

FOCUS

TENANT

Your regular housing updates

Cost-of-living supplement 2023



HelpinBrum



WELCOME TO TENANT FOCUS

Are you worried about the rising cost of energy bills, food, and fuel?

You are not alone; the cost-of-living crisis is affecting many of us. Therefore, in this edition of Tenant Focus, we wanted to focus on the help and support available from Birmingham City Council and its partner organisations and how we are working together to assist residents with

everything from: increasing benefit take-up, to boosting energy efficiency to cut bills, to increasing the supply of food through foodbanks across the city, to launching our new network of warm spaces.



BOOST YOUR BENEFITS

During the cost-of-living crisis, it is important to ensure you have access to the right benefits and money advice. There are several information portals below which can help.

To find out what benefits you are entitled to, it is best to use the Benefits Calculator provided by the Government. Find out more by using this link www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators Birmingham City Council has also developed several support factsheets which provide useful information on a range of debt related issues.

You can view and download Information on [birmingham.gov.uk/debtadviceteam](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/debtadviceteam)

If you are struggling with debt and need advice and support you can also visit [birmingham.gov.uk/helpinbrum](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/helpinbrum) which can help direct you to the right information.

There are also other services who offer free and confidential advice:

- **The Project** – Benefit, debt and housing advice. Call 0121 453 0606 or visit theprojectbirmingham.org

- **Citizens Advice Birmingham** – Advice on benefits, debt, housing and more. Call 0344 477 1010 or visit bcabs.org.uk
- **Disability Resource Centre** – Advice and advocacy services. Call 03030 402040 or visit disability.co.uk/



HELP IN A SHORT TERM CRISIS

Birmingham's Local Welfare Provision (LWP) scheme helps vulnerable people in short-term crisis with food and essential items. It is grant-based, which means people who receive help from it will not have to repay anything.

The scheme is funded on an annual basis and once the fund has been exhausted for that financial year, there will be no further awards.

The scheme is purely discretionary, and people have no statutory right to an award.

There are two types of payment made from this provision:

- Crisis payments are made to citizens to meet their needs for subsistence in terms of essential food and or clothing.
- Community support grants are paid to citizens to meet

their immediate needs for essential furniture or white goods to sustain their housing needs.

To be eligible, you must:

- Be resident in Birmingham
- Be aged 16 or over
- Not be a person subject to immigration control or have no recourse to public funds
- Be without sufficient resources to meet you/your family's immediate short-term needs.

If you meet the criteria. You can only apply online at:

birmingham.gov.uk/info/20017/benefits_and_support/308/help_in_a_short-term_crisis/5

The amount awarded will be based on your circumstances and the funds available within the scheme. You are allowed to make two applications in any financial year. At present we are receiving a greater number of applications at this time so you may experience longer waiting times. We will contact you to let you know the outcome within 10 working days.



HELP WITH FUEL AND ENERGY COSTS

In response to the challenges which continue to cause difficulties for many households there is a range of advice and help available to reduce your energy bills, keep your home and save you money.

There are several schemes already available for residents, with full information and guidance available at birmingham.gov.uk/energyhelp

There has also been a significant rise in energy scams

linked to the cost-of-living crisis.

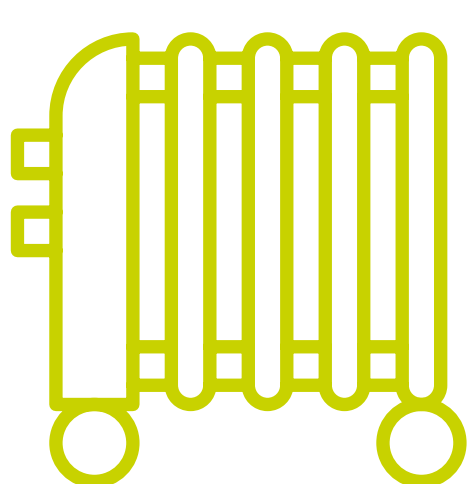
There is some helpful support on the Birmingham City Council website to avoid these scams.

