Chartered Institute of Housing

COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

The crisis worsens – how are social landlords responding?

A briefing from the Chartered Institute of Housing

July 2022

Welcome to Issue no.2

June's inflation was 0.3% higher than May and shows that the worrying rising trend continues. Experts are warning that inflation could hit 12% by October. It was the latest marker of a crisis that affects everyone, but with poorer households hit the hardest.

This CIH briefing is the second in a series. They address the question: 'what is the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on social housing tenants – and how should the sector respond?' The first edition set out the facts about the crisis. This edition includes more information on how the cost-of-living is worsening, what CIH's views are on the government's response so far and some of the steps social landlords are taking to help tenants.

Issues to be covered in future briefings include how changes in benefits have reduced the help available, and how the sector should handle the next round of rent increases.

Feedback on and input to these briefings is very welcome. Please email policyandpractice@cih.org.

Topics in this edition:

Latest evidence on the crisis

- In June, UK inflation increased again, to 9.4%, showing that the worrying trend continues. The ONS says that people are coping by cutting back on food/essential spending (41%), using savings (21%) and taking on debt (15%).
- The July report on energy pricing from the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee said, 'The impact of the energy price crisis on households is ongoing and severe, particularly in the context of the cost-of-living crisis and is likely to cause an unacceptable rise in fuel poverty and hardship this winter…. 'While we welcome the Government's May 2022 support package, it is no longer sufficient to respond to expected price increases come October. The Government must immediately update its support, targeting this at customers who are on low incomes, fuel poor, and in vulnerable circumstances….'
- Both Sainsburys and Marks and Spencer say that inflation will only get worse and that shoppers are turning to cheaper, frozen foods.
- 4.4 million households – one in six – are estimated to be in 'serious financial difficulties' according to the Financial Fairness Trust.
- Research from Cornwall Insight suggests energy bills could reach £3,244 a year in October, when the tariff is next adjusted, as wholesale prices continue to soar. The default tariff cap is expected to be raised again in January, to £3,363 a year.
- Analysis by the Centre for Cities thinktank shows that inflation is highest in the UK's poorest cities, with a clear north-south divide. London and Cambridge for example, face an annual inflation rate of 8.8% each – nearly 30% lower than in Burnley. Eight out of ten cities with the highest energy costs are located in the North, Midlands & Wales.
- Research by Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'left behind' neighbourhoods as part of its inquiry into levelling up, shows that high levels of debt, financial insecurity and fuel poverty in England's 'left behind' neighbourhoods mean residents will be hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis. 213 of the 225 'left behind' neighbourhoods (94.5%) have higher levels of fuel poverty than the national average.
- More than two million households have missed a bill payment every month this year, according to Which? This figure has been above two million every month so far up to June this year. Based on an online poll of 2,000 consumers, the tracker found that six in ten consumers said they had had to make an adjustment – such as cutting back on essentials or dipping into savings – to cover essential spending. The figure is similar to April and May's but much higher than a year ago, when it was about 40%.
- Single parents who are part of the Home Start Horizons project in Leicestershire talked to *The Guardian* about the cost-of-living crisis, after the Institute of Fiscal Studies published research showing that single parents are almost twice as likely to be in relative poverty as two-parent families.
- Laca, the school caterers trade body, says that beef and chicken are disappearing from school lunch menus because of rising prices. Many companies report that staples such as potatoes and pasta are increasingly expensive and difficult to source.
- Hestia, the domestic abuse charity, reports that the cost-of-living crisis is leading to an increase in domestic abuse cases and demand for refuge spaces. They have seen a 30% increase in demand for refuge spaces and support in the first quarter of 2022.
- England's leaky homes will cost poorer families £250 extra a year in wasted energy Says the LGA. Households are wasting £770 million a year as expensive heat leaks through walls, roofs, and windows of the poorly insulated homes in England's 'fuel poor' households.
- *The Guardian* has started a series called the heat or eat diaries. One diarist, Liz, says 'I'm being threatened with a visit from the bailiffs over my gas bill. Let them come – I've got nothing to give.'
- At the start of the year only 18% of households said they were cutting back on food spending; now the figure is 44% according to an Office of National Statistics survey - up 26% from start of year.
- Radical economist Michael Roberts looks at the evidence as to whether the world economy is heading for recession or not, and concludes that it is.

