

Research and Campaigns Bulletin

June 2023

Financial Stress & Cost of Living

**Local residents remain under
immense pressure in the face of
rising costs**

Our data is telling us that families, couples and young people are facing heavy burdens due to financial stress.

Our unique position as a local advice provider means that we can offer real-time insights into how local residents are being affected. In January to March 2023, compared to January to March 2022, we saw the following increases:

There has been a 24% increase in issues relating to Divorce and Separation, which includes an increase in problems around financial liabilities

121%

Increase in all Financial Crisis issues

Local wards with a large proportion of debt issues also show the highest proportion of issues related to Domestic Violence and Abuse

174%

Increase in issues relating to Benefit Entitlement and Eligibility

126%

Increase for Charitable Support and Foodbank Referrals

91%

Increase in all Debt issues

Well-being Impact



We have seen a 38% increase in issues related to Personal Independence Payments. Disability Rights UK reports that around 1/3 of new claims are for Mental Health related conditions.



Charity MIND reports that the mental health of 78% of people has been affected by financial crisis, increasing to 94% for those with pre-existing conditions.

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citizens
advice

Bournemouth
Christchurch
& Poole

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Case Study of our clients James and Lauren* from Poole

*Names and personal details have been changed

James and his wife Lauren are struggling with their finances. They have accrued some debts and have a deficit budget each month. Although their rent is affordable, the service charge on their accommodation is particularly high. This is because energy is provided communally, so their heating and hot water is included in the service charge, but the amount is very high due to energy costs.

James explained that he suffered with depression and anxiety linked to his financial worries, and that both him and Lauren were using alcohol to cope with the stress they were under. Although they were spending money on alcohol, they did not show any signs of dependency.

Short term help was provided in the form of food bank vouchers and access to the Household Support Fund. This allowed the couple some time to consider their options. Our adviser then checked their benefit entitlement. They were due more in Housing Benefit, and they were reminded that Lauren would benefit from changes to the minimum wage. This increased the couple's income.

Our adviser created a budget and demonstrated how much money was being spent on alcohol and tobacco. We suggested that cutting back on both could help James and Lauren to balance their budget. They were also paying too much for broadband and were shown how to shop around for a cheaper deal, as they were out of contract. The couple were given information on priority and non-priority debts, and on how to tackle these debts. They were signposted to a debt adviser.

James and Lauren were also signposted to Live Well Dorset for help with reducing smoking and were made aware of alcohol support services to use if they found it hard to reduce their alcohol consumption.

After making these changes, they still could not afford their non-priority debt repayments. The debt casework is ongoing and James and Lauren's mental health is still impacted considerably by the position in which they have found themselves.