

<b>Report Title:</b>	Better Lives Rossendale Anti-Poverty Strategy		
<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Economic Development	<b>Cabinet Portfolio:</b>	Communities, Housing, Health and Wellbeing
<b>Cabinet Lead Member:</b>	Councillor McInnes	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment:</b>	Required: No	Attached:	No
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jackie Flynn/Stephanie Thornton	<b>Telephone:</b>	01706 252532
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<b>Valley Plan Priorities</b>	<b>Thriving Local Economy:</b> This involves securing new inward investment, creating a sustainable economy, matching local skills with future job opportunities, and supporting town centres as unique destinations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>High Quality Environment:</b> This includes having a "clean and green" local environment, reducing the borough's carbon footprint, improving waste and recycling rates, and delivering new homes with a good mix of housing tenures.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Healthy &amp; Proud Communities:</b> This priority focuses on improving the health and physical/mental wellbeing of residents, reducing health inequalities, ensuring access to better leisure facilities and health services, and fostering a sense of pride in the community.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Effective &amp; Efficient Council:</b> The aim is to provide good quality and responsive services, embrace new technology, be a financially sustainable council with a commercial outlook, and ensure sound governance.	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To agree the adoption of an anti-poverty strategy and action plan for the borough.
- In response to rising costs of living and changes to Household Support fund it was decided to look at how we can help tackle poverty and build financial resilience in Rossendale, supporting some of our most vulnerable residents.
  - It is our collective responsibility to ensure that people aren't being left behind. We have developed Better Lives Rossendale to improve the lived experience of poverty and increase the financial resilience of our most vulnerable residents. A copy of the Strategy can be found accompanying this report.
  - The strategy sets out our vision, our ambitions for tackling poverty, and the specific actions we will take over its three-year duration.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To agree the adoption of an anti-poverty strategy and action plan for the borough.

## 3. BACKGROUND AND REASON FOR THE DECISION

- 3.1 The Interim report of the Poverty Strategy Commission, September 2023, advocates the use

of all the available levers to address poverty. Many of these are outside the scope of the council and its partners e.g. increasing earnings by 5% or increasing benefits awards or reductions in housing costs.

- 3.2 However, one lever is to improve the lived experience. This means enhancing relationships and networks, improving qualifications and employability, improving physical and mental health and financial capability. These are areas where, working together, we can exert some influence and make progress.
- 3.3 Better Lives focuses on tackling poverty and building financial resilience and part of this is maximising the knowledge of available help and support.
- 3.4 In 2024 the future of the Household Support Fund was in doubt, sparking local conversations about a longer-term approach to supporting financially vulnerable Rossendale residents. At the same time, we were becoming increasingly aware of the increased costs of basics-housing, heating and food costs. The strategy has developed from those initial conversations. In November 2024 the communities team held a partnership workshop with key local support organisations from the statutory and voluntary sectors to explore how we can work together to build the financial resilience of our residents. This included mapping all known services against a series of themes: employment support, money and debt, food support, homelessness and affordable warmth. A number of issues also emerged including the digital skills needed to access support, residents knowing where to go for help, and the gaps in knowledge that local support organisations had about other available services.
- 3.5 Over the next year we held themed meetings to further explore available support within these areas.
- 3.6 At the same time the communities team became aware of a tool being used by other local authorities to identify those in crisis, and those who may be eligible for unclaimed support to maximise their incomes. CMT gave approval for the purchase of Policy in Practice Low Income Tracker. This tool is key to the delivery of the Better Lives Strategy as set out in the action plan
- 3.7 When the strategy is approved, we will establish a multi-agency board to oversee the implementation of the strategy and ensure its effectiveness. Membership will include the portfolio holder, council staff from communities, housing and benefits, as well as from the Family Hub, Citizen's Advice, Haslingden Community Link, Social prescribing team, Rossendale Valley Energy, Rossendale Works, Homewise and others.
- 3.8 The strategy has been developed in partnership with Resolve Poverty (formally the Greater Manchester Poverty Unit) and following extensive research by the communities team looking at other local authority anti-poverty strategies. Our vision is to reduce the impact of poverty across Rossendale by strengthening community resilience, and ensuring equitable access to opportunities and services for all residents.
- 3.9 The framework for strategy includes our vision, goals and ambitions, definition of poverty, causes and impacts of poverty, local data, case studies, local initiatives, an action plan and a communications plan.
- 3.10 The 7 key ambitions of the strategy are 7:

## **1. Addressing Debt**

We will work with partners to understand the root causes of debt and develop early intervention strategies. Our aim is to prevent financial crisis before it happens and support residents to regain control of their finances.

