

Cost of living crisis

Response Plan 2025-2026



Foreword

from Cllr Vince Maple,
Leader of Medway Council



I know first-hand from speaking to families across Medway, that the cost of living crisis is impacting many families.

When I was elected as the Leader of Medway Council, I pledged to bring forward a cost of living crisis response plan within the first 100 days of our new Labour & Co-operative administration. I assured residents that this would be a living, evolving document and I am pleased to bring you the third version of the plan which includes the support that our local community can access, both directly from us as your council, but also the wide range of support from our partners. This plan highlights the work we have undertaken over the past year and our plans for the coming year. A highlight from last year was the council being named as the Money and Pensions Service, Partner of the Year for our work with the Money Guiders Programme, demonstrating our commitment to supporting residents with high quality money guidance.

We remain committed to getting the information on accessing support out to Medway residents in a variety of ways, from updating our website, to sending leaflets, making information available in our community hubs, to regular updates on our social media platforms.

I would urge you to please make use of the resources we have across Medway at this most challenging time to support household budgets. If you know someone who is struggling, please make them aware of this plan or send them the link to [Medway.gov.uk/HouseholdHelp](https://www.medway.gov.uk/HouseholdHelp)

We are monitoring national welfare reform and remain committed to responding to needs arising from changes. Following changes to the Winter Fuel Payments, we wrote to those who could be entitled to Pension Credit and held an event at the Pentagon to highlight the support available to pensioners in Medway. 116 extra households claimed and were awarded Pension Credit. 1,537 households who just missed out on Pension Credit were supported with £200 from our Household Support Fund.

As well as ensuring as much support as possible is available to households and individuals whilst we are going through this crisis, our administration is focused on the medium and long term as well to ensure a sustainable future for Medway's residents.

Introduction



The cost-of-living crisis is affecting us all. The rising costs of fuel, food and other essentials are combining with existing hardship and vulnerability within our community to put many Medway households at greater risk of both immediate hardship and reduced opportunity and wellbeing.

Medway residents are having to live with ever tightening budgets, often making difficult decisions to cut back on essential items.

In Medway around 23 per cent of households (approximately 25,500 households) are particularly vulnerable to rises in living costs, with some people facing extreme hardship. The number of children in relative low-income households has increased by nearly 18 per cent over the past five years with the number of children eligible for free school meals increasing by 112 per cent over the same period. Our voluntary sector partners have been clear that they have seen increases in the need for their support in the multiple ways they assist Medway residents.

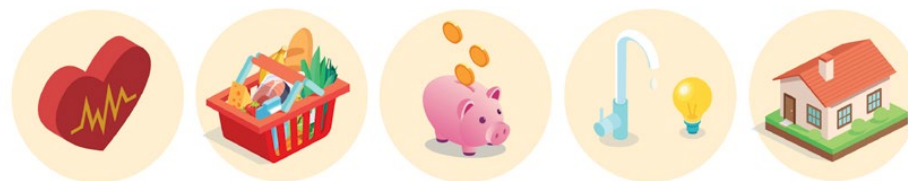
Supporting Medway residents suffering hardship is a priority for the Labour & Co-operative administration and sits at the heart of our agenda to ensure our community can access the help and advice they need to support them through these difficult times.

This plan outlines our four objectives in tackling the cost of living crisis:

- Responding to urgent need in Medway
- Minimising cost and optimising financial support
- Maximising incomes and supporting health and wellbeing
- Building financial resilience and supporting debt management.

We will be focussing our efforts to:

- ensure that local people can receive all the financial help and support they need
- provide a centralised information point to help residents access the information and guidance they need.
- work closely with our partners to coordinate and maximise our impact.



Since introducing the response plan in 2023, we have been providing significant support to an increasing number of local residents.

Despite the significant financial challenges facing the council, Medway residents currently pay the lowest council tax in Kent, and we will strive to ensure this continues in future years.

We are also determined to use the coming years to create a strong, sustainable and inclusive local economy which we know will be the best prevention against future crises.

This document sets out our achievements along with our continued commitment to helping struggling Medway families and how they can access the support they need now.