Energy bills in Great Britain are expected to soar this winter

How projections for the energy price cap from October 2022 have changed

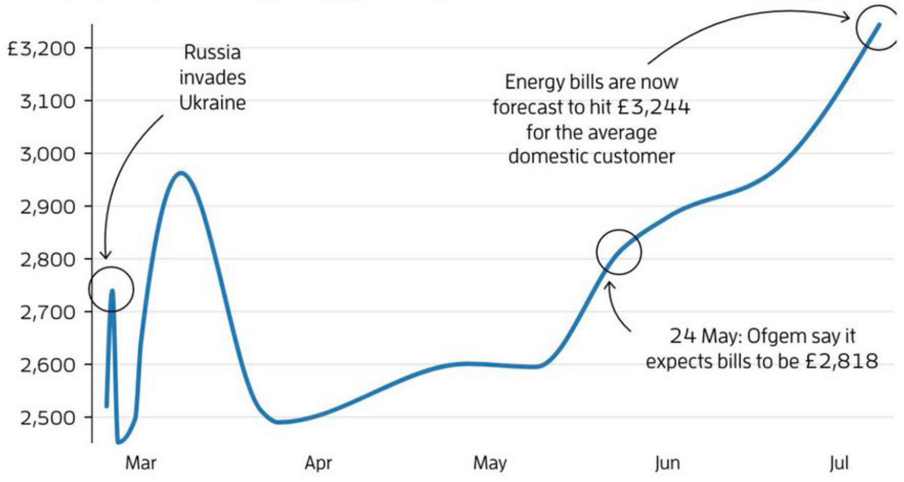


CHART: NEW SCIENTIST • SOURCE: CORNWALL INSIGHT

Top and bottom five inflation rates across the country for May 2022

City	Top five	City	Bottom five
Burnley	11.5%	**Milton Keynes**	9.6%
Blackpool	11.0%	**Reading**	9.4%
Blackburn	11.0%	**Oxford**	9.3%
Bradford	10.9%	**Cambridge**	8.8%
Leicester	10.8%	**London**	8.8%

Source: Centre for Cities.

How the crisis affects social tenants

The Resident Voice Index™ is a long-term project from MRI Software that seeks to provide all stakeholders in UK social housing with insights into the residents' perceptions and what can be done to help improve their lives. Their third report, 'Surviving but not living', which was published in June is based on a survey of 5,231 social housing residents between late March and early May. Resident Voice Index™ describes some of its conclusions as 'saddening', highlighting the acute requirement for our society to attempt everything possible to ease the cost-of-living burden for many people in the UK.

Households are making tough choices in the face of these challenges, one of the biggest indicators of this was how often the word 'food' was mentioned in answers. Many parents are skipping meals to feed their children, the use of food banks is increasing, and some residents are eating only cold food to avoid using energy.

'Can't cut back on anything as I already don't overspend on a thing, I can't possibly cut back as I already don't have money to spend.'
Resident Voice Index™ survey respondent

Key findings

- 68% of social housing residents were worried about being able to meet normal monthly living expenses all or most of the time.
- Over half (56%) didn't know that help or support would be available to them if they faced a financial struggle.
- Over half (53%) had used credit or buy-now-pay-later services to cover their monthly household essential needs.
- 38% of those used these services often.
- Almost 9 in 10 people under 35 were currently using or considering using buy-now-pay-later services or credit to pay for essential household costs.
- 82% of under-35s reported being worried all or most of the time about meeting normal monthly living expenses.

A core theme that emerged was that there is nothing more to cut; many indicated that they were living on shoestring budgets to begin with. For many, this is not an instance of forgoing holidays, trips out with the family or self-proclaimed luxuries. Instead, it's applying pressure to already bare-bones living.

Ipsos research

Research by Ipsos (published 7 June 2022) shows that those who rent are most likely to be worried about housing costs - 54 percent said they were concerned about their ability to pay their rent. In comparison, only 14 percent of those who own their property were worried and 39 percent of those with a mortgage concerned. Similarly, renters (59 percent) were most likely to be worried about whether they would be able to pay for their homes in 12 months' time.

'So far, the cost-of-living crisis has focused on increases in food and energy prices, but increases in rents and mortgage repayments could see an additional squeeze on households. … Before the pandemic, 31% of people said they were very or fairly worried about paying for housing in 12 months' time, but the proportion has grown to 41%'.

(Ben Marshall, Ipsos Research Director)

CIH views on the crisis submitted to the Work and Pensions Committee

The House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee is carrying out an inquiry into the cost-of-living crisis and the government's response to it. In June, CIH submitted its [views](#) to the inquiry. Here is a brief summary. More details of the analysis for the CIH submission will be included in the next bulletin.