## **2. Employment Support**

We will support residents who are furthest from the labour market through specialist services, training, and inclusive employment opportunities. Everyone deserves the chance to thrive in meaningful work.

## **3. The Basics**

We will work to ensure that all residents have access to the essentials for a decent life - safe and secure housing, nutritious food, warmth, and hygiene. No one should be left behind in meeting their basic needs.

## **4. One Size Does Not Fit All**

We will tailor our services to meet the needs of those most at risk of poverty, including families with children, disabled people, carers, older residents, and those facing multiple disadvantages. Equity, not just equality, will guide our approach.

## **5. Making Every Contact Count**

We will empower our staff, partners, and communities to recognise the signs of poverty and confidently signpost people to the right support. Every interaction is an opportunity to make a difference.

## **6. Income Maximisation**

We will promote access to all available financial support, including benefits, grants, and discounts. Through targeted campaigns and advice services, we will help residents boost their income and reduce financial stress.

## **7. Digital Inclusion**

We will explore how to improve the digital skills of our residents including access to training courses and the recruitment of digital champions. This will increase the uptake of benefit entitlements and, therefore, income. And we will work with our partners to consider their systems and processes to enable better access.

## **4. RISK**

### **4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendations in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:**

- The Better Lives Rossendale Strategy covers the period 2026 to 2029 which encompasses the period of local government reorganization. This will mean the RBC will not exist in its current form which may impact on our ability to deliver at a local level as we become an authority covering several existing local district areas.
- There is a significant risk that insufficient funding will be available to deliver the scheme if the Crisis and Resilience Fund does not meet expected levels. Current indications are that funding will be at least £630K per year and could be more.

## **5. SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS (FINANCE)**

### **5.1 The government has announced a Crisis and Resilience Fund from April 2026 to enable councils to support their most financially vulnerable residents. We are still awaiting confirmation of exact amounts but we have been asked by LCC to plan for around £630K per**

annum. This should provide the opportunity to fund some of the key actions such as continuing to fund LIFT, local campaigns etc. This initiative marks a shift from short term funding cycles to a more stable long-term approach allowing local authorities to develop comprehensive strategies to combat poverty and support their communities effectively. Identify any financial implications from the decision and ensure that the S151 Officer is consulted and able to comment here.

## **6. MONITORING OFFICER COMMENTS (LEGAL)**

6.1 None.

## **7. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 No implications.

## **8. POLICY/STRATEGY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The Council has adopted the socio-economic duty in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025, and will undertake integrated impact assessments as part of the Council's decision-making process.

8.2 Consultation has been undertaken with Management Team and Portfolio Holder

8.3 Any equality implications related to the strategy will be given consideration in a relevant and proportionate manner.

## **9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 Appendix A – Rossendale Better Lives Strategy 2026-2029.

# Rossendale Better Lives Strategy: Tackling poverty and improving financial resilience (2026–2029)

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## **FOREWORD FROM ceo/leader/portfolio holder?**

### **Introduction**

Rossendale has a plan. A valley plan. Drawn up by the council to build on the good work already undertaken by businesses, partners, community organisations and our local residents to make Rossendale a great place to live and work.

The plan is ambitious and sets out steps to grow our town centres and economy, improve the health and wellbeing of local people and improve our environment.

The vision is to have a thriving economy, built around our changing town centres, creating a high-quality environment for all and improving the life chances of all those living and working in the borough.

The Government has thrown its weight behind this in the form of a number of regeneration funding pots and, more recently, a A Pride in Place, a 10-year plan with an emphasis on strengthening our communities and listening to the voices of all our residents.

But not all people in Rossendale are able to participate fairly in these ambitions.

They are financially vulnerable, for a variety of reasons, long or short term. Financial struggles can affect people of all ages, people with small or large families, people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

It means being unable to afford the basics of food, warmth and shelter, or to be able to keep clean, being constantly or persistently worried about money and lacking hope in the future.

Financial struggles can happen for a variety of reasons including redundancy, poor health and/or disability, low wages and insecure working conditions, rising housing and fuel costs.

And it matters because the impacts of financial vulnerability include

- Poor mental health
- Poor physical health
- Reduced educational attainment
- Reduced neighbourhood resilience

There are services, schemes and projects in Rossendale to help people who are struggling but we don't believe that enough people and partners know about them.

The vision of the Rossendale Better Lives strategy is that all Rossendale residents live their lives free of poverty and improve their levels of financial resilience. There are 3 key goals - reducing poverty, mitigating the impact of poverty and improving cross borough partnership working. And these are underpinned with a number of ambitions and associated actions.

The Interim report of the Poverty Strategy Commission, September 2023, advocates the use of all the available levers to address poverty. Many of these are outside the scope of the council and its partners e.g. increasing earnings by 5% or increasing benefits awards or reductions in housing costs.

However, one lever is to improve the lived experience. This means enhancing relationships and networks, improving qualifications and employability, improving physical and mental health and financial capability. These are areas where, working together, we can exert some influence and make progress.

## **1. Better Lives – Journey so far**

In May 2024, representatives from groups and organisations from across the borough that provide help and support for residents struggling financially, met to map out the support available in Rossendale.

The organisations included:

- Rossendale Borough Council
- Rossendale Valley Energy
- Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale CVS
- Rossendale Works
- Citizens Advice East Lancashire
- Lancashire Carers Link
- LCC Public Health (Communities)
- RLT Health Coaches
- Homewise
- PCN Integrated Neighbourhood Team
- Newground Together
- Haslingden Community Link

The group identified 6 thematic area of support:

- Money and Debt
- Employment Support
- Food Support
- Homelessness
- Affordable Warmth
- Family Support

Digital Inclusion

These were them more intensively mapped in follow up workshops and meetings over the following 6 months.

Conclusions raised from the workshop and mapping exercises were:

1. There is a huge amount of support available in the borough, but support organisations were not aware of each other, which made supporting and signposting families on to the support they need very difficult.
2. Residents were not aware of most of the support available, and there is no 'one stop shop' either physical or online to help residents find the support they need.
3. There was no hyper local data available that allows organisations to target support to those that need it most.
4. Some groups were digitally excluded from accessing information on line, or using websites to upload information needed for some applications for support
5. There is no overall approach to supporting residents to maximise their income or seek advice.

From these workshops it was agreed that a more joined up approach was needed. The Communities team at Rossendale Borough Council have agreed to take these conclusions forward in developing a strategy to drive forward the actions needed to address financial vulnerability across the borough.

## **2. Policy Context**

Better Lives Rossendale needs to be viewed within the wider policy context and environment locally and nationally.

Local government reorganisation is being actively considered at the time of writing with a number of options on the table for the future of Rossendale council. The likely choice will be an East Lancs unitary authority. And the plan is for this to be in place, albeit in shadow form by 2027/2028. Whilst we don't know exactly what the effects of this will be on local services it will be helpful to have started this work and embedded it with our key partners which should then continue into the future.

Current associated policies at Rossendale Borough Council include the Economic Development strategy and the Equality strategy. The latter is currently being revised and will include the new Socio-economic duty.

This is a high level policy response that contributes to the achievement of all three goals contained within the strategy.

Adoption of the duty would enable all service and departments in Rossendale Council to consider decisions and practices through an anti poverty lens. This reduces the risk that the strategy becomes siloed and ensures all aspects of the council play their part in delivering its intended impact.

This includes all future strategic decisions, including commissioning, project/policy design and processes such as procurement and recruitment.

At time of writing 47 councils nationally have adopted the SED including Blackpool and Preston.

The Rossendale Economic Development Strategy has five priorities of which the following relates most closely to this strategy.

- Ensuring residents and communities reach their full economic potential; enhanced employment, skills and educational opportunities

Many of the actions the Better Lives strategy contribute to this priority.

We continue to work closely with Lancashire County Council and are active members of cross district groups dealing with food poverty and Household Support, soon to be Crisis and resilience fund. We also work with LCC's Welfare Rights team to raise awareness of particular benefits – a recent campaign targeting over 75-year-olds in Rossendale for Pension Credit resulted in significant uptake and more than £500k coming into the borough in extra income for some of our poorest households.