Executive summary

This plan sets out how we have and will continue to help mitigate some of the impact of the crisis, especially for our most vulnerable residents. We aim to provide support for Medway's residents and help them to access emergency help if needed.

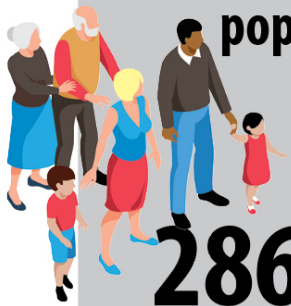
People's circumstances change and we want to ensure that everyone who needs help is able to get help, even if they've never had to before.

Our four main objectives are:

- **Responding to urgent need in Medway**
- **Minimising cost and optimising financial support**
- **Maximising incomes and supporting health and wellbeing**
- **Building financial resilience and supporting debt management**

In recent years, events have increased inequality and financial insecurity. Although not new, the underlying issues will continue to be addressed ensuring those who need it have access to essential support, encouraging health and wellbeing, creating opportunities for everyone to achieve their full potential and to gain financial independence.





Medway has a population of
286,800

Vacancies
Apply within

There are jobs for every person aged 16 to 64 in Medway

As of 2021/22, **30.6%** of children in Medway were living in poverty

The number of children eligible for free school meals has **doubled** since 2016/17



THE PICTURE IN MEDWAY

Economic inactivity was highest in:
Chatham
Gillingham
Rochester

17.1%



of Medway's population aged 16 to 64 are economically inactive and are likely to experience increased pressure from the cost of living crisis

11% of Medway residents experience fuel poverty



The median annual earnings for a person living in Medway is **£32,107**



7,635 people



claim Universal Credit or Jobseekers Allowance who are able to work but not working

Responding to urgent need in Medway

We have seen significant increases in demand to provide urgent financial support to residents. This support acts as a safety net to prevent households falling into destitution, homelessness and to avoid the escalation of crises.

What we've done

- The Household Support Fund has provided support to vulnerable Medway households who are most in need. The fund can be used for food and home essentials, energy, water, essentials linked to energy and water and housing rental costs.
 - Our Benefits and Financial Welfare Service assisted over 1,000 households with financial guidance and support through our Financial Welfare Hub.
 - Following the changes to the Winter Fuel Payments, we quickly established a programme of work to support pensioners which has resulted in financial gains of over £700,000 for Medway's residents.
 - We provided over £15m worth of support for those on low incomes to pay their Council Tax.
 - We provided £0.5m in Discretionary Housing Payments to those on Universal Credit or Housing Benefit to fund additional help with rent.
- Supported 10 charities through providing grants through the Government's Household Support Fund.
 - Our Medway Food Partnership helped residents with emergency food support through 18 partners listed on council website including an estimated 24,300 individuals and 1,350 families with food parcels and hot meals every month.





- Held quarterly food poverty subgroup meetings including key partners.
- The Medway Food Partnership achieved the Sustainable Food Places Bronze award.
- We've implemented a Medway Food Strategy and action plan.
- Our Housing team have worked with Medway tenants to support with rent arrears, including the arrangement of payment plans. This work has seen arrears reduce to just 1.06% of the net rent roll.
- For 2024 the Housing Options Team were approached by 3,642 households requiring assistance with their housing issues, of those where a duty was triggered over 67% were either prevented or relieved through either supporting them financially to secure alternative accommodation or assisting them to sustain their tenancy through financial assistance to clear rent arrears, pay advances, rent top ups and a number of other initiatives.
- In 2024/2025 we identified the need to invest in staff resources to further the opportunity to prevent/relieve homelessness in addition to reduce the burden on the temporary accommodation budget. The additional staff meant that the team was able to focus their resources to further assist clients and prevent the need for emergency accommodation above what was previously achieved. This resulted in an additional 314 households that would have required emergency accommodation being supported to avoid this option.
- The launch of One Medway Lettings in November has been a great success allowing Medway to offer a fully managed rent guarantee service to landlords to take the hassle away from lettings. For the year we have successfully onboarded seven properties and moved on tenants from temporary accommodation into affordable and secure private properties. We have also combined the old private rented scheme which focused on a client find service which has allowed us to rebrand into a competitive service for the market.
- With our Rough Sleepers Initiative, we had a winter shelter open for all of Jan-March and into the first two weeks of April, part funded through Household Support Fund, MHCLG winter pressures grant, and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. A multi-agency approach brought in a range of professionals to support the people in the shelter and 44 people moved directly into accommodation during the period of opening.