CIH welcomed the support package announced in May but believes more needs to be done. One-off payments cannot be a substitute for adequate basic benefits rates and proper indexing so that benefits maintain their real value. Basic benefits are now worth 11% less than they were a decade ago - that's equivalent to a benefit cut of £1,800 for a family with two children.

> *'One-off payments cannot be a substitute for adequate basic benefits rates and proper indexing so that benefits maintain their real value.'*

At the same time other welfare reforms have severely constrained households' ability to manage – especially the two-child limit and the benefit cap. Those with rent and mortgage payments are variously affected by the social sector size criteria (the 'bedroom tax'), the ongoing local housing allowance (LHA) freeze and the fact that basic benefits do not include any allowance for owner-occupier housing costs.

For childless households, the restoration of the £20 uplift (£1,040 pa) would more than restore the real value of benefits, with £400-600 left to provide much-needed support with fuel bills. 'However, for households with at least one child even the £20 uplift would not fully restore benefits to their 2012 value and the losses for larger households are substantial'.

We urged the government to:

- Fund local council tax support schemes so that working-age residents on the lowest incomes receive a 100 percent council tax rebate.
- Restore the £20 uplift to universal credit and uplift legacy benefits by £20.
- Commit that all benefits will be indexed by CPI for the lifetime of parliament. Introduce a double lock for working-age benefits to raise the standard of living.
- End the blight of child poverty in larger families by abolishing the two-child limit and the benefit cap.
- Extend the scope of section 150 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 to include LHA rates and reset all rates to the 30th percentile.

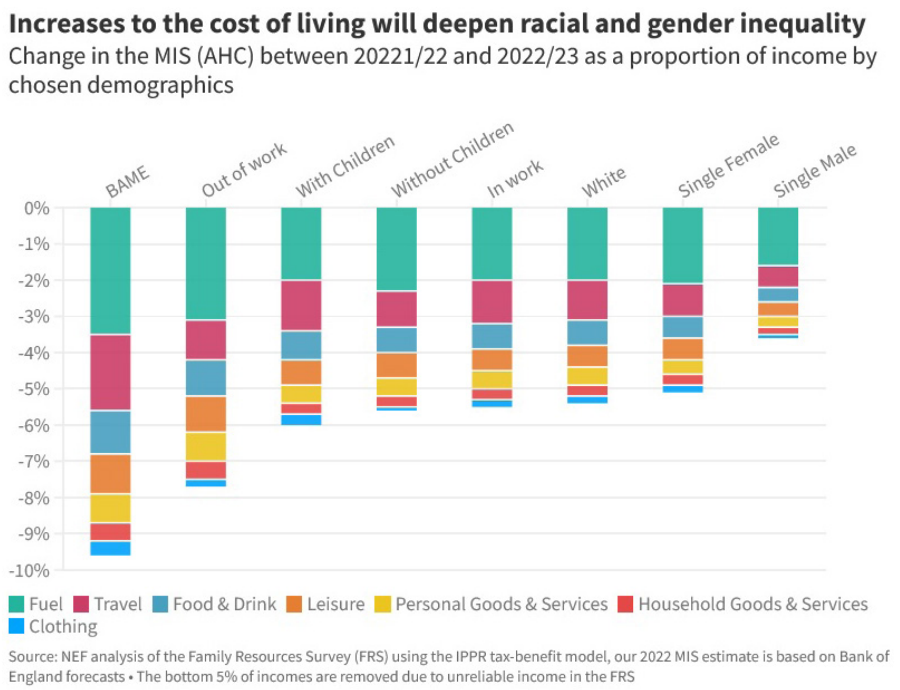
We also asked that owner-occupiers claiming universal credit who have taken out mortgage protection insurance for sickness, disability and unemployment have these disregarded (as in legacy benefits). Those who are unable to obtain insurance due to a pre-existing medical condition should be eligible for help with owner-occupier housing costs when out of work, without having to serve a waiting period.

> The Work and Pensions Committee report on cost of living, published 27 July, noted that "the context for the cost of living crisis and its impact on the poorest in our society reliant on social security support, particularly those of working age, must be recognised. According to the 2019 figures from the Resolution Foundation, social security spending will be around £34 billion lower in 2023–24 than it would have been if the 2010 social security system had remained in place."

Losing the inflation race – BAME households are most affected by the crisis

The [New Economics Foundation](#) (NEF) has used data from the Family Expenditure Survey to reveal the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on black, Asian or other ethnic minority (BAME) households.

Different demographics are affected differently (see chart).



