilience and Safeguarding](#)
- [Universal Credit Datashare](#)
- [Debt](#)
- [Universal Credit](#)
- [Benefits take-up](#)
- [Transition to Universal Credit](#)
- [Discretionary Housing Payments](#)
- [Indices of Multiple Deprivation](#)
- [Cost of living modelling](#)



# Drilldown to the households you want to target

**FINANCIAL RESILIENCE + DEBT** + UNIVERSAL CREDIT + WELFARE REFORM + BENEFITS TAKE-UP + COVID-19 GROUP

**31,836** household(s)    **21,540** children    **£9,702,349** CT/Rent arrears    **£83,951** DHP award in FY

**RESILIENCE**

Financial resilience now	Financial resilience 2023	CT arrears	Months in CT arrears
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coping	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coping	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	0    46
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Struggling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Struggling	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="46"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> At risk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> At risk	Rent arrears	Months in rent arrears
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In crisis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In crisis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	0    158,294
<input type="button" value="Cancel"/> <input type="button" value="Apply"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="158,294"/>

**POVERTY**

In relative poverty	In fuel poverty
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**DEBT AND SAVINGS**

Rent or CT arrears	Debt
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	£0    £13,281
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="text" value="£0"/> <input type="text" value="£13,281"/>

**HOUSING**

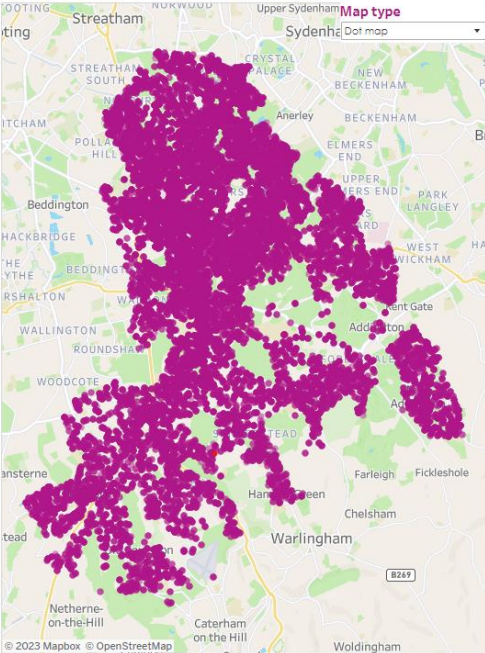
Housing benefit overpaid	Savings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	£0    £333,241
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="text" value="£0"/> <input type="text" value="£333,241"/>

*Show definitions*

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**ADDITIONAL FILTERS**

<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>INTERVENTIONS</b>
Tenure: (All)	Barriers to work: (All)	DHP: (All)    EHP: No    CTS: (All)
Household Type: (All)	Hours worked: (All)	HSF: No    Energy rebate: No
Age group: (All)    Age bracket: (All)	Earning below: £9.97/hour    £11.05/hour	<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>
Disability: (All)    Carer household: (All)	CHILDREN & NON-DEPS	Postcode: <input type="text"/>
Economic status: (All)	Number of children: 0	Local authority: Croydon    Ward: (All)
Self employed household: (All)	Number of non-dependants: 0	Filter HB Ref#: <input type="text"/>
Council tax band: (All)	With a child between: <input type="text"/> and <input type="text"/>	



Map type: Sydenham Dot map

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# Take a traditional localities approach

**FINANCIAL RESILIENCE + DEBT** **+ UNIVERSAL CREDIT** **+ WELFARE REFORM** **+ BENEFITS TAKE-UP** **+ COVID-19 GROUPS**

**16,790** household(s)    **15,324** children    **£6,640,409** CT/Rent arrears    **£36,075** DHP award in FY

**Map type**  
Ward map

**RESILIENCE**

Financial resilience now    Financial resilience 2023

Coping     Coping  
 Struggling     Struggling  
 At risk     At risk  
 In crisis     In crisis

**POVERTY**

In relative poverty    In fuel poverty

Yes     Yes  
 No     No

In food poverty    In water poverty

Yes     Yes  
 No     No

**DEBT AND SAVINGS**

CT arrears    Months in CT arrears

Yes    0  
 No   

Rent arrears    Months in rent arrears

Yes    0  
 No   

Rent or CT arrears    Debt

Yes    £0    £13,281  
 No   

Housing benefit overpaid    Savings

Yes    £0    £333,241  
 No   

**ADDITIONAL FILTERS**

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

Tenure  
[All]

Household Type  
[All]

Age group    Age bracket  
[All]    [All]

Disability    Carer household  
[All]    [All]

Economic status  
[All]

Self employed household  
[All]

Council tax band  
[All]

**EMPLOYMENT**

Barriers to work  
[All]

Hours worked  
[All]

Earning below  
£9.97/hour    £11.05/hour  
[All]    [All]

**CHILDREN & NON-DEPS**

Number of children  
0   

Number of non-dependants  
0   

With a child between  
 and

**INTERVENTIONS**

DHP    EHP    CTS  
[All]    No    [All]

