

# Case Study

## Chichester District Council uses TellJO to move from crisis management to crisis prevention

- Chichester District Council serves a rural population of 124,000.
- The Council had traditionally worked in a silo approach
- TellJO was used to identify vulnerable residents choosing fuel over food.
- A new multi-disciplinary team now use TellJO to engage and support vulnerable residents.

### Chichester District Council

With a population of around 124,000, Chichester District Council is a large rural district that includes Petworth, Midhurst, and Chichester. The council have faced a higher-than-average growth for England and the Southeast, with an increase of 20.8% in people aged 65 years and over.

### Creating a joined-up approach to prevention

Since 2011, the district's Population had grown significantly, with a high proportion of people aged 65 years or older. The Council had a much higher percentage of benefits cases at pension age than the national average; their residents experiencing vulnerability were as likely to be working as they were retired.

Many benefits cases had historical debt and complex issues. Coming out of covid, the benefits team became increasingly concerned how the cost-of-living pressures would affect their growing number of vulnerable residents.



Marlene Rogers, Benefits and Systems Support Manager saw an opportunity create a **digital and human hybrid model** to **maximise the prevention opportunity**.

As Marlene Rogers, Chichester District Council's Benefits and Systems Support Manager explained: *"We needed a joined-up approach to prevention. And we faced four significant challenges:*

1. Identifying residents who were likely to be most at risk during the cost-of-living crisis.
2. A lack of resource with staff often given more work without any extra help.
3. A silo driven culture. Housing do housing. Recovery do recovery. Benefits do Benefits.
4. Cost. I have already been asked to save 10% of 2023 budget. Everything we do has to provide a greater return"

## Supporting residents during the cost-of-living crisis



With the cost-of-living crisis looming and the Council concerned by a pattern of increasing costs to manage their vulnerable customers, a cross functional team was established to take a proactive approach towards prevention.

Supporting You is a two-year in-house project to help Chichester's residents with cost-of-living pressures. Supporting You is a five-person team recruited over the Summer of 2022. They launched in November 2022.

The team cover a wide area including advice on finances, household bills, housing, health and wellbeing, plus help for businesses. They take in-bound calls from residents who have seen the Supporting You team promoted to the Council's home page, with links that offers residents advice, videos and tips to help with the cost-of-living pressures. They make out-bound calls to residents who have used the TellJO service.



## One of TellJO's tasks was to **help get residents into debt advice** as early as possible.

During 2022 TellJO identified 1000 Chichester residents with debt issues from council tax arrears data. Of these:

**75%** requested a new payment arrangement for their Council Tax.

**60%** received an Outreach call from the Council or TellJO to support the root causes of debt.

**57%** were choosing between heating and eating.

**50%** had recently seen their income reduce.

**50%** were paying persistent debt such as min payment credit card.

**47%** had an unmanaged overdraft.

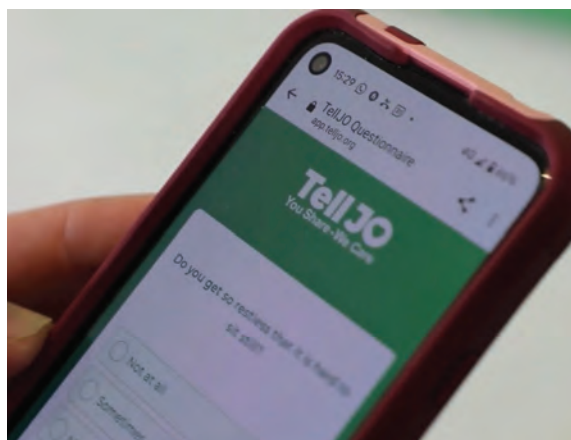
**40%** were in rent arrears.

**31%** reported that a life event had affected their finances.

**27%** were using a foodbank.

**20%** were experiencing hardship with BNPL.

## Preventing crisis as a priority



Marlene believes that *“If you don't deal with people at crisis early, then you have a missed opportunity. Homelessness, for example, is very difficult to manage and incredibly expensive.”*

TellJO was also used for the energy rebate scheme, with a survey conducted to help identify residents who were choosing between 'heating or eating'. The council spent £274,000 With an average award of £1,000 so that residents could clear their gas and electricity arrears before moving into the cold Winter months.

As Marlene says, *“We would not have been able to run our discretionary energy scheme without TellJO. TellJO helped us identify and pay residents who were choosing between 'heating or eating'. We used the Government energy rebate to help them clear their gas and electricity arrears before moving into the cold Winter months. For these people, that kind of money can be life changing.”*

## TellJO – Embedding Digital into Chichester District Councils **prevention and cost saving strategy**

By using TellJO, Chichester District Council were able to achieve specific strategic objectives whilst realising significant benefits:

### OBJECTIVE

- Engage instantly and at scale with all residents demonstrating signs of distress.
- Engage digitally with vulnerable residents.
- Help identify and support residents who were choosing between 'heating or eating'.
- Provide soft signposting to external support services such as Samaritans and Refuge.
- Create a unique personalised consent-based vulnerability profile for each resident.
- Capture resident voice.

### BENEFIT

- ✔ No wait time or backlog to reach out to vulnerable residents.
- ✔ Residents respond instantly and are much more likely to disclose vulnerability digitally.
- ✔ CDC can match grants with TellJO's specific preidentified vulnerabilities, saving officer time identifying potential customers.
- ✔ Enabling residents to self-help digitally saving officer time.
- ✔ Saving time; Officers are not required to do a fact find exercise with residents.
- ✔ Officers understands anecdotally how the resident is feeling and can support the resident with their immediate problems.



**Marlene Rogers**

Benefits and Systems  
Support Manager  
Chichester District Council

*“TellJO is **excellent at catching vulnerable people** early on. It feeds **vital information** to our cross-functional team who can be proactive and work across our departments **to help them.**”*