Single female and BAME households are experiencing costs that are 50% higher than their male and white counterparts (respectively) as a portion of their income.

Single women will see average costs increasing by £1,400 (6% of income) compared to £1,110 (4% of income) for single adult male households.

White households are experiencing an average increase in the cost-of-living of £2,200 (5% of their income) while the increase for BAME households is £2,900 (8% of their income).

These outcomes are in part a reflection of pre-existing gender and racial inequalities such as those that contribute to [pay gaps in the labour market](#) and [unequal responsibility for childcare](#).

Black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani households are disproportionately likely to face low or very low food security and are significantly more likely to be social renters.

Sam Tims, a co-author of the NEF study, [told](#) *Inside Housing* that 'There's a couple of reasons why BAME households are more affected than white households. First, people from BAME backgrounds tend to be younger and in larger households, meaning their cost-of-living is higher.' He added that benefits policy, such as the two-child limit and other restrictions 'have disproportionately impacted BAME households, who also have lower incomes'.

‘Not heating, eating, or meeting bills’ – latest research on poverty and the cost-of-living

This year has seen low-income families going without essentials, building up arrears, and taking on debt just to get by, shows [new research from JRF] based on a survey of 4,000 people:

- Low-income families have fallen behind on payments by an average of £1,600. 4.6 million low-income households (40%) are behind on at least one bill – up by 20% since October
- About seven million households – equivalent to every family in the north of England - have missed out on essentials like heating, toiletries or showers because they couldn’t afford it this year or didn’t have enough money for food last month
- One in five (21%) low-income households, the equivalent of 2.3 million families, were going without enough food and were unable to keep their homes warm. A third (33%) of those who said they were going without essentials, said they had experienced having to go without four or more
- 1.3m low-income households (11%) have used credit to cover essentials this year
- Over two million households are in debt to high interest lenders like loan sharks or doorstep lenders.

> *‘The Chancellor’s support package, although welcome to tackle rising energy costs, doesn’t even touch the sides when it comes to the financial problems of low-income families highlighted in this extensive report.’*
>
> Comment from JRF research.

‘Not heating, eating or meeting bills’ (from the cover of the JRF report)

The report describes the impossible position people found themselves in choosing between paying rent on time or feeding their loved ones, in many cases unable to do either.

2.3m

households found it was not a choice of heating or eating - they had already gone without both.

People on low incomes have taken on £12.5 billion of new debt in 2022.

They owe a total of £3.5 billion to high-cost lenders including doorstep lenders and illegal loan sharks which can threaten their financial future. Families are already struggling to make repayments. **Arrears on all personal debt have more than doubled from £1.8 billion to £3.8 billion since October last year** and, with interest rates rising, JRF expects these arrears will spiral.

Benefit deductions are making a bad situation worse

According to information from the Department for Work and Pensions, almost half of households receiving universal credit (45%) have had money deducted from their allowance by the government. On average, people were losing £61 a month in deductions, it could be as much as £130.

Worryingly, the report has found that the government is causing severe hardship by collecting these debts, often at unaffordable rates. People forced to have ‘debt deductions’ are suffering more severely than other families.

> *‘The way government collects debts is making an already bad situation far worse, by making an already low basic rate of social security even lower still. It leaves too little to cover the essentials at the best of times, let alone during the biggest cost-of-living crisis in a generation – a crisis which shows no signs of abating.’*

JRF found that:

- 94% of UC recipients with a deduction were going without essentials, compared to a still shockingly high 76% of UC recipients without a deduction.
- On average, households facing deductions owed over £300 more in arrears than most low-income households.
- More than seven in ten (72%) UC recipients with deductions went hungry in the last 30 days, compared to a still too high four in ten (42%) without deductions.

JRF is calling on ministers to consider a simple fix to the spiralling financial woes of these families; let them pay back their debt more slowly rather than automatically clawing back up to a quarter each month from what people are entitled to.

3.6 million children are still living in poverty in the UK

New research from Loughborough University for the End Child Poverty Coalition shows that:

- 3.6 million children were living in poverty in 2020/21, or about eight children in a class of 30.
- Child poverty levels have remained alarmingly high over the last decade. The only year child poverty levels reduced by more than one percentage point since 2010 was 2020/21.
- Regionally the North East has seen the sharpest increase in child poverty levels at 38%, up seven percentage points from 2010/11.
- Highest rates of child poverty continue to be in major cities and London boroughs. Over half of children growing up in Tower Hamlets are living in poverty.

