

April 2022



South  
Lincolnshire

Spotlight



## On Research and Campaigns

# Cost of Living Crisis Special

*Hello all*

*Welcome to the latest issue of Spotlight, which is a special edition focussing on the cost of living crisis, which is having a significant impact on our services. For example, a huge increase in demand since January has impacted on our ability to meet need. We had an average of 628 calls per month for Q3. This has increased to 1,484 per month in Q4, including up to **1,757** in March. We answered more calls than ever during March, but that was still less than 20% of demand. Our face-to-face services are also under huge pressures, with some offices seeing about two-thirds of people coming in for help with food vouchers. This is before increases in bills kick-in from April.*

*Much of that increased demand arose from enquiries about the Household Support Fund. This edition provides some information about the work that we did supporting the delivery of the fund, which provided vital help to people in need across our communities. We await details of any future scheme and are willing to work with Local Authorities and others to ensure we best meet people's needs.*

*We continue to campaign on cost of living issues and have been in contact with elected representatives to outline the impact on our local communities. This is likely to be more important than ever in the coming months.*

*As always, thank you for your support.*

*Please do get in touch if you have any questions or ideas for future work.*

*Simon Richards*

*Chief Officer*

*Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire*



## Household Support Fund.

(Peter)



The Household Support Fund (HSF) is a grant, usually in the form of supermarket or fuel vouchers. The government has funded local councils to set up schemes to help those in greatest need. In the CASL area, Citizens Advice have helped the district councils by identifying clients in need, assessing the best forms of help, and completing application forms. The current phase of the scheme closed at the end of March 2022, although new funding from April is expected.

### Report on the scheme

(Cameron CASL Coordinator)

#### Headline Stats

Total Clients Supported	539
Clients Supported by dedicated paid resource	289
Clients Supported by core provision	250
Average Expected Award (when recorded)	£311

#### Amount Generated

It is hard to ascertain the total amount of income generated by Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire as data has not been recorded for outcomes on the majority of cases.

From those cases where an outcome is recorded the average expected award is £311. If each client had applied once total income would be £167,629. We estimate that around 20% of people that we helped were repeat applications.

#### Issues from Clients

The most common issues leading to an application were the rising cost of living, low income both from benefits and employment, and debt. Further to the most common issues, we have supported clients fleeing from domestic violence, moving into new properties, and dealing with the impacts of COVID.

#### Issues in Delivery

The major issue with delivering the HSF was in keeping up with the demand, as resources were initially limited to the Session Service Coordinator team and volunteer advisors. This placed pressure on the core service which led to the need to recruit paid staff in order to allow advisors to focus on the core service.



With the paid resource in place pressure was reduced on the core service, however a number of increases in hours was required to meet the increasing demand. The advice given to clients was limited by the number of applications needing to be made, this led to additional demand on our core service for follow up advice.

We are grateful that Lincolnshire County Council provided some funding to help meet this demand, although it only met around half the cost of the additional resource. The rest was provided from our local charity's funds.

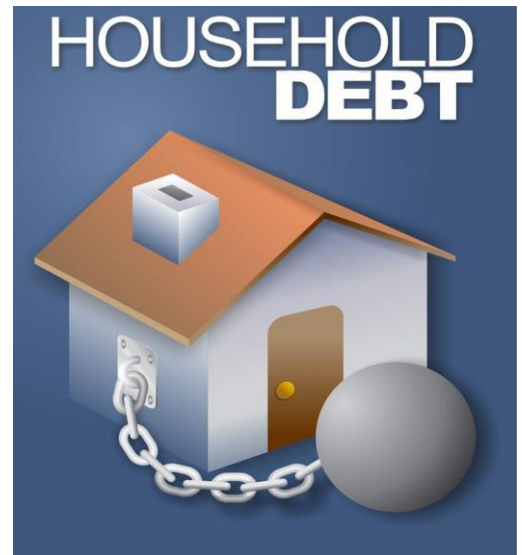
We believe we are well-placed to help with any future scheme, as we help to address people's problems as well as providing access to support, thus helping with longer-term solutions.

## Case Studies.

*(Peter)*

In order to understand why the extra help from the Household Support Fund is so necessary, these case studies tell you a little more about our clients who we have helped to access help. Typically, the client will be reliant on benefit income, often Universal Credit. They may be unable to work due to disability or caring responsibilities. Those in work will be on low income.