What we're doing

- We have a new allocation of Household Support Fund from the government and continue to provide support through our grant scheme in 2025/26.
- We are preparing for the New Crisis and Resilience Fund which replaces the Household Support Fund from April 2026. Provided by the UK Government, the fund will enable the council to provide support to Medway residents in financial crisis.
- We have increased our Council Tax Reduction scheme income bands in line with inflation enabling ongoing support with Council Tax for those on low incomes.
- In Medway, military compensation is not treated as income for any of our locally defined benefits such as Council Tax Reduction, Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payments and Disabled Facilities Grants.
- Exploring funding opportunities for food hub in Medway.
- Developed a Task & Finish group for the Medway Food Ladders initiative.
- The Medway Food Partnership continues to work with 28 charities to tackle food insecurity.
- Council tenants in urgent need can access support from our tenancy sustainment officers who can arrange and agree an affordable rent re-payment plan. The team is able to issue emergency support in the form of food and utility vouchers while also signposting to specialist debt advice agencies.
- The Housing Options service provides advice and assistance to households at risk of homelessness and will work with residents and the housing provider to prevent homelessness where possible. They have access to the Prevention Fund to assist with this.
- Take appropriate enforcement action against landlords where required.
- Provide financial assistance and advice to deal with issues relating to rent arrears including paying off the arrears if the landlord is willing to continue with the tenancy.
- Provide assistance and advice including referral to appropriate agencies for support on issues that relate to increased cost of living.





- For 2025/26 we are looking to strengthen these positive outcomes by creating a move on team to focus on supporting clients to successfully move on from emergency accommodation as well as redefine the resources in the team to continue the prevention work and avoid the need for clients to access emergency accommodation.

- For 2025/26 we are looking to further strengthen our One Medway Lettings service and increase the numbers with a number of marketing strategies, providing a regular information service to landlords and build on our landlord engagement through the Landlord forum and focus groups. In addition, we will be looking at further initiatives such as tenant training and tenant referencing to improve the options for clients to get on the housing market.

- Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) conducts multiple outreach sessions from 5am through the week to engage with people sleeping rough and assists with maximising income and signposting to relevant services for supports.

- The Rehousing Team support residents in temporary accommodation to claim housing benefits where they are entitled. The team visit residents in temporary accommodation and offer advice on budgeting and make referrals to local charities for relevant assistance.

The team also work with other statutory agencies including Children Social Services to ensure that additional support is provided to families with children and care leavers where required. The Rehousing Team offers baby cots to all pregnant and mothers with toddlers in TA.

- To support children and families, Family Solutions can request funding from local charities such as Chatham Charities, Gillingham Street Angels for furniture and white goods or provisions for families for example Wonderfully Made, a charity providing school uniforms for children who need them. Family Solutions signpost families as required and complete budget planning with families .

- There are Children and Family Hubs and wellbeing centres across Medway which provide activity groups and sessions (in partnership with various agencies) designed to provide Medway's children with the best start in life and parents/carers get the support and advice they need.

- The Children and Family Hubs also have resources such as hygiene bank and food boxes which can be given to children & their families as the need arises.



Minimising cost and financial support

The cost of essentials has risen faster than overall inflation, with food and energy price inflation particularly challenging for households. Crucial to our cost of living programme is how we can help our residents minimise their costs and reduce their outgoings.

