

National Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice South Somerset
Cost of Living Briefing 17th August 2022

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Across the 260+ members of Citizens Advice nationally there is evidence that “**winter problems**” **are coming up in the summer** and an accelerating rise in people who can’t afford to top up pre-payment meters (**households on a pre-payment meter have no access to power** when they can’t put money on the meter – can’t keep the fridge, lights, internet on).

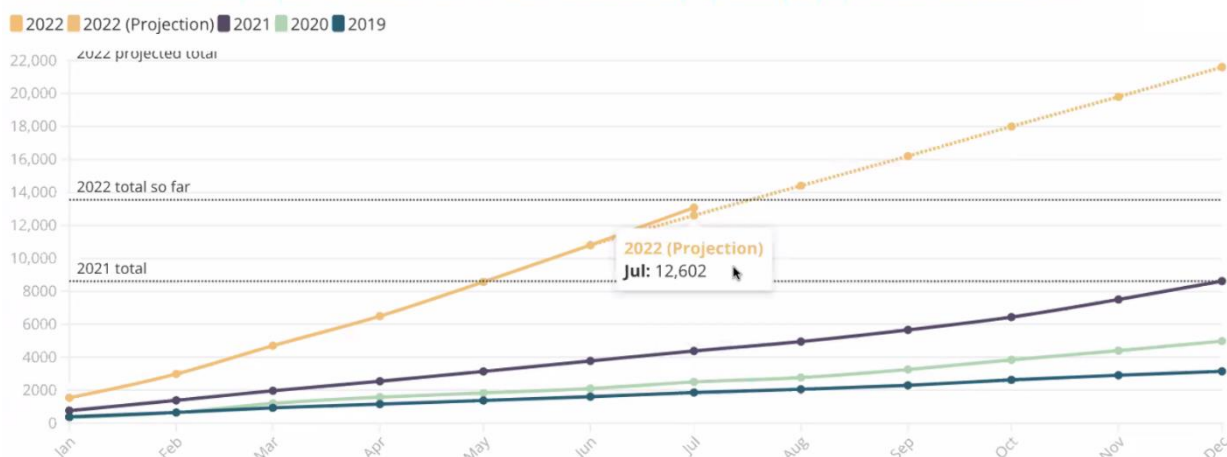
National Citizens Advice Forecast of changes in clients advice needs due to CoLC identifies that 1 in 4 people are not going to be able to pay their energy bills as they can’t make ends meet (just don’t have enough money coming in) when the next price cap takes effect. That forecast goes up to 1 in 3 in January. National Citizens Advice recommend two principles that can guide policy makers:

- 1) Target support to those who need it most
 - 2) Prevent the worst happening if people can’t pay their bills
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- 1) Targeting is needed because over half of those who won’t make ends meet (be able to pay their bills) **are not in receipt of means tested benefits** so the help needs to extend to them.
 - a. Policy campaigning from Citizens Advice is suggesting that Government brings forward the benefit up lift that is planned to be awarded in September but not effective until April – bring it into households income sooner
 - b. Increase the support for people living with health conditions – eg boost one off CoLC payments to disabled people
 - 2) For those that cant’ pay their bills we need to prevent the worst happening
 - a. Targeting Ofgem to ensure people don’t get moved onto a pre-payment meter when they can’t pay. Clients on a pre-payment meter have no access to energy when they can’t put money in the meter.
 - b. Make sure people are not chased by debt collectors when they can’t pay

What National Citizens Advice Network Members are Reporting:

- 1) The anticipated demand for advice from people with problems with their pre-payment meters **has exceeded National Citizens Advice Forecasts** (see debt below)

Cumulative number of people we’ve seen who’ve been unable to top up their prepayment meters each year



Homelessness

Pre pandemic the highest housing issue that our clients experienced was being threatened with homelessness.

Across the Citizens Advice Network the highest demand for housing advice is now from people who are experiencing **actual homelessness or seeking advice on making applications to local homelessness services.**

Benefits

The National Citizens Advice public website (www.citizensadvice.org.uk) page views demonstrate a very **steep increase in visits to PiP pages (personal independence payments for people of working age)** and to advice for those affected by the **Cost of Living Crisis.**

The steep increase in seeking advice for PIP is evidence that the Cost of Living Crisis is really affecting disabled people and **Cost of Living issues are now the biggest issues for disabled people** using Citizens Advice compared with two years ago.

The extra costs of disability are linked to higher energy use and therefore a disproportionately increased impact from the CoLC (eg dialysis, oxygen and equipment at home)

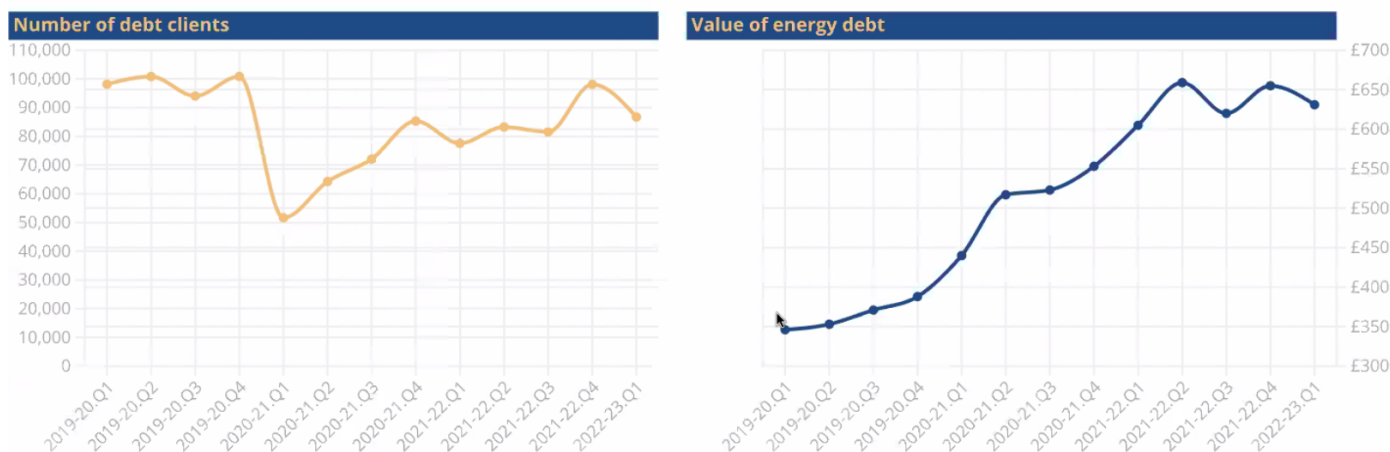
Debt

Pre-pandemic the most common debt advice among Citizens Advice clients was Council Tax and Rent Arrears.

Energy debt is now the biggest debt advice need and the amount of **debt per client has increased considerably.**

we'll update these charts quarterly.

The number of people we've helped with debt issues and the value of energy debt



Data for England and Wales. This data will be updated in October 2022.



<https://public.flourish.studio/story/1243816/>