- **In 2020/21, two thirds of children in poverty lived in a working households where at least one adult is in work and 40% of children in lone parent households were in poverty (compared to 24% of those in couple parent households).**

- The latest data available show children from Black and minority ethnic groups are more likely to be in poverty, at 46%, compared with 26% of children in white British families.

On the End Child Poverty website, you can see a map which shows the data at local authority level.

'During 2020/21, a period of great disruption in many areas of life in the UK due to the Covid-19 pandemic, child poverty remained a major issue across the UK despite the additional support provided to low-income families via the £20 uplift to universal credit,' said the report's author, Juliet Stone, from the University's Centre for Research in Social Policy.

'There was wide variation between local areas in the impact of this policy and of the trends in child poverty. In particular, areas affected by already high rates of unemployment and in-work poverty, particularly in the North East of England and in Wales, saw substantial increases in child poverty.'

> *'The stark local and regional variation in child poverty rates, presented in this report suggest that the government's 'levelling up' agenda has a long way to go where child poverty is concerned,'*
>
> said the report's author.

Liv, one of the End Child Poverty youth ambassadors, made these comments of the research

With this year's childhood poverty statistics highlighting how 3.6 million children are living in poverty, I wanted to contribute my young person's perspective on what reality is like growing up in a deprived household.

From a young age I have always been acutely aware of my own social standing. Going to the local primary school in the middle of my council estate, I was surrounded by other young people, just like me. We all had a mutual understanding of some of the sacrifices that our parents were making, we could all tell who had come to school without having anything to eat and all shared a mutual frustration of being unable to help each other. I now hold all the guilt of knowing only two of our class have progressed to university come September. 23 of the talented, creative, and hugely intelligent young people are now stuck in the poverty cycle just like their parents before them.

Whilst in high school I had real difficulties creating friendships. My mum worked shifts in a restaurant and the unaffordable cost of childcare meant that we had to go with her. Because my mum was on a 0 hour contract on minimum wage, I could never create concrete plans to go out and see anybody, and therefore relied upon the short 15 and 30 min breaks to establish friendships. Ultimately, this led to me acting out in class as a way to generate attention and gain friendships. By the end of year nine I was sent to an alternative provision, also known as a 'behaviour school'. It was only very recently that I was able to link my experience of child poverty and my behaviour in high school.

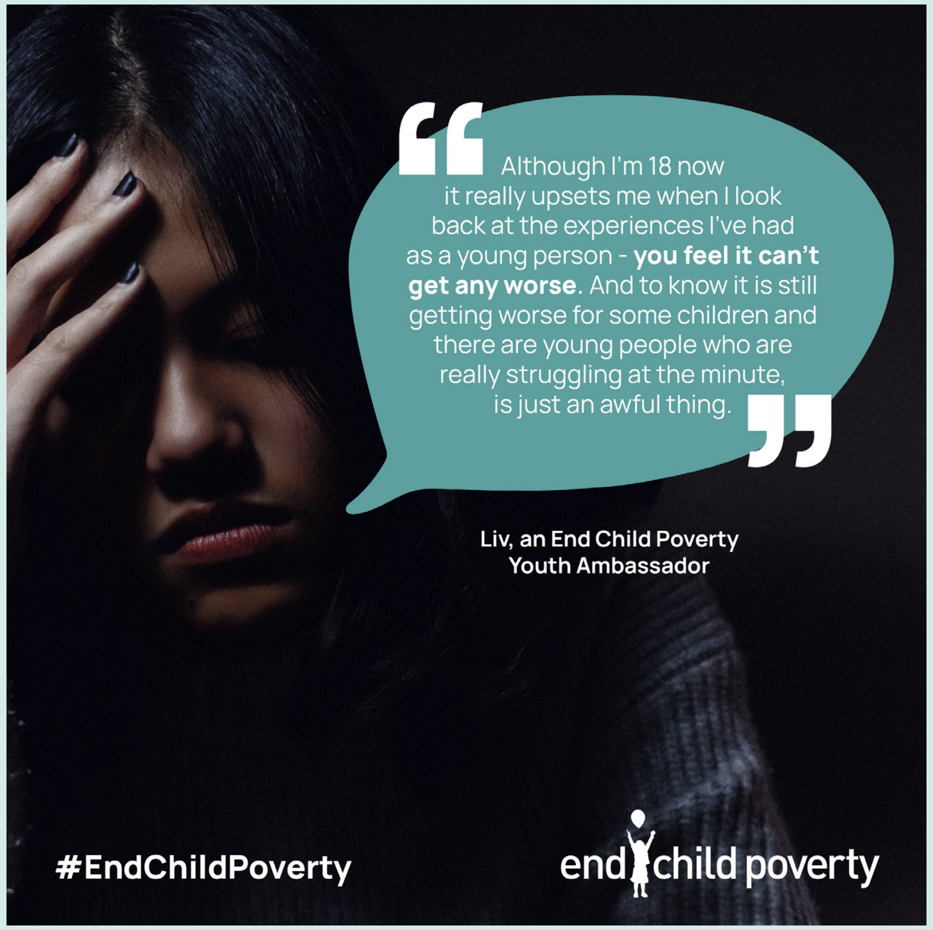
Whilst in my second high school, my mum had found more stable employment and I had come off free school meals. I had begun performing significantly better in school and had never been in any real trouble in school. Whilst simultaneously, in year 10 my school had established its own 'food pantry' in which we were encouraged to bring in food for them to distribute food parcels before we all went on half term. I will forever be haunted by my head of year telling me that the only reason why he was in school during the early first few days of Covid emerging whilst other schools were closed was because 'otherwise some of these kids won't get their scran' referring to free school meals. Although my life was improving and there was less of a struggle as previously, it was a horrible reminder that not everybody was as lucky.

