

East Lothian residents receive more than £500,000 in support

More than half a million pounds in welfare support was handed out to struggling residents in East Lothian between April and December last year.

A new report has revealed that the council approved £518,000 in crisis and community care grants while more than 120,000 meals were provided by the East Lothian Foodbank.

The report into the impact of austerity on people living in the county revealed that between January and December last year 13,558 people including 4,820 children received help from the foodbank.

It said between April and December the council received 2,773 applications for a crisis grant with 1,551 approved while there were 1,214 applications for a community care grant and granted 618.

It also revealed more than one in ten households in East Lothian receive council tax reductions with a third of Band A houses qualifying for the support and 26% of Band B households either receiving support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme or benefits as council tenants.

The report, which has been lodged in the council's members library was called for by cabinet at a meeting last month as

they asked for more information on the cost of living crisis and its impact on residents.

At the time councillors were told that the local authority has been working to provide more support to people and households who are struggling including investing in an in-house Financial Inclusion Service.

During 2023/24, councillors were told that for every £1 invested in the new service, household income for residents had been increased by £9.46 in benefits and grants, which may otherwise have gone unclaimed.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter