

December 2021



Spotlight



## On Research and Campaigns

*Welcome to another packed edition of Spotlight, highlighting the important work that we have been doing to support South Lincolnshire communities.*

*Please read about and support our campaigns, including National Consumer Week, which launches on the 6<sup>th</sup> December. Understanding our rights and being aware of what to do if things go wrong are important issues to highlight as we approach the spending spree that is Christmas. Our guide to consumer issues should help people. We are also reporting on issues around scams and online shopping frauds, as more and more of us will be buying gifts over the internet.*

*Whilst many of us will be celebrating the festive season, it will be a tough time for numerous people across South Lincolnshire. We know that energy bills are increasing, and we are already being contacted by people with real problems having enough money to heat their homes, particularly as the colder weather hits us. Our advisers will be on hand over the coming weeks and months, helping clients to deal with the problems that they face.*

*Christmas is also a time when we see increases in domestic abuse – and we highlight how it has been dealt with by society over recent years. It is an interesting read.*

*I am proud of the way that CASL has continued to deliver much-needed services over the last 12 months, in really challenging circumstances. We have helped thousands of people with tens of thousands of problems. Demand remains high, although our resources are limited. If you are interested in making a real difference to people's lives, please do consider talking to us about volunteering. We need more people to help even more people!*

*Thank you for your support. I hope you have all get to have a lovely break over the Christmas period. Please do get in touch if you have any questions or ideas for future work.*

*Simon Richards*

*Chief Officer*

*Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire*



## National Consumer Week

National Consumer Week is an annual campaign which aims to raise people's awareness of specific consumer issues, and provide support and advice for those who need it. **This year's campaign will launch on the 6 December.**

We will be encouraging people to “be wise to being green”. It is important that we take steps to be more environmentally friendly, like making our homes more energy efficient and installing energy technologies like solar panels. It can save money in the long run, and it’s good for the environment. It is also an important part of how we can meet our UK climate change target.

**But it is also important that people feel confident when they are making these decisions.**

That is why we are raising awareness of how people can protect themselves from misleading energy efficiency and environmental claims, such as “green scams” and rogue traders. With our advice and support consumers can arm themselves with the knowledge and confidence they need to make the best decisions. Further details go to this link, <http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/ncw21>

**Be wise to being green**

From making your home more energy efficient to choosing who you buy things from, it's great to make eco-friendly decisions – saving money and the environment. But it's important to make sure you're doing it in a safe and savvy way.

For advice on how to spot things like misleading energy and environmental claims and scams visit [citizensadvice.org.uk/NCW21](http://citizensadvice.org.uk/NCW21)

If you've had a problem you can also contact the Citizens Advice consumer service at **0808 223 1133**

**#NCW #GreenAndWise**

citizens advice

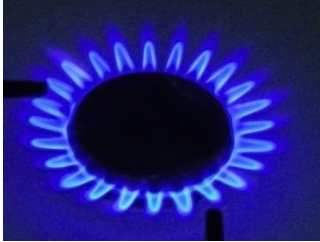
ctsi Chartered Trading Standards Institute

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS  
Protecting Consumers

## From bad to worse — how will people cope with even higher energy prices next year?

(Peter)



CASL advisers report many clients are extremely worried about how they will be able to afford their fuel bills this winter. Most people anticipate increases in their bills and loss of special deals as energy firms have failed. Unfortunately, the Warm Home Discount Scheme is not open to all low-income clients, meaning this help unavailable to some struggling to heat their homes.

Citizens Advice comments as follows:

*Millions of people are already starting to feel the pinch after the energy price cap rose by almost £140/year for the average dual fuel customer on October 1st. But it could be set to get much worse. [Analysts are forecasting](#) that the price cap could rise by a staggering £400/year to £1,660, for an average household, next April.*

*This could leave many falling into debt with their supplier, unable to afford to top up their meter and potentially facing the grim choice between heating and eating. Earlier this year the government [published proposals](#) to improve the Warm Home Discount scheme, but it should now urgently reassess these, and use the budget to put in place extra support from next April when price rises hit.*

*Warm Home Discount is one of the schemes designed to support people with their energy bills — currently a £140 rebate for low-income pensioners and households most at risk of fuel poverty. But our new analysis shows that despite planned improvements to the scheme, significant price hikes early next year will leave many people who get Warm Home Discount hundreds of pounds worse off, even if prices fall rapidly next year.*



## Consumer Rights and Wrongs.

(Peter)

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 consolidated and enhanced rights to redress if things go wrong with a purchase or service. However, our clients have reported instances where these rights are not upheld by the trader or retailer. This can be extremely frustrating when, for example, an item proves faulty, or work is not completed to the standard promised and the situation remains unrectified. Here are some examples of recent experiences of our clients:

