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Charity launches cost of living crisis in the city report

Local charity, Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove undertook a study to look at the combined impacts of price pressures on city residents.

The data shows that poverty in the city is much worse than before the pandemic. It affects more households with an 84% increase in households depending on Universal Credit who are unemployed, an additional 4135 households. Child poverty figures were at 24% in Hove and Pavilion and at 32% in Kemptown. It is anticipated that these figures once updated will worsen as children entitled to free school meals in the city rose by 17% by 2021.

Households most likely to be in the deepest poverty are:

- Single parent households
- Households where someone has a disability
- Households where the head of household is from a BAME community

In addition, in our city households renting are likely to have more poverty and rents rose from between 9% - 25% depending on the type of property being rented since the pandemic began. Putting additional penalties on renters. Our city has a high dependence on private rented housing at 28% of all households.

The report found that disabled people suffered worst on every measure during the pandemic and the decision making process to access benefits is completely broken with 74% of PIP claims that were turned down in the first instance being overturned and 67% of ESA claims also overturned on appeal.

The mental health of all groups but particularly young people and disabled people were significantly affected by the pandemic and rates remain higher than

before the pandemic which means that clients accessing support and advice from our advice partnership have more complex needs and need more support to deal with their issues.

There are many universal cost of living pressures but the most serious in terms of rate of price increase is the cost of utilities at 54% and potentially a further 20% in October. For those in the deepest poverty the outlook for winter 2022/2023 is incredibly bleak. Already clients who most need to take care of their health are turning off power in their homes. In wintertime when we expect a further price rise in utilities, both the health impacts and the safety concerns become critical.

For the first time in working memory we have a cohort of clients where no matter what we or they do for themselves, will not be able to heat or eat on an ongoing basis rather than in a crisis or where an unexpected expense arises.

Partnership Manager, Emma Daniel said:

“Services which normally provide limited crisis help will need to consider changing our models and providing ongoing support such as food or fuel vouchers in order to prevent serious health impacts. It will be important for services to distinguish carefully the difference between extreme poverty and neglect and not penalise people for being poor but provide emergency relief where that is the issue. Schools and charities will find themselves on the front line of a poverty bomb next winter that we have never experienced before and find hard to contemplate.”

Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove is working with other advice charities, the city's food partnership and the council to work together to meet the challenges of poverty. Emma Daniel explained:

“We are working with the fire service to help more households have free home safety measures fitted ahead of a winter where we expect to see more injuries and accidents caused by using candles and other items which are less safe than an electric light or cooker.”

"We are talking to public health about the concern that people might not collect prescriptions because it means missing meals and we are working to make the charitable and council level safety nets stretch as far as we can."

There is help and advice for people struggling with keeping their utilities switched on and grants available throughout the year. Contact either Citizens Advice either by telephone 08082 78 78 15 or Moneyworks advice line 0800 988 7037. Sometimes lines are busy but you can submit an online enquiry via our website - <https://www.cabrightonhove.org/online-enquiry/>

Notes

The full report can be found [here](#).

The report summary and recommendations can be found [here](#).

Donate to Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove [here](#).

To discuss this release please contact our spokesperson Emma Daniel by email emma.daniel@cabrightonhove.org .