

Research and Campaigns Bulletin

December 2023

2023: A year like no other

This year saw us break many unwelcome records. In this quarter's bulletin, we look at the highs and lows of 2023, and share ideas about how we can make 2024 better for people living in BCP.

*All data is from January to November 2023. Comparisons are made with January to November 2022.



This year we saw a **31%** increase in all issues reported to us.

People across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole came to us for help with **63,316** issues. Our volunteers gave over **13,900** hours of their time to support clients.

Demand for help from Charitable Support and Foodbanks grew by 121%.

A much larger percentage of our clients needed support from the Household Support Fund this year.



Issues around utilities, especially energy, grew by more than 80%.

As 2024 approaches, energy prices will rise again. With many clients struggling in fuel poverty, we expect January to be one of our busiest ever months.

How are we helping?

This year, additional funding has enabled Citizens Advice BCP to deliver targeted advice and support to an extra 1,528 people, as well as the 16,000 already supported.



This support is delivered through 22 outreaches, 12 specialized projects, digital and telephone advice, and work with our community partners.

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Making a difference

What could be done to improve
things for people across
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole?

Housing

Following collaborative campaigns, Local Housing Allowance rates will be unfrozen in 2024/25. Despite this positive step, LHA rates will regrettably freeze again from 2025/2026, eroding generosity over time as rental prices inevitably rise.



Citizens Advice will continue to advocate for a full program of housing market reform that reduces private tenants' exposure to unaffordable rent rises.

Benefit uprating

Successful campaigning by charities such as ours meant that the government will uprate benefits by 6.7% in 2024/2025. This will help many people across BCP whose lives are affected by Cost of Living increases.

Local welfare

Local welfare funding doesn't compensate for gaps in the wider welfare system. It's designed to be a short term fix only. Citizens Advice's aim is to help clients to make longer term changes where possible.

Energy

All of our data indicates that this winter will be difficult for many of our clients. No new targeted support has been announced by the government, and we are yet to see a move towards social tariffs for energy.

Citizens Advice are continuing to advocate for energy market reform to benefit our clients, as well as bill support and energy efficient homes.



In 2024 we will also be undertaking more **targeted work with those of pensionable age and above**. In partnership with Independent Age, we will provide more support to assist older people with income maximization.