

Cost of Living Programme – Community Board Update December

As a Council, we recognise the growing pressures being faced by our residents linked to the increases in the cost of living.

Buckinghamshire Council has made further provision to assist residents who are in need, which is especially important during the winter months, developed through close partnership working, particularly with the voluntary and community sector.

We are continuing to develop our offer of support to residents, which is summarised below, and further information and updates will be published on our website.

- **Partnership with Inspire Bucks for the 2022 Children's Gift Appeal** - We're supporting [Inspire Bucks'](#) Christmas Gift Appeal and encouraging anyone who can give a helping hand to raise money to buy gifts for local children & young people who are vulnerable or facing difficulties. Further details are available here: <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/buckschristmasappeal> or [Home \(inspirebucks.charity\)](#)
- **Warm Boxes** – We have started trialling a warm box offer for residents that will enable them to collect free essential items to help with keeping warm from selected welcoming spaces. Items available include things such as blankets, hot water bottles, thermomugs and thermal socks. The offer is initially available from our 9 county libraries – residents can ask a member of library staff who will be able to help.

If you know of any community projects that may wish to purchase some warm boxes then please raise this with the Community Board manager.

For more bespoke help with essential items to keep warm, residents may contact the Helping Hand team.

- **Better Housing Better Health** - Better Housing, Better Health (previously called the Affordable Warmth Helpline) helps Buckinghamshire residents keep warm and well at home and improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

For self-referrals residents may visit the [Better Housing, Better Health website](#) or call [0800 107 0044](#).

We also offer guidance for [saving energy and tackling climate change at home and in other buildings](#).

- **Help with the cost of living council homepage** – Our updated website ensures people can access information about the range of support available, including: support with food, fuel and household bills, finding a place to keep warm, obtaining essential household items, support available from Government, support for pensioners and how to contact the Helping Hand team: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living/>
- **Helping Hand** - Our Helping Hand programme provides support to local individuals and families who are experiencing financial hardship. The team can be contacted on 01296 531 151 or through

the [online contact form](#). You can read more about the help available on the [dedicated section of our website](#).

- **Social media campaign** – We are providing a range of cost of living and energy efficiency related content and links for residents through our social media outlets – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Printed materials are also available in libraries and other welcoming spaces.
- **Partnership with Heart of Bucks for the crisis appeal** – For those who are in a position to help financially during this crisis, we have partnered with Heart of Bucks to raise funds for those in need. Residents are able to donate money via the Heart of Bucks Crisis Appeal webpage. [TotalGiving™ - Crisis Appeal for Buckinghamshire - Heart of Bucks - Fundraising Page](#)
- **Welcoming Spaces** - Starting with council and community libraries, these locations will provide a warm, welcoming and supportive space for anyone who needs it. These are places where residents can come into safe and inclusive spaces, free of charge, to stay warm and enjoy a little company. Use of facilities, including free wifi, will also be available in these places along with information and support. [Find a place to keep warm \(Welcoming Spaces\) | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Welcoming Spaces have started extending to some private and community venues. Information about these will be accessible through the Bucks Online Directory and [Find a Warm Welcome Space Today](#).

If a community venue wishes to set up as a welcoming space, a toolkit with guidance is also provided in the cost of living section of the Council's website [Community toolkit: register as a Welcoming Space | Buckinghamshire Council](#).

- **Food and hot meals schemes** – There are many food schemes available in Buckinghamshire. Further information is available in the cost of living section of the Council website. [Help buying or accessing food | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

We have also partnered with local organisations to launch the Food Champions Network, whereby residents volunteer to collect food on behalf of their local food banks and deliver it to the food banks. [Become a Food Champion and help your local community | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

If a community organisation wishes to set up a hot meals scheme, a toolkit with guidance on how to do this will also be available in the cost of living section of the Council's website [Toolkit: hot meal provision for groups | Buckinghamshire Council](#)