What we've done

- We have been awarded Money Guiders Partner of the Year by the Money and Pensions Service for our work and commitment to the Money Guiders Scheme.
- We continued to provide FSM school holiday vouchers for 13,251 eligible children.
- The Holiday Activities and Food programme, delivered a range of activities and food for school aged children.
- The Housing Team continues to engage with tenants through surgeries, the Big Door Knock and events.
- Our council tenants have received support from our Tenancy Sustainment officers with £138,000 in income generated for tenants.
- The Festivals and Events team have successfully delivered Rochester Sweeps Festival with over 50,000 people visiting the festival, even in heavy rain. 86% of audience told the festival atmosphere was very good or good and 75% agreed the event created a sense of community spirit.
- Armed Forces Day was attended by over 7,000 people joining us at the Historic Dockyards in its 40th anniversary year.
- We successfully delivered in partnership with the Town Centre Management Team, the first Love Gillingham Big Day Out that attracted over 2,500 people
- Rochester Christmas Market now in its 16th year saw a new partnership with Rochester City Centre Forum and added a further 40 stalls were added to the high street to expand the experience. Over 130,000 people attended event with the middle weekend being cancelled due to Storm Daragh.



- Between September 2024 and March 2025, MAE received 240 eligible applications for the Discretionary Learner Support (DLS) Fund, resulting in approximately £2,500 in funding - primarily allocated to support learners with travel costs to attend courses. At the start of each course, learners are assessed to determine their eligibility for free tuition. During this process, the DLS Fund is also discussed to help identify and remove any financial barriers that may hinder their ability to participate in learning.

- MAE has provided 30 digital loans to learners to provide the necessary digital equipment to complete their course.

- In 2024/25 MAE offered a variety of courses that were free or available at concessionary rates. The carefully structured programme included pathways to help learners develop strong foundational skills that will help with everyday life and work.

- Workskills programmes between September 2024 and March 2025 had over 540 enrolments on courses to develop learners' employability and vocational skills in courses such as counselling, digital skills, teaching assistants, childcare, public speaking, and preparation.

- Between September 2024 and March 2025 there were over 280 enrolments on the English and maths programmes, and 262 enrolments on programmes for English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to help them develop English skills.

- We have now implemented the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) Scheme. We are working closely with the Greater Southeast Net Zero hub and e.On to deliver energy saving improvements in residents homes. We have facilitated installations in properties (focus on properties not connected to gas supply) to 74 homeowners and the amount awarded was £815,380.15.

- We have implemented the Energy Company Obligation Scheme (ECO4) and are working closely with e.On to ensure we can help all eligible households receive energy saving upgrades to reduce energy costs and be better for the environment. 51 installations of energy conservation measures under the Great British Insulation Scheme with 34 additional installations happening into early 2025.

- In 2024, Child-Friendly Medway ran hundreds of free events and activities for Medway's children, young people, and families as part of their Seeing is Believing Programme, which helps to narrow the gap by giving all children and young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and with additional needs, the chance to try new things and take up opportunities they may not otherwise have access to. This included: Two Child-Friendly Medway City Hall Events, 29 soft play and story corner activities, storytelling and crafts activities, puppet theatre shows, cinema screenings, arts and crafts workshops, theatre performances, drop-in football and large-scale events such as: Super Saturday, Dino Day, Hoo Family Fun Day and The Big Doodle.

- Child-Friendly Medway also installed Book Nooks at wellbeing centres and The Medway Maritime Hospital, and carried out book trails.

- In June 2025, we offered a free bus travel weekend.