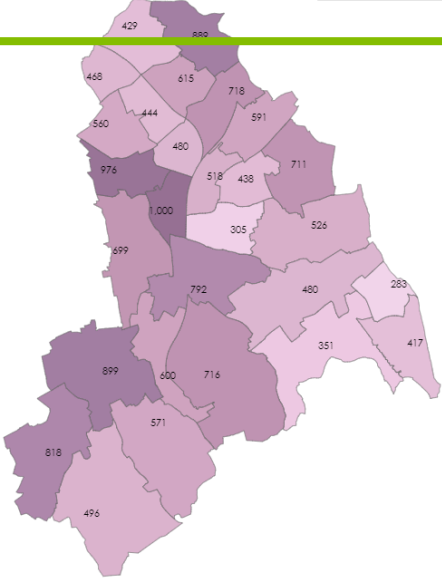
HSF    Energy rebate  
No    No

**GEOGRAPHY**

Postcode

Local authority    Ward  
Croydon    [All]

Filter HB Ref#





# Or pinpoint support to individual households

**FINANCIAL RESILIENCE + DEBT** **+ UNIVERSAL CREDIT** **+ WELFARE REFORM** **+ BENEFITS TAKE-UP** **+ COVID-19 GROUPS** **700** household(s) **633** children **£277,877** CT/Rent arrears **£1,087** DHP award in FY

**RESILIENCE**

Financial resilience now	Financial resilience 2023	CT arrears	Months in CT arrears
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coping	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coping	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Struggling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Struggling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> At risk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> At risk		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In crisis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In crisis		
<input type="button" value="Cancel"/> <input type="button" value="Apply"/>	<input type="button" value="Cancel"/> <input type="button" value="Apply"/>	Rent arrears	Months in rent arrears
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	0
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	158,294

**POVERTY**

In relative poverty	In fuel poverty
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> No
In food poverty	In water poverty
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> No

**DEBT AND SAVINGS**

Rent or CT arrears	Debt	Savings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	£0	£13,281
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		
Housing benefit overpaid		£0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes		£333,241
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		

Show definitions

**ADDITIONAL FILTERS**

<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>INTERVENTIONS</b>
Tenure [All]	Barriers to work [All]	DHP [All] EHP [No] CTS [All]
Household Type [All]	Hours worked [All]	HSF [No] Energy rebate [No]
Age group [All] Age bracket [All]	Earning below £9.97/hour [All] £11.05/hour [All]	<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>
Disability [All] Carer household [All]	<b>CHILDREN &amp; NON-DEPS</b>	Postcode
Economic status [All]	Number of children 0	Local authority [Croydon] Ward [Multiple ...]
Self-employed household [All]	Number of non-dependants 0	Filter HB Ref#
Council tax band [All]	With a child between	

Map type: Dot map

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# Automate take-up of Pension Credit and other benefits

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Policy in Practice worked with 18 London boroughs to precisely identify households who are eligible for and not claiming Pension Credit.

- We automatically sent them a letter to help them to claim. Over 11,800 letters sent to over 8,000 households
- 1,700 households had successfully claimed Pension Credit in the first four months. We expect this to rise to 2,200+
- Average annual Pension Credit value per household is over £3,600 for a total annual value so far of over £6.4 million in year one
- This rises to over £9m when backdated payments and cost of living payments are taken into account
- People continue to receive the benefit year on year, meaning the lifetime impact of this one campaign is likely to reach over £100m

GREATER  
**LONDON**  
AUTHORITY

SUPPORTED BY  
**MAYOR OF LONDON**

 Policy in Practice

 London  
**ageUK**

# A new Health Foundation backed project

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*There is a proven correlation between poor health outcomes and low income... We have some of the highest areas of deprivation in the country and some of the poorest clinical outcomes, most of which are influenced through the wider determinants of health as opposed to access to care itself.*

*We aim to try to positively influence our populations health and wellbeing. There is a great opportunity for us to collaboratively try a different approach.*

**Nikki Teesdale**

Director of Health and Care Integration and Improvement.

Medway & Swale Health and Care Partnership



# Improve the wider determinants of health in your area to show the impact on outcomes and savings

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We are seeking partners for both the Health Foundation project next steps, and a Nuffield backed project looking at the relationship between income and referrals to children's social care

- Linking data on income to data on health service contacts
- What is the relationship between low income and the cost of healthcare?
- What is the relationship between Pension Credit take-up and the cost of ASC?
- A similar project found that children living in households in Cash Shortfall were twice as likely to be referred to children's social care

Contact [hello@policyinpractice.co.uk](mailto:hello@policyinpractice.co.uk) to register interest



# Thank you

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[www.policyinpractice.co.uk](http://www.policyinpractice.co.uk)

Download the £19bn report

See how much pension credit goes  
unclaimed in your local authority

[policyinpractice.co.uk/pension-credit](http://policyinpractice.co.uk/pension-credit)

