



Cost of Living Support for Families

November 2022

Over the past few months many people in East Sussex have experienced increases in the cost of living. This has left many facing tough decisions about how to spend their money, and many others in need of advice and financial support to afford rent, fuel bills and everyday items. To help with these issues we are continuing to collate local and national resources.

This newsletter is intended as a resource for practitioners to use to support families, it hasn't been created as something to be sent directly to families/residents. The content in it might be useful to inform work with families during casework, when signposting or referring onwards.

The ESCC webpages are currently being updated with cost-of-living information for residents: [Support with the cost of living | East Sussex County Council](#)

Government Support

The government has created a web area for families to find out what support they could be eligible for e.g. Universal Credit, Child Benefit, Working Tax Credit and Disability Benefit: [Help for Households - Get government cost of living support](#)

Benefits Calculators

Free on-line checkers. Answer questions about savings, income and outgoings to get benefit advice for you, your family or someone you work with:

[Benefits Calculator - entitledto - independent | accurate | reliable](#)

[Benefits calculators - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Household Support Extended

In May, the government announced a further extension of the Household Support Fund which will run from October until the end of March 2023. We will be working with schools, further education, and Early Years providers to issue food vouchers to all families with eligible children/students for the school holidays.

Eligible school pupils should automatically receive HUGGG food vouchers ahead of each holiday. Eligible children with Early Years providers will also receive vouchers to cover this period. For more information on the HUGGG voucher system and how it works, please visit:

[Redeeming vouchers - Huggg Public Sector \(zendesk.com\)](#)

For any other query please contact: freeschoolmeals@eastsussex.gov.uk or sles.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk

DWP - Universal Credit & cost of living payment

Urgent reminder for colleagues working with families or individuals receiving DWP benefits including Universal Credit:



Unfortunately, we have recently had 13 Universal Credit cases where approx. **£80,000+** of Universal Credit has been overpaid to claimants open to support services, including Children's Services. In each case, the claimant did not report changes to their circumstances by updating their Universal Credit account and continued to be overpaid every month. In one case, the overpayment was £1000 per month. This money will have to be paid back to DWP.

If you are supporting anyone receiving DWP benefits and you are aware of a change to their circumstances, **please remind and encourage them to inform DWP of ANY changes of circumstances.**

The claimant has a responsibility to notify DWP of changes, any overpayment of Universal Credit must be paid back, regardless of how they occur. Circumstance changes that should have been updated in these situations were changes to the family unit:

- children no longer in the household
- separation between partners / partner no longer in the household
- new partner joined the household
- changes of address (including move to Emergency, Supported or Temporary Accommodation)
- change of phone numbers or email addresses

Please be aware that only one parent (the claimant with primary care) can be paid benefits for a child. Overpayments will occur both parents receive benefit payments for the same child. This happens when a couple separate and do not update DWP of their change to circumstances.

Universal Credit claimants can log into their claim account and see their monthly statement which gives a full breakdown of their payment including detailing members of the family unit included in the amount. Claimants can also update their circumstances here.

Please contact the relevant Employment Advisor if you have any queries or need advice:

Catherine Sheppard (Early Help Teams covering Hastings, St Leonards & Rother)

07768 933495 catherine.sheppard@eastsussex.gov.uk

Jackie Bromfield (Early Help Teams covering Eastbourne, Wealden, Lewes & Havens)

07557 158953 jacqueline.bromfield@eastsussex.gov.uk

Tracey Hutton (All other teams including Social Care Family Keywork)

07741 674013 tracey.huttonCS@eastsussex.gov.uk

Cost of Living: Please see link below for details on the Cost-of-Living payment. The second payment will be paid for the most people automatically during the period 8th to 23rd November. The qualifying dates for the second payment are 26/08/22 to 25/09/22 (dates when benefit was payable): [Cost of Living Payment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living-payment)

East Sussex Library Service

There is lots to do for free at your local library. It's easy to become a member and adults and children and take out up to 20 books at a time. We run regular Rhymetimes and Storytimes for under 5s. For older children there are weekly Homework and Activity Clubs at Uckfield, Newhaven, Eastbourne, Seaford and Hastings Library.



