

CASE STUDY: West Lothian Money Week

West Lothian Money Week is a partnership initiative which is part of the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Money Week has been delivered annually since 2011 to raise financial awareness and reach those people who might be affected by poverty.

It includes targeted events aimed at improving financial capability and getting as many people as possible involved in good money management. The events take place in the community throughout a week in October and include a range of council services, community planning partners, the private sector, voluntary organisations and members of the public.

It is linked to the [Better Off West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy](#) and events are planned in line with the seven priorities:

- income
- employability
- housing
- health
- education
- community
- inequality

Money Week aims at reaching people in more isolated communities and sharing information about the availability of advice and other services.

The Council's Corporate Communications team plays a vital role in the publicity and marketing of Money Week. A theme was created and is used for flyers and posters and has been used consistently over the last five years to create a common brand for Money Week.

An evaluation gets carried out and is reported to stakeholders through the Policy, Development and Scrutiny Panel, which is chaired by the leader of the council, following each Money Week. Councillors have commended the amount of effort and passion that has gone into Money Week and fully support its continuation. It has become a recognised brand.

The Challenge

One of the main challenges with Money Week is keeping the event fresh and up-to-date, covering the latest topics of interest and providing people with information and advice that they want, as Elaine Nisbet, Anti-Poverty and Welfare Advice Manager, explains in the video below.

The success of Money Week also depends on making sure that everyone has bought into the idea; this is why such a huge effort



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was put in at the start to give some clarity about roles and responsibilities, what participating agencies need to know and what support they need and can expect. At first the Council tried to accommodate all partners and would run 30-40 events in a week, which proved challenging. The number of events has now been reduced.

The amount of planning involved is significant. The first event was planned over a 12 week period, which was not sufficient time to do it properly and accommodate all partners needs.

In the video below, Elaine Nisbet talks about the development of Money Week over the past five years.



(Video opens in browser window)

“When we started Money Week, the focus was on raising individual awareness and giving partners an opportunity to come together on a focused piece of work.”

**Elaine Nisbet,
Anti-Poverty and Welfare
Advice Manager,
West Lothian Council**

What is the Council trying to achieve?

The Money Week events aim to raise financial awareness and reach those people who might be affected by poverty in West Lothian, particularly those in more isolated communities.

Money Week 2015 events aimed to improve access to financial support, provide advice on budgeting, spending and saving and improve the referrals between agencies.

More information is available in the latest [committee report](#).

What action/approach has the Council taken?

When organising each event, the Council engages with partners, stakeholders and those who will potentially benefit to identify what are the most pressing issues and areas of most interest. “Poverty and the work of anti-poverty has changed as the years have gone on and we’ve re-focused each year to think, what are the most important things we need to be doing?”, explains Elaine Nisbet. “It’s no longer about raising awareness; it’s about targeting specific topics, targeting specific groups and targeting specific localities.”

For example, Education staff recently highlighted that there was a need to increase some awareness of free school meals, school grants and nursery

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places for two year olds as people were not taking up the places and entitlements.

The Advice Shop has developed closer links with Education colleagues now with a view to doing more targeted activities in Money Week.

Activities can be quite varied from anything from a financial literacy workshop to designing a poster and encouraging the children to think about what saving means to them.

On one occasion the children designed piggy banks and children were supported to think about spending and saving and by setting up their own shop. Older pupils in secondary schools have explored typical family finances and thought about budgeting.

The Advice Shop and Education Staff are keen to work better together and this has led onto further poverty awareness training for all teachers in their probationary year, linking the activities of Money Week to the current priorities of the Anti-Poverty Action Plan.

“Everybody that has joined Money Week has to be able to see that they [can] reach an outcome that is useful to them. That’s a key part of its success.”