What we're doing

- All children who need it, will continue to be supported with the provision of free school meals and school holiday vouchers.
- We continue to run our Holiday Activities and Food Programme through 2025/2026, with a new booking system to make it easier to access both free and paid provisions.
- To further support our council tenants we now have an officer in our Tenancy Sustainment Team who will support income/arrears cases, and an officer who will support complex and multidisciplinary cases. We are exploring hosting roadshows for tenants who need to access support in one place
- Medway's 15 community hubs and libraries are key outposts of the council in the community, providing access to all, with many residents within walking distance. In addition to providing brilliant reading, learning and social services they are an access point for a range of council and voluntary sector services.
- Community hubs and libraries provide a range of services, along with hundreds of clubs, events, and activities for all members of the community. For anyone who may be less mobile we provide an extensive digital library, plus audio material. In addition, we continue to invest in the provision of free access to computers and Wi-Fi.
- Community hubs and libraries provide free regular and one-off activities and events from Baby Bounce and Rhyme for newly born, Songs and Scones for older people, Teen reading clubs, Knit and Natter groups and our award winning Repair Café, where volunteer repair experts will be available to help make repairs free of charge. We host many events for Medway River Lit the local literature festival, The Wigmore Lectures focussing on local history, author talks and much more.
- Community hubs and libraries provide advice and support for residents from drop in session on housing options welfare and benefits, to health advice sessions and mental health support groups.
- Community Hubs and Libraries service has had significant investment from Arts Council England that will see further digital technology rolled across the service including:
 - Self-check-out machines
 - Interactive play tables
 - Interactive screens
 - Archive material scanner
 - A new maker space with 3D printers
 - A new and refreshed mobile library bus that will reach schools, villages and events, that will launch at autumn 2025.



Medway's annual free festival and events programme celebrates the talent and culture of our diverse communities.

The council directly delivers:

- Rochester Sweeps Festival
- Rochester Christmas markets and Dickensian Christmas
- Medway Armed Forces Day
- Love Gillingham Big Day Out

We also fund:

- Medway Pride
- Medway River Lit
- Chatham Carnival
- Medway Fun Place
- Sticks 'n' Stones Festival
- Medway Culture Club Carnival
- The Festival of Chatham Reach
- Medway Print Festival
- Fort Amherst Summer Proms
- Electric Medway
- Medway VE & VJ Day

- Our One Medway Charter partner, Chatham Historic Dockyard offer a limited number of tickets for £2 for Medway residents who are entitled to Universal Credit or Pension Credit.
- MAE will continue to offer an accessible education programme designed to equip learners with the basic skills needed to progress into further learning or employment. The curriculum includes English, maths, digital skills, and vocational courses that are free to learners who meet the eligibility criteria.
- Medway have successfully bid for Warm Homes Local Grant funding of £1.5m.
- The council is acquiring nearly 200 flats and houses to use as temporary accommodation. This will make it possible for households in TA to have more control over their day-to-day expenses. For instance, they will be able to prepare their own meals instead of relying on take outs or ready-made meals. These properties also have better energy efficiency as they are newly built. A dedicated team will be created help residents sustain this accommodation.

- Our Child Friendly Medway Team continues to run free events for children, young people and families in Medway as part of their Seeing is Believing programme, which aims to help narrow the gap by giving all children and young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and with additional needs, the chance to try new things and take up opportunities they may not otherwise have access to.
- Child-Friendly Medway believes literacy is a key priority and launched For the Love of Reading in September 2022 as a legacy project to inspire a passion for books and reading among children and young people.
- The Early Years Sufficiency team (EYST) and the Medway Family Information Service (FIS) are working to engage as many vulnerable families as possible with two-year-old children who are entitled to funded childcare.
- We are providing free bus travel for children in Medway this summer. The offer allows up to three children, aged 18 and under, to travel for free with a fare-paying adult or concessionary bus pass holder.



Maximising incomes and supporting health and wellbeing

For many Medway residents, our assistance in helping to minimise costs is a lifeline. However, for anyone facing debt and other forms of financial insecurity, efforts to maximise income are equally critical.

What we've done

- In 2024/25, 948 smokers were supported to stop smoking through the Smokefree Advice Centre, clinics in the community, GP practices, pharmacies, Text to Quit and via phone support.
- In 2024/25 we established a specialist service for people who smoke and have a mental health condition. There is continued work with groups where smoking prevalence is high including clinics in areas of need and campaigns targeted to reach specific audiences.
- In March 2025, there were 423 active users of the Try Dry app in Medway. Over 49% of individuals used the wellbeing tools on the Try Dry app and from April 24 to March 25 users of the app as a collective saved over 6.5 million calories. Money saved by those people was £123,939 since April 24. This is a saving of £293 per active user.
- We have successfully implemented the national Swap to Stop scheme, including tailored delivery within the pregnancy and military communities.