- An elderly disabled client paid £7000 for a new mobility scooter. After 18 months, the motor failed, meaning the client could no longer use it. He took it back to the retailer to get it fixed but he was told he would have to pay as the guarantee had run out. In fact, the client should have qualified for a free repair under the Consumer Rights Act as he should reasonably expected the scooter to run for longer than 18 months.
- A female client bought a fridge-freezer from Argos. The appliance was delivered by DHL. During delivery, a mirror was broken, and the client's wooden floor scratched. The client complained to DHL who only offered to pay for the mirror not the floor.
- A young male client bought a pair of football boots online from Pro-Soccer for £195 plus £4.50 delivery. When they arrived, they did not fit well so he returned them getting proof of delivery. Despite requests to the company, the client is unable to get the refund to which he is entitled. He can ill afford to lose the money.
- A music fan bought tickets for a concert in 2019, even though the event was due to take place in October this year. Ticket Master cancelled the booking without warning just a few weeks before the concert. The client was still eager to attend but was unable to communicate with Ticket Master other than by email and even then, without satisfactory reply.
- A female client took her car into a garage and was told that a filter needed to be replaced. A few months after the job was done a warning light came on indicating the same problem as before, but this time the garage said a new seal was needed. The client paid £250 for the first repair and £138 for the second one. Subsequently, the car warning light came on again and the garage charged £460 for what they said was an engine fault. The client was travelling away from her hometown when the next fault arose. She took it to the nearest garage, which rectified the problem and queried whether the work that the first garage had been necessary. The client is seeking recompense from the first garage, so far without success.



Citizens Advice, through Adviceline and our Consumer Service, can assist and empower clients when dealing with such issues. Our advisers can help in contacting the trader for recompense as well as helping report rogue traders to Trading Standards. For more information on Consumer issues see our website <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/>



## Domestic Violence and Society's Treatment of it Over Time

(Amelia)

This is the second part of our research on domestic violence and abuse.

Our September edition of Spotlight summarised the key legislative changes in our approach to domestic violence and abuse.

This edition considers some important moments in the Police and Court handling of abuse/violence during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and during the 21<sup>st</sup> - and the resulting changes in legislation.

Some of the offences mentioned here are particularly serious. However, it is the appalling nature of the offences and the public outcry at official handling of them which have led to important procedural change now written into law.



### The Police

In 1982, 'A Complaint of Rape' was broadcast. A 'fly on the wall' police documentary, it caused widespread shock and horror as a police interview with a woman alleging rape was aired. Police officers made it clear they did not believe her, asking her intrusive and offensive questions about her sex life and dismissing her claims. **The documentary led to a re-evaluation of the treatment of rape victims by the police, beginning a pushback against rape myths and stereotypes.**

A landmark moment also came in 2014 with the introduction of **Clare's Law**, otherwise known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. The scheme was named after Clare Wood, who was murdered by her ex-boyfriend. Unbeknownst to her, her ex-boyfriend had previous convictions in relation to violence against women. **The scheme enables anyone to contact the police and ask for information they hold on a person in relation to domestic abuse offences and, if the police hold such information, it can be disclosed to them.** Its potential to prevent future incidents of domestic violence, and even homicide, is great and it is welcome to see it placed on a statutory footing as a result of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

A key case in improving police procedure in relation to sexual violence was *Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis v DSD and Another* (2018). The case was initially brought by victims of John Worboys, a black cab driver in London who committed several sexual offences against female victims. His victims alleged that the police failed to conduct effective investigation into Worboys' crimes, therefore violating Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights – no one shall be subjected to torture or degrading treatment or punishment. Their case succeeded in the High Court and Court of Appeal, so the Commissioner appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court dismissed the appeal, holding that the state was obliged under Article 3 to conduct effective investigation into crimes involving serious violence to persons and that this obligation had been breached. Compensation was awarded to the victims as a result. **This case demonstrates the vast impact of human rights on cases of sexual and gender-based violence, and the shift in recent years to hold states accountable when they fail to take preventative measures against such violence.**

## The Courts

There has been much controversy over the way victims of domestic and sexual violence are treated in court, which has led to much legislative change. **Section 34 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 prevents defendants cross-examining complainants in criminal proceedings when charged with a sexual offence and Section 41 of the same Act introduced restrictions on evidence or questions about the complainant's sexual history.** In sex cases, the judge is inclined to direct the jury to reject myths and stereotypes surrounding rape and other sexual offences with the aim of targeting possible bias against complainants.

**In 2005, the Specialist Domestic Violence Court Programme began.** These courts are adapted magistrates' courts which specialise in domestic violence. **Those involved have had additional training in domestic violence and the specialised courts enable there to be additional support for victims and separate areas for the victim and defendant.** The court process can be very traumatic for victims in domestic violence cases, so this scheme is a step in the right direction for improving the experience.

**Sentencing** has also been subject to much change. The Ealing Vicarage case was one such case that caused shock and controversy regarding the sentences of those convicted. Burglars broke into a vicarage and raped Jill Saward, who was living there at the time. The perpetrator of the rape received 5 years for rape and 5 years for burglary, whilst his accomplice received 3 years for sexual assault and 5 for burglary. There was public outcry at the shortness of the sentences and particularly towards the comments of the sentencing judge, who suggested Jill's trauma was 'not so very great.' **In 2013, the Sentencing Guidelines were updated to have a greater emphasis on sexual offences. The new guidelines took into account the psychological harm of a sex offence on the victim, not just physical harm, as well as the defendant's motivation for the offence as an aggravating factor (which may increase their sentence).** This enabled a greater sense of justice for victims of sexual offences and ensured appropriate sentences based on the severity of the crime and its impact.