### **3. Definition of Poverty**

Poverty is the condition where individuals or families lack the financial resources to meet basic needs such as food, housing, clothing, and essential services. It includes both absolute poverty (insufficient income to meet basic survival needs) and relative poverty (living standards significantly below the average in society).

## 4. Causes and Impacts of Poverty in Rossendale

Causes of Poverty	Impacts of Poverty
<b>Low Income and Unemployment</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insecure, low income jobs</li> <li>• Unemployment and zero hours contracts</li> </ul>	<b>On Individuals and Families</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor health and food insecurity</li> <li>• Housing issues – poor condition, fuel poverty, threatened homelessness</li> <li>• Family breakdown</li> <li>• Stigma</li> <li>• Debt</li> </ul>
<b>High Cost of Living</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High rents and low LHA</li> <li>• Increasing energy bills</li> <li>• Transport</li> </ul>	<b>On Children</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developmental delays</li> <li>• Health issues</li> <li>• Social exclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Welfare System Challenges</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate and underclaimed benefits</li> <li>• Benefit delays and sanctions</li> </ul>	<b>On Communities</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crime and strained services</li> <li>• Reduced social mobility</li> </ul>
<b>Health Issues</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical and mental health issues</li> <li>• Limited access to services</li> </ul>	<b>On the Economy</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lost productivity</li> <li>• Higher public spending</li> </ul>

## 5. Poverty myths

Public perceptions of poverty are often shaped by prejudice and misinformation. To effectively address poverty, it's essential to challenge and dispel these myths, as they can undermine the actions we take. Common misconceptions include:

- The "bootstraps" myth – the belief that anyone can escape poverty through hard work alone.
- The "individual fault" myth – the assumption that people in poverty are lazy or irresponsible, and therefore deserve their circumstances.

- The "educability" myth – the idea that children living in poverty are inherently less intelligent or less prepared for school.
- The "culture of poverty" myth – the notion that people experiencing poverty share a uniform set of values, beliefs, and behaviours.
- The "intergenerational worklessness" myth – the belief that some families have multiple generations who neither work nor want to work.

In truth, poverty is driven by complex socioeconomic factors. It's crucial that we avoid making assumptions or passing judgment on those who experience it.

## 6. Poverty in Rossendale

According to the latest data from the UK Government and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation:

- Child Poverty: Around 29% of children in the UK live in poverty; Rossendale's rate is estimated to be above the national average, particularly in areas like Bacup and Stacksteads.
- Working-Age Poverty: Approximately 22% of working-age adults in the UK are in poverty, with Rossendale showing higher-than-average rates of economic inactivity and low-paid work.
- Deprivation: Rossendale contains several Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the top 20% most deprived in England, particularly in relation to income, employment, and health.
- Fuel Poverty: Rising energy costs have disproportionately affected households in older, poorly insulated housing stock common in Rossendale.
- Food Insecurity: Local food banks report increasing demand, particularly among working families and pensioners.

Some groups within our communities may be disproportionately affected by poverty due to overlapping and compounding disadvantages. For example, lone parents, disabled people, care leavers, minority ethnic communities, and unpaid carers often face additional barriers that intensify the impact of poverty and financial insecurity. These experiences can vary significantly depending on the interplay of different characteristics and circumstances.

In Rossendale:

- 19.8% consider themselves disabled under the Equalities Act, which is higher than the national average of 17.3%.
- 9.2% of the population provide unpaid care, with 2.9% providing more than 50 hours a week in unpaid carer hours.
- 7.6% of the Rossendale population are non-white, with 5.5% being of Asian heritage and 92.4% describe themselves as white. This is a significantly higher percentage than the England average of 81.1%.
- 97.8% tell us that English is their main language, and 0.7% say they don't speak English or don't speak English well. Both are lower figures than the England average.

- Rossendale has more people in the lower socio-economic classes, and less in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations than the average figures for England.
- The population of Rossendale is older than the England average with significantly more 50–80-year-old residents.