Elaine Nisbet,
Anti-Poverty and Welfare
Advice Manager,
West Lothian Council



Obstacles and issues

A big issue is the amount of time it takes to organise Money Week. The organisers need to understand partners planning schedules, commitments and work priorities and ensure there is sufficient time for partners to build in any targeted approaches into their planning, e.g. schools need to plan in the spring for the school term beginning in autumn of that year to fit in with the school calendars.

Results

Results from the targeted Money Week events evidence improved partnership working and an increase in referrals which helps to strengthen the network. Usually partners have found that ‘themed’ events work well, however, the success of 2015 evidenced that targeted events linked to the Anti-Poverty Action plan including food poverty, child poverty, energy advice, in-work poverty and employability worked well.

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The number of people attending Money Week events has increased: an average of 57 clients attended each event in 2015, compared to 46 in 2014. Feedback from the last partner survey suggested that 'Money Week enhances and raises the profile for options and choices that residents can make on the service that best suits their needs, location and situation'.

There was also an increase in the number of people signing up to the Money Makeover Budgeting Toolkit. The '5 Day Money Makeover' toolkit was developed by the [West Lothian Advice Network](#) and introduced in 2014. The information pack contains a step-by-step guide to the five day plan as well as practical tools such as budgeting sheet, recipe cards and self-help guides.

People were given the toolkit and if they agreed to participate were entered into a prize draw. This has proved successful in the last two years and helped encourage buy in from customers.

Lessons Learned

A range of key partners are consulted and involved in the development of Money Week. Some of the key learning points are:

- The number of events should be limited. In the beginning partners were involved in delivering a high volume of events but partners cannot commit to participating in multiple events per day. They now have fewer events targeted in specific areas and aimed at key customer groups, with a focus on quality rather than quantity. They held 9 targeted events in 2015 compared to 30 in 2014.
- Enough time is needed to plan the events over the course of the year.
- Get the timing right for the event. The first Money Week event was held in November; it was found to be too close to Christmas and proved difficult with the weather. October has worked well for West Lothian residents.
- Social media could be better utilised to reach a wide audience of potential customers.
- Work should continue with schools to link Money Week with financial education.

Jan Ingram, Quality Improvement Officer, Education says, "We signpost activities, training opportunities and resources to support the teaching of financial education and encourage schools to participate in Money Week", and highlights that being a partner in the Anti-Poverty Working Group makes it easier for them to plan various activities from nursery through to secondary. They usually attend the planning group for Money Week.

- When training is delivered, make sure that people have the right toolkit to be able to recognise what they can do when someone needs help, know the questions to ask and strengthen the referral path.

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Related Documents

[Year 1: Money Week
Committee Reports](#)

[Year 2: Money Week 2012](#)

[Year 3: Money Week 2013](#)

[Year 4: Money Week 2014](#)

[Five Day Money Makeover
\(introduced in 2014 and
2015\)](#)

[Year 5: Money Week 2015](#)

[Year 6: Money Week 2016](#)

[Year 7: Money Week 2017](#)

Next steps

Partners have indicated that fewer, more targeted events work really well and have suggested further streamlining including:

- Holding Money Days throughout the year to capitalise on national initiatives.
- Linking events to coincide with key dates e.g. employability support after Christmas temporary jobs end or financial assistance for parents when children go back to school.
- Holding events in key locations such as partnership centres where a wider audience can be reached and partners can access wifi to enhance the range of advice they can offer.
- Continue to work with Education, and other partners such as fire and police services. Some feedback from schools suggests that they would like to be able to reach parents and families as they come into school and there has been a suggestion of having some workshops which they can feed back through the anti-poverty group.

Further information

The 2015 Money Week was immediately followed by a [Digital Inclusion Awareness Week](#). This created an opportunity to link digital advice and support with events delivered during Money Week which resulted in a particularly positive outcome between partners.

- [Download more information about the 2015 Let's Get Digital Week](#)

Access to wifi in council buildings was promoted during Money Week which enabled a partner from [Skills Development Scotland](#) to set up an account and access the internet remotely.

Further information about the West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy is available in the video below.