For many, it is often difficult to fully sympathise with the struggles of growing up poor. This was something I very quickly established whilst moving up to further education surrounded by individuals who have never felt the guilt of knowing your mum has sacrificed her own meal so that you could have yours, or the shame attached with being one of a few individuals in school alone whilst everyone is out on a school trip which you could not afford. For the individuals I am now surrounded with, in my sixth form college, their parents biggest sacrifice is spending money on a tutor for them.

It is a hard pill to swallow knowing the issues you faced growing up are still rife today. I walk to college everyday passing children from my primary school with broken school shoes looking absolutely shattered as though they have not had anything to eat.

There is a narrative that the parents of those growing up in child poverty are lazy, and do not work hard enough and so therefore their children must 'deserve' to grow up so deprived. My single mother is the hardest worker I have ever known, I am so proud of the sacrifices she has made to get to where she is today. To suggest that she is lazy is an insult and undermines the experiences and challenges I faced whilst growing up.

The impact of growing up in poverty will stay with me forever. That is why I wanted to contribute my experiences, in this blog post, to ensure that policy makers and those without lived experience can have a greater insight into the struggles of growing up poor. My story is not exclusive to me, it's one of many and I hope that by sharing a small insight into these difficulties I, and the children I have grown up with, have had motivates decision makers to do more – no young person deserves to grow up in poverty.



How are social housing providers responding?

In the latest Resident Voice Index™ survey, housing providers were named as the second potential source of financial help and support (after Citizens Advice) for social housing residents.

Support for residents varies across organisations and includes offering fuel vouchers and money/energy advice. In a recent survey of housing providers by Inside Housing nearly 70 per cent of respondents said they intended to increase support now the energy price cap has been lifted. One organisation said it had invested an extra £1.5m in crisis support.

> *'Housing associations' roles will be ever more critical as we help our residents to navigate the deeply uncertain months ahead. As organisations rooted in our communities, we're well placed to help.'*
>
> (Matt Bayliss, L&Q Foundation)

A February 2022 study by Demos (supported by Hyde housing association), *The Bottom Line*, makes recommendations on potential actions for housing associations to help those already in arrears and to prevent arrears from happening. These included implementing proactive outreach, encouraging residents to seek help before missing payments, using modern technology to identify early warning signs, developing a network of proactive referrals via advice services and credit unions, and introducing flexible rent payment schemes.

The adoption of these schemes has already begun. HACT has launched 'FlexMyRent' with the Centre for Responsible Credit that allows residents to personalise their rent payments in accordance with their needs.

Midland Heart housing association estimates that around 80 percent of referrals to its money advice team relate to difficulties with the cost-of-living increase. The organisation helps with the provision of foodbank vouchers, shopping vouchers and vouchers for gas/electric top ups. They are also working with their building safety team to assist customers with large gas debts (which are identified when they attend to do a gas safety check).

Grand Union Housing Group

We asked Grand Union's Financial Wellbeing Team to give us some examples of residents they help and the typical problems they try to deal with. Grand Union has a debt advice team and a small fund to help with very severe needs, though this is heavily oversubscribed in the current crisis. Each local authority where they work has hardship schemes for those who are struggling, although with differing criteria for receiving support.

We understand that many of the big players in the energy industry, such as EDF and British Gas, sign up to energy trust funds and with individual advice agencies such as Citizens Advice, but accessing these can be difficult for vulnerable tenants so the help available is either small, non-uniform or complicated which strain a social landlord's resources and time.

