**News Release 13 12 21**

**Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove warn of rising debt and winter cost of living crisis**

Rises in the cost of living are having a devastating effect on local people and driving up debt warns Citizen Advice Brighton and Hove.

First the first time in years debt enquiries have overtaken requests for benefit advice at the charity. In November the need for help with council tax debt increased by 100 per cent and fuel debts by 80 per cent compared to October.

Chief executive officer Jo Carden says: “The triple impact of the £20 cut in Universal Credit, the leap in energy prices and the predicted 5 per cent inflation next year is creating a perfect storm for clients on low incomes.”

In Brighton and Hove demand for food parcels in 2020 was almost four times higher than 2019. Numbers decreased this year but are still well over double that of pre-pandemic levels. National Energy Action (NEA), the national fuel poverty charity, forecast that fuel bills are expected to rise by almost £500 per year from April 2022. This will coincide with the hike in National Insurance for working people.

As a campaigning organisation Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove are backing the [national office in its demand that the government](https://wearecitizensadvice.org.uk/the-government-must-act-now-to-avoid-a-cost-of-living-crisis-this-winter-c981842eb09b) take immediate steps to avoid a winter cost of living crisis. They are asking for benefits to be raised in line with inflation and to pause deductions from benefits for advance payments and historic overpayments.

Jo added: “We are always here to offer free money advice but we can also point to groups that can offer practical help for those struggling to afford food and fuel.

The council’s [website](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/household-support-fund) has up-to-date information about support available over Xmas and winter.”

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People can contact Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove on: freephone 08082 78 78 15 and online at [www.cabrightonhove.org](https://www.cabrightonhove.org/)

Moneyworks also provides money, debt and benefits advice, on: 0800 988 7037

**Notes to editors**

**Case study**

Client is a single mother of three on Universal Credit (UC) who has been unable to work since 2020 and has a physical impairment. She is struggling to make ends meet and the amount of debt to her energy provider is growing. We advised her that she might be eligible for the disability benefit Personal Independence Payment (PIP) but there is a four month wait for the PIP assessment. She has money deducted from her UC every month to pay for the advance on the benefit she claimed while she was waiting six weeks for the first payment. We are looking for short term grants and foodbank help this winter. She has a very large council tax bill that she can no longer afford and we are helping her with debt advice.

Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove staff and volunteers are available for interview:

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[Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove](https://www.cabrightonhove.org/) is an independent charity and part of the Citizens Advice network whose goal is to help everyone find a way forward, whatever problem they face. We provide free, confidential and impartial advice as well as campaigning on the issues affecting people’s lives.