- Our sports centres, including our brand new Cozenton Park Sports Centre, have introduced new family holiday swim (during designated swimming pool sessions in school holidays): suitable for those under 16 accompanied by a parent or guardian in the water. Children under 16 can swim for £1 (up to two children) when accompanied by a full fee-paying adult.
- Sports centres provide swimming lessons, including school swimming lessons to over 40 schools.
- Medway Youth Games delivered to all primary schools during 24/25 consisting of 10 different sports.
- Disability Youth Games delivered to all special schools and units in 24/25 consisting of four different sporting events.
- Both the Big Splash and Medway Mile took place in 2024. Both are free mass participation events for adults and young people to come to and try a range of different sporting activities.
- We've opened a new splash pad and tennis courts at the Strand Lido and Park.
- Families whose children are in receipt of free school meals have the option to enrol their children for free at the Mini Youth Sports Camps and Medway Go swimming lessons and sessions that run throughout the summer holidays which include a wide range of fun pool and sporting activities

- Our Macmillan Welfare Benefits Team gained £4.6m for its customers in 2024.
- We held four Welcome to Medway events. These events are supported by numerous agencies who are available to advise and guide children and families attending . These events have been well received and demonstrated the support available in Medway.

What we're doing

- We are helping residents to save money by making healthy choices with Medway Stop Smoking Service. Our trained advisers support residents by developing tailored plans to help quit smoking. The average smoker can save £2,451 a year by stopping smoking. (Source: Public Health England from ONS (Office for National Statistics) data.
- Increasing the number of smokers engaging with effective stop smoking interventions. Specific focus will be among the highest smoking prevalence groups such as, routine and manual workers, people with mental health illness, those accessing drug and alcohol treatment services, the unemployed and across some ethnic groups.

- Continuing to support residents to consume alcohol at low risk levels through promotion of the Try Dry app.
- We are working to reduce the instances of vaping amongst young people by identifying key themes, trends and forming an action plan.
- Our sports centres, including our brand new Cozenton Park Sports Centre will continue to offer a family holiday swim (during designated swimming pool sessions in school holidays): suitable for those under 16 accompanied by a parent or guardian in the water. Children under 16 can swim for £1 (up to two children) when accompanied by a full fee-paying adult.
- In addition, we provide the Alpha Step Awards which are designed to build confidence in those who may need more support during their swimming lessons, including certain adults and some people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).
- We continue to provide free access for a carer for all registered disabled users of Medway sports centres.
- Our sports team encourages active participation for everyone in the community and run both the Mini Youth Games and Disability Youth Games (DYG), a funded series available to all Medway schools and special units. Competitions are available to children from Year 4 to Year 9.

- During the summer break we provide a Summer of Sport and offer a wide range of free children's drop-in sessions including football twice each week, street cricket, family workouts, basketball, yoga at Rochester Castle Gardens, and family sports. This year including tennis at the refurbished courts at the Strand and Maidstone Road, Chatham.
- We work in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support and various local agencies to provide benefits advice, advocacy, information, signposting and help residents with the completion of forms as needed.
- We will host four Welcome to Medway events this year, with the one in Chatham already taken place.



Building financial resilience and managing debt

The cost of living crisis threatens to trap more residents in debt. Therefore, building financial resilience and supporting residents to manage their debts is a foundational aspect of our response to the cost of living crisis.

What we've done

- We have now empowered over 140 council employees who have money conversations within their job to become trained Money Guiders.
- Medway Adult Education utilised Multiply Funding to support work with several primary schools. For example St James' Primary in Hoo (from cooking to team building and learning through play and build a bird feeder), Kingfisher Primary (afterschool parent support with maths), Abbey Court (card making business support via the parent teacher association) Barnsole Primary (family gardening) and Phoenix Primary (explaining the school curriculum and how to support education from home).
- Medway Adult Education's Teaching Assistant course was successful and expanded to work with parents at Bligh Primary School. Parents are on target to complete in 2025/26.
- Delivered a family learning ESOL course at the Salvation Army Centre in Chatham to help parents and their



children develop their English skills, socialise with the support of playworker. As a result, learners are engaging with other services.