Here are some examples of people Grand Union are currently helping with the crisis (names have been changed).

Sana's story

Sana is a single mum living with her son, Tariq, who receives disability benefit. She receives universal credit and disability living allowance (DLA) for her son. She runs a car and has additional costs relating to her son's needs - these are for things like extra educational resources at home. She also pays extra for certain television channels that help her son to relax when he feels overwhelmed.

As you will see from the figures below, she has no unnecessary expenditures. The figures do not include extras such as school clothing or children's hobbies because there just isn't room in her budget for it.

Sana cannot work because her child's additional needs require a lot of support from her and the school. She has been assessed as having the maximum benefit possible, but it is just not enough to make ends meet.

Monthly income	
Earnings	£0.00
Benefits and tax credits	£1,289.25
Total income	**£1,289.25**

Monthly outgoings - fixed costs	
Rent	£118.06
Council tax	£28.00
Other home and contents	£13.95
Utilities	£76.00
Water	£54.00
Care and health costs	£373.75
Transport and travel	£306.00
School costs	£40.00
Pensions and insurances	£16.36
Total fixed costs	**£1,026.12**

Monthly outgoings - flexible costs	
Communication and leisure	£81.38
Food and housekeeping	£281.67
Personal costs	£13.33
Total fixed costs	**£376.38**

Total monthly outgoings (fixed and flexible)	**£1,402.50**
Difference	**-£113.25**

On top of this, Sana owes £2,924 to the local council and £6,371 to other creditors including a former landlord and college. Even without paying these debts back, at the end of the month she is left with minus £113.25.

Geoff's story

Geoff lives alone and has a mild learning disability. Despite this, he is unable to get personal independence payment (PIP) as he is considered 'too high functioning'. He would like to have more hobbies as he can get very lonely, however, his budget doesn't allow it. He has no additional, high, or unnecessary expenditure and receives jobseeker's allowance. He travels to the Job Centre once a fortnight to look for work.

Just paying basic bills is overstretching him, leaving him without any money for occasional clothing or unexpected expenditure. He rang the debt advisor in a panic because his gas and electricity have gone up. Staff looked at his budget and it won't cover it. He asked whether it was okay to stop attending the Job Centre to save money on transport, but this could see them sanctioning his money if he doesn't attend.

Monthly income	
Earnings	£0.00
Benefits and tax credits	£677.82
Total income	**£677.82**

Monthly outgoings – fixed costs	
Rent	£370.37
Council tax	£22.27
Other home and contents	£13.00
Utilities	£86.66
Water	£6.00*
Transport and travel	£21.67
Total fixed costs	£519.97
School costs	£40.00
Pensions and insurances	£16.36
Total fixed costs	**£1,026.12**

*Water unknown at present

Monthly outgoings – flexible costs	
Communication and leisure	£10.00
Food and housekeeping	£130.00
Personal costs	£20.00
Total fixed costs	**£160.00**

Total monthly outgoings (fixed and flexible)	**£679.97**
Difference	**-£2.15**

Geoff also owes £1,073 to the local council for unpaid council tax and has other debt with other creditors of £2,670. Even without paying these debts back, at the end of the month he is out of pocket by £2.15.

Clive's story

Clive lost his wife recently. She used to 'do the money', but he's adapting and is doing well with his budgeting. Our debt advisor has been providing him with support. He's unable to work due to a workplace injury, for which he receives Industrial Injury benefit.

Clive has made room in his budget for his model-making which keeps him going when he feels low with grief. He'd like to socialise more and make friends to help with his loneliness, but we can't make any more room his budget for social activities.

As a result, he found a free website to meet new people. Unfortunately, he met a woman who began grooming him for money in return for her love. This escalated and resulted in him being a victim of financial abuse. We have safeguarded him, and the debt advisor is now supporting him on an almost daily basis.

Recently his energy bills have increased, and he can get a grant, he will no longer have enough money for his model making. This could make him more reliant on the scam relationship as he attempts to budget and resolve his loneliness.

Monthly income	
Earnings	£0.00
Benefits and tax credits	£301.75
Pensions	£958.30
Total income	**£1,260.05**

Monthly outgoings – fixed costs	
Rent	£435.00
Council tax	£58.00
Other home and contents	£13.37
Utilities	£227.50
Water	£20.00
Transport and travel	£26.00
Total fixed costs	£779.87
School costs	£40.00
Pensions and insurances	£16.36
Total fixed costs	**£1,026.12**

Monthly outgoings – flexible costs	
Communication and leisure	£118.67
Food and housekeeping	£286.00
Personal costs	£75.00
Total flexible costs	**£479.67**

Total monthly outgoings (fixed and flexible)	**£1,259.54**
Difference	**£0.51**

Clive is currently in rent arrears of £2,630 and owes £480 to other creditors. He has just 51pence a month to try to pay these off.

