Policy in Practice

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CORNWALL COUNCIL

Targeting DHP money well using data analytics

LIFT case study

Challenge

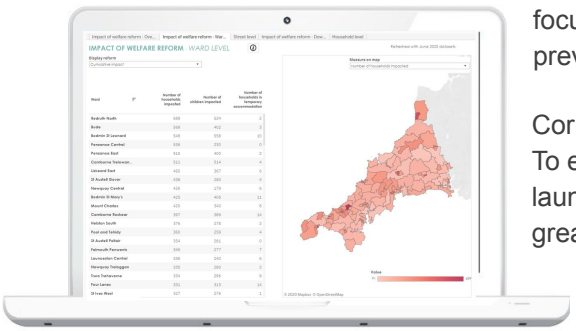
Cornwall Council needed to identify households most in need of DHP support to boost their financial resilience

Solution

Using a LIFT platform data analysis pinpointed private renters impacted by housing reform and experiencing a cash shortfall

Impact

A proactive data-led outreach campaign saw 80% of those who engaged apply for and receive a DHP award of £450, on average.



"We chose Policy in Practice because once we saw the dashboard itself we realised the power behind it. It was detailed and it allowed us to drill right down to household level."

Mark Ransom
Assessment Manager
Cornwall Council

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Cornwall Council wants to spend its Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) fund where it is most needed. With the help of a LIFT platform from Policy in Practice they are unlocking insights from their administrative datasets to proactively identify and target households most at risk or in financial crisis across the county. In this way they are ensuring their DHP money reaches residents most in need.

Using insights from data analysis to target support is not new to Cornwall Council. In 2016 they asked Policy in Practice to look at the effects of welfare reforms and Universal Credit rollout. We found that a third of low income households faced reduced income and were in need of transitional protection. Those privately renting needed the most help.

DHP funds are awarded to local authorities to support people affected by welfare reforms including the benefit cap, the spare room subsidy and changes to the local housing allowance. Reflecting need, Cornwall Council's DHP funds have risen from £972,059 in 2019 to nearly £1.5 million in 2020. The council's objective was to increase take up of DHPs and ensure those in need of support get all the help available.

Cornwall's challenges: scale of the problem and resources available

The sheer number of households needing support was a huge challenge. With a dedicated yet small team Cornwall Council needed a streamlined approach to focus their limited resources on helping those most in need. More proactive, preventive measures were needed, and unlocking insights from data was the key.

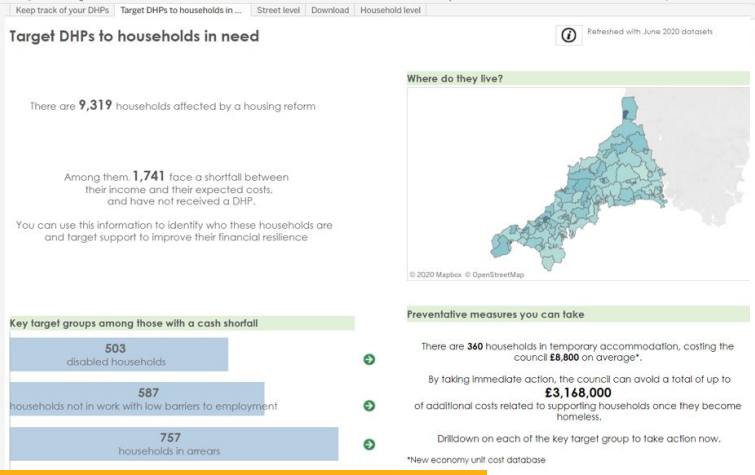
Cornwall knew that not everyone who was eligible for a DHP was taking one. To ensure their DHP budget was efficiently managed, the council decided to launch a trial campaign to target a small cohort and test ways to achieve greater take up.