## Top Tips to Avoid Online Shopping Fraud

(Sean)

With key dates in the consumer calendar rapidly approaching, this article takes you through some crucial steps that you can take to stay safe from online shopping fraud in the run up to Christmas.

### 1. Shop Safe, Shop Well

If you are making a purchase from a company or retailer that you have not used before, be sure to carry out some research on them first to check that they are reputable. It is also may be worth asking a friend or family member for advice before completing the purchase. If you decide to buy from the company, use a credit card if you have one because most credit card companies insure purchases. This level of protection may not be offered if paying by bank transfer, debit card or other payment methods.



### 2. Be Sure That Your Devices Are Up to Date

Update any devices that you use for online shopping. Be sure that they are running the most recent operating system (OS) updates and that any apps you use are the latest versions available. If needed, try to ensure that your device has anti-virus software, if it is not already included as part of the OS.

### 3. Secure Any Email or Online Shopping Accounts That You Use

Secure any accounts that you use with strong passwords. Scammers may look to try to gain access to these accounts (especially your email) to try and steal your personal information. Be wary of clicking on any suspicious links in emails and of any unsolicited communications asking for sensitive information. If you are in doubt about any links, do not engage with them. Other steps you could take may include using a password manager or two-factor authentication on your accounts.

Two-factor authentication is a way for a service to double check that it is really you when you are using an account, it can involve text-message or phone call verification.

#### 4. Don't Share Too Much Information

When making a purchase, shopping sites will typically ask for information such as your name, address, and bank details. Take care to only fill-in the mandatory sections required and remember that you should not be asked for information about your mother's birth name or your first school when making a purchase. This information may be used to access your other accounts.

#### 5. If Things Go Wrong

Scams are very sophisticated and convincing. If you think you have fallen victim to a scam, contact your bank account provider straight away and report the scam to Action Fraud by calling them:



## Volunteering with Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire

(Sean)

Volunteers are crucial to the ability of Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire to serve its communities. If you would like to, or know someone that may be interested in, volunteering with us then there is a role available.

At the moment, we are looking for telephone advisers to help our clients find a way forward with the problems that they face. Training for this role is ongoing. Other volunteer opportunities include the opportunity to join our Research and Campaigns Team.

The Research and campaigns team collects evidence of clients' problems from advisers using evidence forms. The team use our evidence forms to inform national Citizens Advice campaigns and the work that we do at a local level. There is no requirement to exclusively volunteer with Research and Campaigns. Some of the team also work as advisers and their experiences of delivering advice and hearing client stories helps shape the direction that our work takes.

We are wanting to recruit a volunteer Research and Campaigns Lead. The lead helps co-ordinate the team, chair our regular meetings and is involved with data analysis, organisation-wide communication and liaising with national Citizens Advice.

*If you are interested in volunteering with us, please fill out our enquiry form under the volunteer section of [www.citizensadvice-southlincs.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice-southlincs.org.uk)*

*If you would like more information about the Research and Campaigns Lead role, please email [impactofficer@citizensadvice-southlincs.org.uk](mailto:impactofficer@citizensadvice-southlincs.org.uk)*



## Find us on Social Media.

(Sean).

The months of October and November has yet again seen our social media audience increase. We are now followed by 709 people/organisations on Twitter and our content has once more reached over 22,000 people during these months. There are also 151 people who either like or follow our Facebook page.

In addition to this, our Facebook and Twitter are still important in sharing information about developing Research and Campaigns issues through our very own bulletins. Recent releases are around identity fraud and online gaming fraud.

Keep a look out on social media for our content about the Money Advice and Pension Service's 'Talk Money campaign and Friends Against Scams #Scamnesty campaign.

You do not need to have an account to see either our Twitter or Facebook pages. They can both be accessed at [www.citizensadvicesouthlincs.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvicesouthlincs.org.uk) by clicking on the speech bubbles in the 'connect with us' box on the website home page.



## Evidence forms September to November 2021.

These are forms filled in, electronically, by our assessors/advisers after interviewing any client who comes to us with an issue of unfairness. The forms are monitored both by the CASL Research and Campaigns team and by national Citizens Advice. The issues are in order of number of Evidence Forms received during these months.

Type	Number
Housing	32
Universal Credit	27
Immigration (12 EUSS)	18
Employment	12
Consumer	11
Benefits	11
Other (6 food bank)	8
Utilities	6
Debt	5
Legal	5
Finance	4
Travel	4
Education	2
Discrimination & Hate	2
Health	2
Tax	1
Relationships	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>

### Contact us.

We hope you found this edition of Spotlight of interest. If you wish to contact the Research & Campaigns team with questions or comments, please use the email, [impactofficer@citizensadviceouthlincs.org.uk](mailto:impactofficer@citizensadviceouthlincs.org.uk).