The Riverside Foundation

Following the merger of Riverside with One Housing Group, six customer pledges were made, one of which was to "...improve the livelihoods of customers and build stronger communities, providing better opportunities by investing in employment support and money advice".

This pledge was to be achieved through the additional investment of £2.5 million into the Riverside Foundation from April 2022. The Foundation already supported several tenancy sustainment services, but the new funding has allowed the Foundation to do more to tackle the significant issues being faced by customers due to the cost-of-living crisis.

- 20% of the new funding has already been ringfenced for crisis funding for customers. This will enable frontline staff to provide small grants to customers facing an immediate financial crisis.
- Monies have also been ringfenced for a Communities Fund. This will allow groups and organisations to apply for funding for projects that will address local issues.
- The remaining funding will be used for strategic projects to address key issues being faced by customers, particularly those related to fuel and food poverty.

All funding decisions are made by a Board of Trustees which includes customers from both Riverside and One Housing Group.

Newydd Housing Association

Newydd Housing Association offers 3,000 homes for rent across mid and south Wales and is well aware of the cost-of-living crisis. Its financial inclusion team is supporting tenants, but it has seen a marked increase in caseloads with a longer lead-in time for support due to the numbers needing cost-of-living help.

Newydd is particularly keen to bridge the 'digital divide' which prevents many tenants from making the best use of the internet. It has a wide range of digital support initiatives which are upskilling tenants to enable them to access sources of savings, such as utility comparisons, as well as giving them use of devices they would be unable to afford.

For example, a tranche of tenants may not have the necessary skills or knowledge to claim universal credit as they move across to it, nor do they have awareness on ensuring their details such as rent amounts are correct. Newydd's digital support service helps to fill this gap. Newydd offers short-term loans of pre-loaded sim cards and digital equipment including tablets, laptops, and smart speakers to help tenants get online and use the internet effectively and safely.

Newydd provide the opportunity for all tenants to have access to devices from sign-up. Tenants are identified through the digital inclusion programme and the housing department team, to ensure the devices provided make the biggest impact. For example, one partner, ComputerWorld, donated equipment now used by sixteen tenant households. Newydd was also a partner in the Vale Tablet Loan Scheme, which allowed over 130 households to access digital devices.

Newydd also provides online support through its Digital Support Google Classroom. The classroom is used to develop tenants' confidence and capability around topics including 'Understanding your android device', 'Understanding your iPhone and iPad', 'Social networking and online communication', 'Digital skills in the modern workplace', 'Digital Health', 'Government services', 'Smart speakers and voice assistants', and 'Hobbies and interests'.

Flagship Group

Flagship has launched an 'Affordable for All' initiative. During 2022/23, Flagship is investing funds to develop several interventions to provide support for tenants who raise affordability concerns with their rent or the running cost of their home, including:

- A Tenancy Support & Wellbeing Service in partnership with Life & Progress to provide free and confidential advice, support and counselling services for tenants.
- Local partnership funds to address affordability at a local level by issuing small one-off grants to organisations and community groups that are supporting tenants, such as food banks.
- Relocation support to fund the moving costs for tenants relocating to address long-term affordability concerns linked with the costs of running their home.
- A Warmer Homes Fund to provide fuel vouchers for tenants that need help with increasing heating bills.
- Designated Affordability Advisor roles to act as a point of contact for tenants requesting help with affordability concerns, directing them to internal or external support.
- Discretionary fund for other household items or support that tenants urgently need e.g. a supermarket voucher.

Flagship is also running a pilot to understand how we can best support tenants raising affordability concerns with their rent.

What is CIH calling for?

CIH is still pressing for the long-term reforms presented in our spring budget submission. The government should:

1. Provide enough help with housing costs so people can access an affordable, decent place to call home and permanently restore the £20 uplift for people on universal credit to ease the pressures of fuel poverty
2. Bring forward investment with clear, long-term plans to tackle homes with poor energy efficiency
3. Invest in a long-term strategy to end homelessness in all its forms and provide good quality temporary accommodation
4. Invest in existing and new supported housing to meet a range of support needs.
5. Increase grant levels to provide the number of homes at social rents we need each year.

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