The Rossendale Low Income Tracker (June 2025) tells us:

- Rossendale has 4822 low-income households with 1663 children.
- 1676 households live below the poverty line with 922 children.
- 912 households are in debt (Council tax and rent).
- These households owe £1.05M (Council tax and rent), on average this is £1154/household.
- 3063 households with a low income are households with disabilities.
- 39% of households are energy inefficient (EPC ratings D, E, F, G).

## 7. Our Vision

Our vision is that all Rossendale residents live their lives free of poverty and improve their levels of financial resilience

## 8. Goals

To achieve the vision, we have 3 key goals:

1. Reduce poverty – tackle the root causes of poverty with early intervention and preventative actions with a particular focus on maximising income from employment and social security.
2. Mitigate the impact of poverty – reduce the immediate and harmful effects of poverty on people's daily lives in the borough with a focus on ensuring all residents can access basic needs and essentials.
3. Improve cross borough partnership working within and across the Borough council, public sector, VCFSE and private sectors.

## 9. Our Ambitions

These ambitions, along with the goals, will also form a Better Lives Charter, a one-page document summarizing the overall aims and objectives of the Better Lives Strategy.

## **1. Addressing Debt – Goal 1**

We will work with partners to understand the root causes of debt and develop early intervention strategies. Our aim is to prevent financial crisis before it happens and support residents to regain control of their finances.

Case Study: Citizens Advice

## **2. Income Maximisation – Goal 1**

We will promote access to all available financial support, including benefits, grants, and discounts. Through targeted campaigns and advice services, we will help residents boost their income and reduce financial stress.

## **3. Employment Support – Goal 1**

We will support residents who are furthest from the labour market through specialist services, training, and inclusive employment opportunities. Everyone deserves the chance to thrive in meaningful work.

## **4. The Basics – Goal 2**

We will work to ensure that all residents have access to the essentials for a decent life - safe and secure housing, nutritious food, warmth, and hygiene. No one should be left behind in meeting their basic needs.

## **5. One Size Does Not Fit All – Goal 2**

We will tailor our services to meet the needs of those most at risk of poverty, including families with children, disabled people, carers, older residents, and those facing multiple disadvantages. Equity, not just equality, will guide our approach.

## **6. Making Every Contact Count – Goal 3**

We will empower our staff, partners, and communities to recognise the signs of poverty and confidently signpost people to the right support. Every interaction is an opportunity to make a difference.

Case Study: Homewise/Affordable Warmth

## 7. Digital Inclusion – Goal 3

We will explore how to improve the digital skills of our residents including access to training courses and the recruitment of digital champions. This will increase the uptake of benefit entitlements and, therefore, income. And we will work with our partners to consider their systems and processes to enable better access.

Case Study: Rossendale Works

## 10. Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are central to ensuring the Rossendale Better Lives Strategy delivers meaningful impact and remains responsive to community needs. The strategy outlines a multi-layered approach to M&E, including annual progress reports, equity impact assessments and partnership dashboards tracking key indicators. These mechanisms will help measure progress against the strategy's ambitions such as income maximisation, debt reduction, employment support and digital inclusion. By embedding equity impact assessments and collecting qualitative feedback from residents, the strategy ensures that interventions are not only data-driven but also grounded in real-life experiences.

Reports will be regularly presented to the Better Lives Rossendale Board who are responsible for the delivery of the action plan and acting upon the findings of all monitoring and evaluation.

To support transparency and shared ownership, the strategy commits to publishing annual progress reports and hosting a Poverty Action Summit in Year three. These milestones will showcase successes, identify areas for improvement, and renew commitment across sectors. Monitoring will also extend to communications efforts, tracking engagement through website analytics, social media reach, and event attendance. Case studies and testimonials will be used to illustrate the human impact of the strategy, reinforcing its empathetic and inclusive tone. Ultimately, the monitoring and evaluation framework is designed to ensure that no one in Rossendale is left behind, and that every action taken contributes to building greater financial resilience across the borough.

Our strategy is a three-year plan with three overarching outputs to maximise household incomes.

- Number and percentage of eligible pupils taking up Free School Meals (FSM).
- Number and percentage of individuals taking up Council Tax Support (CTS).
- Total value of income maximised through advice services/Lift.
- Progress in achieving these will be measured annually.