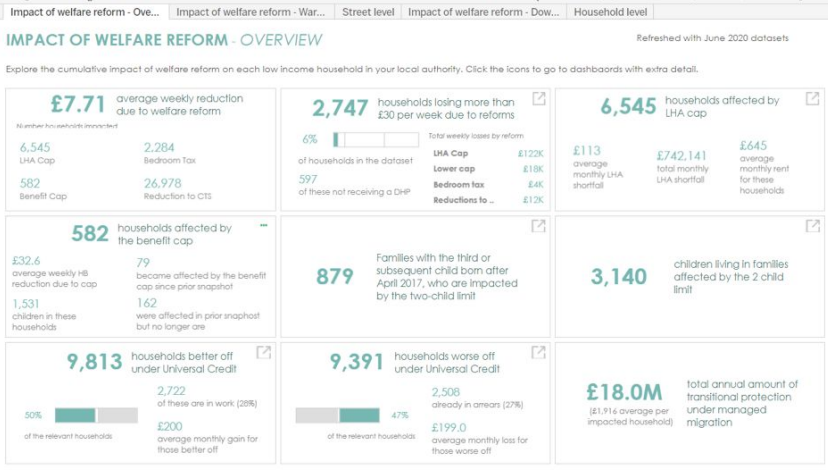
Data analytics identified households most in need of a DHP

Policy in Practice helped Cornwall to identify households most in need of DHP support. The LIFT platform identified private renters who had been impacted by housing reforms and were experiencing a cash shortfall.

Using these insights the council, and with support from Policy in Practice, the council designed a proof of concept data-led campaign that was executed from August 2020. A small group of 150 of households were contacted via three different communication channels: personalised letters, non-personalised flyers and outbound phone calls. The recipients were invited to contact the council to make an application for a DHP, either by visiting a webpage or calling the team.

Results showed there was significantly more engagement with people who received direct phone calls than a letter or leaflet so Cornwall Council then phoned everyone over a two week period to ensure maximum impact.





"When trying to do something different and taking a proactive approach within the discretionary awards team, the LIFT platform gives us effective analysis to target the right residents at the right time, which has been even more important this year."

Emma
Benefits Assessment Officer
Cornwall Council

"Receiving a call from Emma 3 months ago was a blessing! That extra money has helped with things for the children (we have 3), rent and basic living essentials. Knowing that money is there every month is such a relief, especially within the pandemic."

Taylor, Cornwall resident

Across the UK, **typically 9 in 10** applications for a DHP are successful, yet only **1 in 5** households that need a DHP apply

80% of those who engaged with the campaign and applied for DHP successfully received a payment

Watch a LIFT demo here

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80% of the target group were successfully awarded DHPs

Cornwall Council successfully contacted 58% of the chosen group and, of all the applications received, a staggering 80% were successfully awarded DHP support. As a result, the council awarded £10,492.56 in DHP payments, an average of over £450 per household.

The high number of people who applied for and received a DHP from the chosen cohort demonstrates the proof of concept for this type of data-led take up campaign. By using its administrative data with a LIFT platform Cornwall Council was able to target discretionary support to the right group of people from the very beginning. The successful campaign will now be built on to distribute the council's DHP fund effectively, reaching more Cornish residents in need of DHP payments.

Tania and David's story

"The award from DHP came at a time when we, as a family, were at our wits end with how we were going to find the money to pay our rent, on our privately rented home. We had just been going through a tough time financially, due to the COVID-19 lockdown, where I was made unemployed. Then to top it all off, once I was back at work our Universal Credits top up was stopped due to the age of our disabled son, who is still financially dependent on us. This was a massive blow to our financial situation. The discretionary payment that we received has helped us immensely. The scheme highlighted those who may possibly require some financial assistance. We were on that list. We thank Emma for contacting us, as we wouldn't have known who or where to turn to at this trying time."

More data led campaigns next

Now that Cornwall Council has proved the success of this campaign with the high numbers of successful applicants, they are in a very strong position to continue to support their residents during and after the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

The use of data analytics to help target and identify the right people is needed more than ever. Since early March 2020, Cornwall Council has seen a 19% increase in Universal Credit caseloads, bringing the number of cases up to 26,000. In October 2020 there are 1,119 households facing a cash shortfall who are eligible for a DHP. There has also been a steep rise in those who are living in temporary accommodation, with 143 households joining the dataset since the last quarter.

Cornwall Council are now doing more. They will use their learnings to proactively focus their DHP take up work on more residents in need, to help them stay in their homes and to build their financial resilience.