This month we are celebrating games month. There will be open game sessions across the county for grown-ups and little ones to come and play some fantastic family games. We also have a special games event with Bella Learning at Seaford Library where families can enjoy learning and playing with primary education specialist Annabel Grey. This Christmas, we are excited to welcoming back the London Mozart Players who will be performing the classic tale 'A Christmas Carol' with live musicians. All of our events are free, go to eastsussex.gov.uk/libraryevents for more information and to book your place.

Community Fridge & Foodbank update

- **Uckfield Food Bank:** Uckfield Citizens Advice Bureau The Hub, Civic Approach, Uckfield, TN22 1AL (The hut near the civic centre, in Luxford car park Tel 01825 764940
- **Malling Food Bank:** now run from Kings Church in Brooks Road, Lewes Monday 12-2pm 07724504253 briankcfrench@gmail.com
- **Eastbourne Food Bank:** Unit 3, 55 Brompton Road, Eastbourne BN22 9AF, Tel: 01323 409925 E-mail: admin@eastbourne.foodbank.org.uk or Website: <https://eastbourne.foodbank.org.uk>
- There are seven foodbank satellites (distribution points) across Eastbourne. At least one Foodbank satellite runs every weekday between 10am-12pm. A member of Eastbourne Foodbank debt and welfare benefits advice team is available at each of these satellites.
- **Hailsham Community Fridge:** run by a charity Pass it On. The community fridge is daily 10a-4pm at Hailsham Children's Centre, Vega Close BN27 2JZ.



Help to Keep Warm

Plan to keep just one or two rooms warm safely:

[DIY hints and tips - Warm East Sussex](#)



Keep yourself Warm: [Heat the human not the home \(moneysavingexpert.com\)](#)

Ask for help, advice, and financial support:

- **East Sussex Warm Home Check service** offers free advice, along with home energy efficiency visits for eligible households: [Warm East Sussex - keep warm and well in East Sussex](#) or 0800 464 7307 or text WARM to 80011
- **Citizens Advice** offers energy advice, financial support and fuel vouchers: [Citizens Advice 1066 \(Hastings and Rother\)](#) or 01424 869 352

Household Support Fund

Families facing hardship can get help with essential household costs. If you are working within Children's Service Early Help Team, the Household support fund is administered by the Family Focus Team and can help with costs for food, clothing, bedding or health and hygiene.

Support is also available via local district and borough councils for emergency help with bills and other items, please signpost **ONLY** as the local authority will decide eligibility and arrange a payment if the applicant is entitled:

[Household Support Grants - Lewes and Eastbourne Councils \(lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk\)](#)

[Household Support Fund | Hastings Borough Council](#)

[Financial help for residents - Rother District Council](#)

[Household Support Fund - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council](#)

Residents of Lewes district can also apply for the Lewes District 'safety net' fund. More information can be found here:

[Lewes District Council Household Support Scheme - Appendix 1 \(lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk\)](#)

Help with Utility Bills

British Gas Energy Trust (not just for British Gas customers): [British Gas Energy Support Fund](#)
Southern Water Hardship Fund to provide additional assistance to individuals who are experiencing financial difficulty: [Customer Hardship Fund \(southernwater.co.uk\)](#)

Debt support

- [StepChange Debt Charity - Free Expert Debt Advice.](#)
- [Citizens Advice](#)
- [Options for paying off your debts: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Debt Advice Foundation - Call Our Debt Advisers Free On 0800 043 40 50](#)
- [National Debtline - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

East Sussex County Council have an incredible network of community groups, charities and other local organisations, which offer a wide range of support. We will continue to collate sources of help for families to send out to you - if you have any content either local or national, please send it to family.focus@eastsussex.gov.uk