- MAE used a range of creative methods to engage people in developing confidence with using numbers through Multiply whilst developing their environmental awareness and creative capital, including learning how to use an overlocker, eco-friendly Christmas gift



wrapping, crochet, storage bucket creation, making tools, building bird feeders, millinery, building flat pack furniture, family machine sewing, introduction to basic woodwork and basic plumbing. To help people develop life skills and confidence with everyday numeracy MAE also offered cookery courses (fabulously festive tree, pesto and cheese straws, Valentines' themed cooking, and themed food cooking sessions). A total of 169 learners engaged in Multiply budgeting courses.

- Our MAE community programme and outreach work, in partnership with local services, finds and provides classes for those local residents who have barriers to taking part in lifelong learning. This delivery provided free for the learners to remove the financial barrier to taking more involvement in their community. This outreach aspect also aims to reduce isolation, improve mental health and fitness and enhance confidence. These interventions are often a first step in a journey back into employment or further education- including into MAE's Art BTEC

What we're doing

- We continue to be a member of the Money Advisor Network and use the resources that it offers to support Medway residents. The Money and Pensions Service's Money Advisor Network (MAN) allows officers to refer a customer who requires personal debt advice, through one of three ways: referral to the online debt self-help tool, immediate call back from a Debt Advice Agency or schedule a call back from a Debt Advice Agency.
- Medway Council, in partnership with the Money and Pensions Service, is training more staff and partners to become Money Guiders to provide effective money guidance to our residents.
- Housing Related Support Services offer accommodation that is commissioned for vulnerable groups and support tailored to individuals, from accessing health and other universal services, helping to maximise eligible benefits and income, accessing training, and gaining employment, and essential life skills around managing and maintaining accommodation.
- Medway Adult Education are Launching a numeracy family learning project and supporting research into family literacy with the Department for Education at four local primary schools.
- MAE work in partnership with various early years settings, in key geographical areas, to reach families who benefit from the Family Learning programme. MAE utilises close ties with a number of primary schools to help them reach and positively impact their local residents
- The MAE is working with four local primary schools to provide family learning programmes to support research into the benefits of family learning. For example, at St James' the programme is incorporating literacy and maths include comic book literacy, beach walk story creation and Farm to Fork projects.
- Teaching Assistant Courses in Bligh and Twydall Primary Schools with new learner cohorts will start in the autumn term 2025.
- MAE will work in partnership with community partners to design courses around their service users' needs, and work with people to further improve their confidence in working with numbers.
- MAE offers adults (19+) in Medway access to work- shops and courses that will aid their knowledge and improve employability. Anyone who needs it can obtain support via the Learner Support Fund for help with travel costs and childcare, ensuring people are not disadvantaged when trying to gain skills and qualifications

- MAE will continue to collaborate with community partners to facilitate access to services, raise awareness of opportunities and engage with local people. This year MAE has attended multiple events and worked with the Housing Team, two schools and local artists to create a Pride in Place project celebrating the historic gasworks architecture at the Strand in Gillingham.
- For 25/26 MAE has a major campaign on mental fitness- highlighting the benefits of lifelong learning and targeting younger adults to re-engage. This is linked to public health and sports departments remit on preventative actions, and will see MAE presence in council sports' centres and community groups.
- MAE is working with secondary school new partners to reach their parents and local communities, especially those schools in deprived wards. This is part of a drive to enhance the partnerships MAE has with schools -to be their key link for adult education, endorsed by those schools. This includes being a partner on the Strood West Convening Group - which includes planning a large community event in September.





Further information

To access additional resources and information on Medway's cost of living crisis response, including more detail on the services and activities outlined in this plan please visit: **Medway.gov.uk/HouseholdHelp** or pick up a leaflet at any of Medway's libraries and community hubs.

This information can be made available in other formats from **01634 333333**

If you have any questions about this leaflet and you want to speak to someone in your own language please ring **01634 335577**

Bengali বাংলা 331780 Chinese 中文 331781 Gurjurati ગુજરાતી 331782 Hindi हिंदी 331783 Punjabi ਪੰਜਾਬੀ 331784

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