## 11. Local Initiatives Tackling Poverty in Rossendale

Rossendale Borough Council and its partners have launched and supported a range of initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, improving life chances, and building community resilience. Some examples are featured below – all available services will be mapped and promoted widely through our ‘No one left behind’ campaign – an action for Year One.

- Rossendale Works: A flagship employability programme that connects unemployed residents with local job opportunities, training, and support.
- Citizens Advice: A well-known and trusted organisation giving people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are, and whatever their problem. They offer confidential advice online, over the phone, and in person, for free. CA deal with welfare benefits, debt, housing, employment and much more.
- Homewise: Homewise offer practical help and support to older, disabled and vulnerable homeowners to help them repair, improve and adapt their homes. They deliver Affordable Warmth activity on behalf of Rossendale Borough Council. These grants help to repair and replace faulty and old boilers and poor windows and doors.
- Homewise can also access further assistance to help people via Rossendale Borough Council’s Emergency works grants. These grants can assist with roof work, poor electrical wiring and anything else that presents a risk to safety.
- The team also make referrals to East Lancs Citizens’ Advice for energy advice and fuel vouchers, and links people into other Homewise services as required, things like the handyperson and small repairs service.
- Rossendale Valley Energy: Rossendale Valley Energy offers a free energy advice service that can help local residents get free energy advice and ongoing support. They can help you understand your energy bills and see if there are ways to reduce them. They can also help you access energy grants for your home.
- Low Income Family Tracker – Rossendale Borough Council have been working with a national organisation - Policy and Practice, to help identify households who may not be claiming all the benefits they are entitled to. This is via a piece of software called Low Income Family Tracker – LIFT. This will enable the council to run campaigns directly to these households and encourage take up wherever possible.
- Food banks – Rossendale has 7 food banks across the valley, some referral only, some drop in and 18 food boxes located in different neighbourhoods containing donated food.
- Household Support Fund – the council has been receiving Household support fund from Government over the last 4 years. This has enabled support to many of the services listed above. There is also an open application process for individuals and households in financial crisis. Although this is coming to an end the Government is replacing it with a new Crisis and Resilience fund.

## 12. Rossendale Better Lives Action Plan (2026–2029)

THEME	ACTION	LEAD	26/27	27/28	28/29
<b>Working Together</b>	Establish a Rossendale Better Lives Partnership Board	Communities Team	✓		
	Publish an annual progress report	Communities Team	✓	✓	✓
	Host a Poverty Action Summit to share learning, celebrate success and renew commitment	Better Lives Partnership			✓
<b>The Basics</b>	Map existing services providing food, housing, and warmth and identify gaps in services	Communities Team/Better Lives Partnership	✓		
	Explore the potential of the Crisis and Resilience fund to provide a local essentials fund for emergency needs in partnership with VCFSE organisations.	Communities Team/Better Lives Partnership	✓		
	Explore funding opportunities for a feasibility study for a One stop shop in Rawtenstall offering a community grocery, access to advice, school uniforms etc.	Communities Team	✓		
	Launch a 'No one left behind' campaign to raise awareness of available help.	Communities Team/Better Lives Partnership	✓		
	Support community food networks to grow sustainable food access	Communities Team/Rossendale Food Group		✓	
	Embed access to essentials into long-term local strategies (e.g. housing, health).	RBC			✓
<b>Making Every Contact</b>	Train key partner agency staff and volunteers in	RBC/Better Lives Partnership		✓	

<b>Count</b>	poverty awareness and signposting to support				
	Share learning regionally and nationally				✓
<b>One Size Does Not Fit All</b>	Work with Citizens Advice to identify local residents with lived experience of poverty and hold focus group(s)	Communities Team/ Citizens Advice East Lancashire		✓	
	Begin translating key materials into accessible formats and community languages	RBC			✓
	Introduce equity impact assessments for all new policies and services	RBC		✓	
	Champion and promote community-led projects that address specific local needs	Communities Team	✓	✓	✓
	Continue co-production with lived experience panels	Better Lives Partnership			✓
	Embed equity principles in commissioning and procurement	RBC			✓
<b>Addressing Debt</b>	Partner with local advice agencies to deliver early-intervention debt workshops based on intelligence from the Low-Income Family Tracker platform	Communities Team/ Citizens Advice East Lancashire	✓	✓	✓
	Pilot programme of early intervention debt support into e.g. Schools, GP surgeries	RBC/ Citizens Advice East Lancashire		✓	
	Evaluate early intervention strategies and scale successful models	?			✓
<b>Income Maximisation</b>	Run targeted benefit take-up campaigns (e.g. Pension Credit, Council Tax Support) using the Low-Income Family Tracker dashboard	Communities Team	✓	✓	✓
	Update and distribute the Money Matters leaflet	Communities Team/Better Lives	✓	✓	✓

