Dear Joanne

A harsh winter is approaching and many residents in Stanton under Bardon will continue to feel the pressure of rising energy bills.

The continuing cost of living crisis threatens to make this winter a particularly harsh one. A lot of people will struggle to make ends meet as energy costs increase and the Winter Fuel Payment is scrapped for many, with the most vulnerable in society being hit the hardest.

On top of rising energy bills, around 10-12% of people who come to us are struggling with negative budgets. This means that even after we have maximised their income, they do not have enough each month to cover essential spending without reducing to harmful levels. Starkly, 50% of clients who come to us with debt issues are in negative budgets.

From supporting those at a crisis point to empowering people with knowledge to solve their problems, our services make a huge difference to the lives of our clients. In 2023/24, we supported a total of 31,171 clients with 82,339 issues, maximising their income by £14,976,876 and also writing off £1,330,650 worth of debt.

Whilst we are doing all we can to meet demand, we need your support to continue to offer as much help to local residents as possible during this financially debilitating time.

In 2023/24, we supported 3,251 residents of Hinckley & Bosworth with a total of 10,614 issues, maximising their income by £1,487,346.

The top debt issue that clients in Hinckley & Bosworth face is Fuel Debt, reflecting ongoing struggles due to the cost of living crisis, whilst the top benefit issue is Personal Independence Payments.

CASE STUDY

Sarah\*, an 83-year old female client who has a limited ability to hear, was anxious about the rising cost of electricity. She was unable to pay her weekly electricity bills at her local post office as her EOn cards were damaged, meaning she had to travel a significant distance, and also feared she was in arrears.

As she struggled to communicate over the phone, our face-to-face service proved invaluable. One of our advisers was able to contact EOn and discovered that she had £1899.45 in credit on her gas account and £131.68 on her electricity. We also ordered her replacement payment cards so she didn’t have to travel far to pay her bills.

Finding out she had credit on her accounts proved to be a relief, and shows how important face to face services are for people with communication difficulties. It also shows how having someone to find out information for you that seems overwhelming can have such a positive impact on reducing stress and feeling more in control of your finances.

\*name and identifying information has been changed.

Citizens Advice LeicesterShire is doing everything we can to support local people through the worst effects of the cost of living crisis. This includes advice via a range of channels to ensure the widest possible accessibility:

 FREE telephone Adviceline 0808 278 7854, 9am - 4.30pm, Monday to Friday

 Face-to-face appointments

 Pop-up advice at community events

Your support is pivotal in helping us to maintain our vital advice services in the face of an increasingly uncertain funding environment.

If you are able to support us this year, donations can be made by BACS transfer:

The Co-operative Bank

Sort Code: 08-92-99

Account Number: 65395776

You can also send a cheque to our registered office at the address above.

I would like to thank you very much, as ever, for your support.

Yours truly,

Vicky Gutteridge

CEO

The Citizens Advice service helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing information and advice, and by influencing policymakers.

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