

# The cost of living crisis - the challenges and the support on offer

## September 2022

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### **Introduction:**

This short report is based on the experiences of 14 staff from 10 older people's organisations across Leeds. Most, but not all, were Enhance partners.

We wanted to get a feel for how the cost of living crisis was affecting both organisations and their participants, and identify what measures different organisations already had in place.

### **Issues for organisations**

Some organisations were focussed on their own energy bills, especially as they wanted to be able to offer extra activities for both older people and other members of the community. Some thought it might mean people would be asked to work from home more.

A major concern was the impact worries about cost of living was having on their time - instead of doing case work people were spending time offering advice and reassurance.

The organisations involved in food banks or pantries were concerned they would see a big upturn in demand.

There was already some evidence of increased attendance at groups but it wasn't yet clear if this was related to people's fuel bills or recovery from post covid anxiety.

There was fear about what they would do if they identified someone who simply could not pay and they were unable to help.

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## Individual Concerns

Anxiety, concern and confusion about **fuel bills**, taking **meter readings**, how to **claim rebates** and **bill related scams**. No-one had seen evidence of actual issues yet. Information overload on mainstream media meant people were worrying when they might not need to.

## Sources of information

[Money Buddies](#) Advice Sessions are invaluable. Some organizations host them, others refer people to other sessions. They cover the whole of Leeds.

[Green Doctor](#) is great - again they take referrals from organisations and individuals. Importantly they can help both with small jobs and also help people to switch (when that becomes sensible again), and to access financial initiatives to contribute towards their bills.

People are using handouts that show costs of running appliances.

## Practical help

Some older people's organisations are part of the [Leeds Community Anchor network](#) and are in receipt of money through the Household Support Fund - they are doing a range of things to support those members of their community in most need. These include

- Opening their centres for extra sessions, offering hot drinks and snacks, providing digital support, board games and crafts. They may provide hot meals later in the winter.
- Food support is being provided through local pantries (some of which are being expanded), food banks, emergency food parcels for Enhance patients and providing food vouchers.
- Some are using the money for additional quilts for beds or getting cosy on the sofa to delay turning on the heating, and providing thermal wear - for adults and children - socks, hats, long johns and long janes etc

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All these things help people to remain socially connected and keep their spirits up in a warm space where they don't have to worry about their heating. It encourages people to get out of the house - get some daylight and keep moving.

If your organisation is not the Community Anchor network in your area we would recommend you find out who is so you are able to advise your members to visit them.

**Care & Repair** have received funding through the West Yorkshire Winter Pressures Safer Homes Proposal.

This is enabling them to provide a wide range of practical support to those who qualify for Home Plus. They are able to assess people's homes to identify whether small appliances might help people to cook and heat more efficiently. They might include things like microwaves, air fryers, slow cookers, under-blankets, heated throws and oil filled radiators.

They are taking referrals from organisations rather than individuals.

### **Sources of advice originally included in the LOPF Bulletin 22nd September 2022**

#### **Money and Debt**

[Charis](#) - used to be Let's Talk - for individual grants

[Citizens Advice](#) can help check whether people are eligible for grants and benefits to help with energy bills

[Turn2us](#) is a national charity that helps people in financial hardship to gain access to welfare benefits, charitable grants and support services – online. It has some simple calculators.

The [Good Law Project](#) offers a lot of advice to people picking their way through the maze of benefits and support available.

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## Fuel

[Citizens Advice](#) in Leeds are the go to for a lot of help for people, but for those who can't get help from them or want to start doing something directly you can go to [Northern Powergrid](#) to register people as priority customers.

If organisations are thinking of opening up their buildings as 'warmbanks' then they can get advice and support here: [Warm Welcome Campaign - the community response to the cost of living crisis](#)