		Project			
	Work with Rossendale Works to explore the potential of employers promoting in-work benefit checks and financial wellbeing	Communities Team/Rossendale Works		✓	
<b>Employment Support</b>	Map employment support gaps for those furthest from the labour market	Communities Team/Rossendale Works/RBC Economic Development		✓	
	Partner with adult learning providers to offer flexible, accessible training to support Rossendale residents to be work ready	Adult Learning		✓	
	Support peer mentoring and lived experience employment pathways	Rossendale Works		✓	
<b>Digital Access</b>	Launch digital skills drop-ins in libraries and community centres working with Lancashire adult learning	Communities Team/ Adult Learning		✓	
	Launch a “Digital Champions” volunteer network	Communities Team/ Adult Learning		✓	
	Introduce a streamlined digitally accessible benefits application process	RBC			✓

### 13. Rossendale Better Lives Communications Plan (2026–2029)

## 1. Objectives

- Raise awareness of the Better Lives Strategy, Charter and Action Plan.
- Promote access to support services and resources.
- Engage residents, partners, and stakeholders in co-delivery.
- Share progress and celebrate success.
- Reduce stigma around poverty and financial hardship.

## 2. Key Audiences

Audience	Needs	Channels
<b>Residents (esp. those at risk)</b>	Clear info on support, how to access help	Social media, posters, community radio, local press, outreach
<b>VCFSE sector</b>	Partnership opportunities, updates, resources	Email bulletins, forums, workshops
<b>Public partners</b>	Alignment with services, training, referrals	Internal comms, briefings, intranet
<b>Elected members</b>	Progress updates, case studies, community impact	Reports, presentations, newsletters
<b>Employers &amp; businesses</b>	Inclusive employment, support for staff	Business networks, Chamber of Commerce
<b>Media &amp; general public</b>	Awareness, reducing stigma, promoting action	Press releases, campaigns, storytelling

## 3. Key Messages

- **“No one in Rossendale should go without the basics.”**
- **“Every contact is a chance to help.”**
- **“We’re listening to lived experience.”**
- **“Together, we can tackle poverty.”**
- **“Support is available—don’t wait to ask.”**

## 4. Channels & Tactics

Channel	Tactics
<b>Website</b>	Dedicated Anti-Poverty Hub with resources, updates, and referral links
<b>Social media</b>	Regular themed campaigns (e.g. #WarmAndWell, #DebtSupportWeek), video explainers, lived experience stories
<b>Print</b>	Leaflets, posters, banners in community venues, GP surgeries, schools
<b>Email</b>	Use the monthly community bulletins to promote financial resilience services.
<b>Events</b>	Annual Anti-Poverty Summit, roadshows, pop-up advice stalls
<b>Media</b>	Press releases, interviews, case studies in local newspapers and radio
<b>Internal Comms</b>	Staff briefings, intranet updates, MECC training promotions

## 5. Timeline Overview

Phase	Focus	Key Activities
<b>Year 1</b>	Awareness Engagement	& Launch campaign, MECC training comms, essentials fund promo
<b>Year 2</b>	Expansion Integration	& Promote new services, share success stories, employer engagement
<b>Year 3</b>	Impact Sustainability	& Publish impact report, celebrate champions, legacy messaging

## 6. Branding & Tone

- **Tone:** Empathetic, empowering, inclusive, clear.
- **Visuals:** Use real people (with consent), warm colours, accessible design.

- **Language:** Avoid jargon, use plain English, translate key materials.
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## 7. Monitoring & Evaluation

- Track engagement (website visits, social media reach, event attendance).
- Collect feedback from residents and partners.
- Use case studies and testimonials to show impact.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE COMMUNITIES TEAM.