- A couple living in South Holland told us they were struggling to pay their utility bills and were in debt. The client works but is on low income while his partner is disabled and cannot work. The Household Support Fund grant was appreciated as it helped them with their fuel bills and weekly shopping.
- A single mother from the Stamford area can only work part-time due to childcare responsibilities and gets Universal Credit to supplement her income. She has arrears on her water bill and is struggling to pay other bills due to price rises. The HSF grant helped her relieve the financial pressure.
- A disabled single mother from the Grantham area is entirely reliant on benefit income. Her benefits have not kept pace with price rises, leaving her with significant debts, including utility bills. Again, HSF was a welcome, if short term, relief.
- A couple with two young children told us about their worries about keeping up with inflation in their bills. The client is disabled and receives PIP, but she has seen her income from benefits unchanged as prices rise alarmingly. The family are barely managing to pay for essentials despite taking care with their budgeting and trying to economise. They made good use of the grant.
- A single mother who works part-time reported that she is struggling to afford everyday essentials. Although Universal Credit supplements her income from work it is often a problem to afford to top up her gas and electricity meters to ensure the family have power and warmth. Household Support vouchers for fuel and food shopping were very welcome.
- A pensioner couple with one of them disabled reported that their income was not enough to live on. They were accumulating debt on their household bills. As well as being given debt advice, vouchers from the Support Fund were issued to help.



## Citizens Advice crisis support record broken again in March

Report dated 31 March 2022



Ahead of tomorrow's rise in the energy price cap, Citizens Advice has for the third month in a row broken its bleak record for providing crisis support.

In March 2022 so far, the charity referred 24,752 people to food banks or to other charitable support, up by 44% compared to the same time last year.

Research from the charity has revealed that around five million people will be unable to pay their energy bills from April even accounting for the support the government has already announced. This number will almost triple, to 1 in 4 people in the UK - over 14 million - when the price cap rises

again in October based on current predictions.

With the cost-of-living crisis ramping up, Citizens Advice frontline advisers from opposite ends of the country have shared their perspective on the problems rising costs are causing.

**Conal, an adviser for Citizens Advice in Blackpool, which according to government figures is the most deprived council in England said:**

"Heat or eat choices were sadly common in Blackpool even before price hikes, but the stories are getting worse.

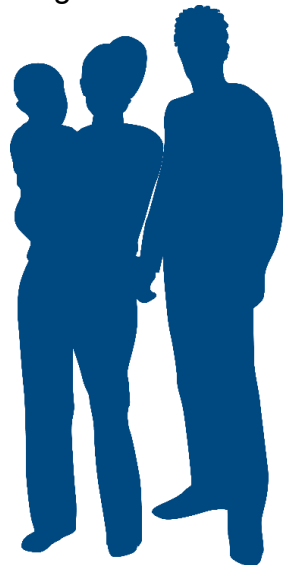
"One person we helped had a broken boiler they couldn't afford to fix so they were boiling the kettle and washing themselves in the sink. Another couldn't cover the cost of using the oven or hob so they're surviving on microwave meals. Parents have resorted to handwashing clothes and skipping meals just so they can provide for their kids.

"We do our absolute best to give people support and advice, but sometimes we're running up against a brick wall. People simply don't have enough to cover the basics and a fuel voucher or food bank referral can only go so far."

**Simon, an adviser at Citizens Advice in Hart in Hampshire, which according to government figures is the least deprived council in England said:**

"We have seen a notable uptick in people seeking debt advice and needing energy grants or foodbank vouchers. I can't see this going down anytime soon - and this will have a big knock-on impact on people's relationships and mental health.

"Hart may be an affluent area, but we're seeing a real imbalance between those who can and can't afford the essentials."



## Evidence forms March 2022.

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 March.

Type	Number
Universal Credit	11
Housing	9
Benefits	4
Employment	4
Consumer	3
Debt	3
Finance	2
Utilities	1
Travel	1
Education	1
Other	1
Immigration	0
Legal	0
Health	0
Discrimination & Hate	0
Tax	0
Relationships	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</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@citizensadviceSouthlincs.org.uk](mailto:impactofficer@citizensadviceSouthlincs.org.uk).