Visit birmingham.gov.uk/energyscam



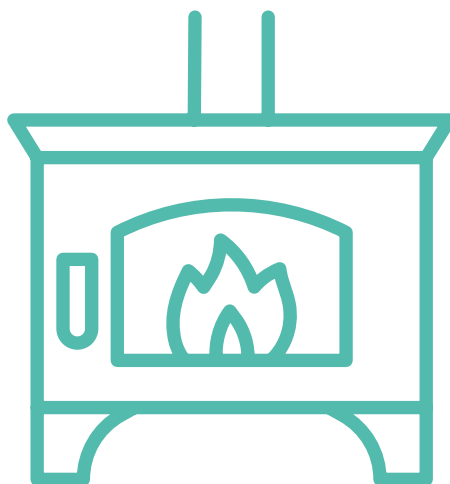
FIRE SAFETY

The West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) is keen to share the following safety messages so residents are aware of the risks and potential dangers which might lead to an increase in fire related incidents within homes as people try to save money or stay warm.



Portable Heaters

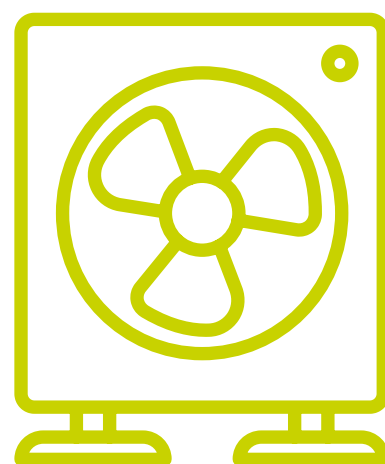
With energy prices increasing people may be tempted to try alternative forms of heating such as portable gas heaters, oil filled radiators and electric fan heaters. Fires can be caused if these are used or situated incorrectly, for example placed too close to combustible materials. To keep you safe, the WMFS has produced the following information: electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guidance/product-safety/portable-heaters. There are also other ways people can keep



warm whilst reducing the use of energy, these are highlighted in the Heat the Human campaign: www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/he-at-the-human-not-the-home-save-energy/

Chimneys and Open Fires

In cold weather there may be an increase in the use of open fires in homes where chimneys have not been correctly maintained, indoor barbecues or the use of combustible materials in an unsafe way. The WMFS has produced the following information to keep you safe:



wmfs.net/safety/chimneys-and-open-fires/

Kitchen Safety

As food costs increase, households may try other methods of cooking, for example using a chip pan as opposed to using the oven to cook or using barbecues indoors which is dangerous and increases the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. The WMFS has produced the following information on cooking and kitchen safety: wmfs.net/safety/kitchen-safety



WARM WELCOME SPACES

As part of the city's response to the cost-of-living crisis we are working with our partners and local community organisations to provide a network of free warm welcome spaces for people to use and visit during the winter period and beyond.

Warm Welcome Spaces are:

- inclusive and non-judgmental
- heated and free to access

The services at each space will vary but may include:

- information on further support and available guidance

- opportunities to participate in activities and learn new things
- free internet access, computers and electrical charging points
- a friendly environment to connect with others within the community

You can find details of our current Birmingham Warm Welcome Spaces at birmingham.gov.uk/warmwelcome



SUPPORT WITH THE COST OF FOOD

The cost-of-living crisis has made it much more difficult for many people to afford food. If this is something you are experiencing, there are several information points below which can help.

Foodbanks

We know that accessing a foodbank or other projects for the first time can be daunting. However, the volunteers do their utmost to make visitors feel welcome. To find a foodbank or other food support please visit birmingham.gov.uk/foodhelp

Healthy Start card

If you are 10 weeks pregnant or more, have a child under four years old, or you or your

family get certain benefits, you may be able to qualify for a Healthy Start card. The card has money on it to be used in shops to buy: plain liquid cow's milk; fresh, frozen, and tinned fruit and vegetables; fresh, dried, and tinned pulses; and infant formula milk based on cow's milk. You can also get free vitamins. To find out more and way to apply visit birmingham.gov.uk/healthystart

Free School Meals

You can also check if your child can get free school meals, visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/school-meals to see if you are eligible. (This will also automatically register you for the Holidays, Activities and Food Programme.)



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Even more information is available on the Birmingham City Council website at birmingham.gov.uk/helpinbrum which can guide you to various organisations depending on the help you may require.

Alternatively, phone 0121 303 9944 and one of our customer service team will help you or follow us on social media to keep up-to-date as new initiatives come online in the coming weeks:

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