

# Cost of living

Bolder Healthier Workplace Champions  
Birmingham Public Health 2022



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# What is the “cost of living crisis”?

- The “cost of living crisis” refers to an ongoing situation in the UK from 2021 onwards, where the cost of everyday essentials like energy and food is rising much faster than average incomes.
- There is a growing gap between what people have and what people actually need for a decent standard of living.
- Rising costs present the most significant challenge to living standards for many years, in a period of social and economic uncertainty following the COVID-19 pandemic.

# The Rising Cost of Living is impacting everyone

In July 2022, 91% of UK households reported that their cost of living had increased in the previous month, up from 62% in November 2021- mainly attributed to higher food, electricity, and fuel costs.

The crisis is even more acute for the poorest UK households, which typically spend a higher proportion of their income on food and housing costs.

Based on forecasts from the Spring Budget of 2022, real household disposable income in the UK will fall by 2.2% in the 2022/23, the biggest fall in living standards since the mid 1950s.

# What is going up?

## Travel

For a single working adult, the average cost of travel is £64.86 in 2022, an increase of **+45%** from 2021

## Rent and Mortgages

Since 2021, social housing rent has increased by **4.1%**, private rental prices have increased by **3%**, and mortgage interest rates have increased by 0.50%

## Water Bills

In 2022, water bills are rising by 1.4%, costing an average household an extra £420 a year

## Childcare

The average annual cost of a nursery place for children under two in England rose by nearly £1,050, **16%**, between 2018 and 2022.

## Energy Bills

Household energy bills increased by **54%** in April 2022 and will see a further rise of **27%** in October

## Personal goods and services

For a single working adult average costs needed each week have risen by **+49%** since 2021

# What actions are people taking because of the rising cost of living?

In the West Midlands, 89% of people reported their cost of living increasing over the previous month (March and June 2022)

**6 in 10 people** are spending less on non-essentials

**5 in 10 people** are using less gas and electricity in their home

**5 in 10 people** are cutting down on non-essential journeys in their vehicle

**4 in 10 people** are spending less on food shopping and essentials

**1 in 10 people** are using more credit than usual



Source: Office for National Statistics Census 2021 West Midlands data

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# The risks of rising cost of living for our communities

## Fuel Poverty:

Cold and damp living conditions increase risk of respiratory and cardiovascular illness, and can worsen existing long term conditions. This can lead to turning down the heating, cold-related deaths and poor health.

## Social and Mental Health Impact:

Shame over requiring financial or food assistance, as well as financial pressures. Rising costs for everyday social activities increase the risk of loneliness and social isolation as people choose to not pay for travel and activities

## Debt:

Greatest impact for those people already on low or unstable incomes or relying on benefits. Not meeting rent or mortgage repayment obligations will create financial pressures which will affect decisions over eating and heating

## Housing:

Rising private sector rent costs and mortgage rates may lead to forced evictions and debt. There is a risk that more people will sleep rough for the first time, as households struggle to make ends meet.

## Air Quality:

More people relying on wood/solid fuel burners due to the cost of electricity and gas will affect local air quality. This may exacerbate respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.

## Food:

High price rises in food and energy mean people may think twice about what they are buying. These tough decisions sometimes mean people may be tempted to skip meals, with less money available to spend on healthy food. Being unable to afford sufficient food leaves people malnourished.

# Local response

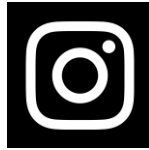
- Birmingham City Council is continuing to develop a range of support for residents over the coming months.
- Please [check the council's website](#) and follow our social media for regular updates about what is available:



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# Bolder Healthier Workplaces



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# What is the role of Bolder Healthier Champions?

**Talk** about the impact that the rising cost of living is having on people in your community

**Connect** people to support through web-pages and services

**Feedback to us** where more help is needed so we can continue to improve the support for citizens

**Talk** about the impact that the rising cost of living is having on people in your community

Bolder Healthier Champions **should not**:

- Act as financial advocates for people in financial insecurity
- Receive personal financial information from people

# Talk to employees

Real household disposable income may fall as wages do not keep up with cost of living, leading to using savings and credit

Those on zero-hour contracts will face greater employment insecurity

Unpaid carers may find themselves in debt as a result of their caring role and their financial situation

Working adults may be required to take on several jobs to make ends meet

Remote working may increase household and bill costs

Increasing travel costs mean getting to work is harder

Businesses which are struggling may make decisions regarding staff cuts and redundancies

Rising childcare costs may impact household decisions around leaving employment

Financial troubles can cause chronic stress and anxiety, self-limiting socialisation and overworking

# Talk to businesses

All costs along the supply chain will increase, leaving businesses with choices around increasing consumer prices

Organisational tools and software are expensive- businesses may benefit from downloading free accounting and organisational tools

Energy use in office space will be more costly, especially if office space not fully utilised or when using equipment with higher energy consumption

When businesses move to a remote working model this increases costs for employees

Obtaining accounting advice may not be affordable

Materials and packaging costs increasing which may impact on profit margin

Businesses may be in need of more staff and are unable to afford hiring, impacting on growth

# How can you provide brief support in everyday interactions?

- Provide a **brief intervention**
- Use open questions with the **Ask, Assist, Act** model

## Use an example: For Budgeting

### Ask

Do you have any worries relating to money, budgeting, borrowing or debt?

How confident are you about a budget setting, sticking to it and how to save?

### Assist

Taking the time to manage your money better can really pay off. It can help you stay on top of your bills and save £1,000s each year, would you like some helpful information on managing your money?

### Act

The [Money Helper Service](#) (set up by the government) offers:

Free and impartial money advice and guides to help improve your finances

- Tools and calculators to help keep track and plan ahead
- Support provided over the phone and online, live [webchat](#) and WhatsApp (+44 77 0134 2744)

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## Use an example: For Debt and Borrowing

### Ask

Do you have any worries relating to money, budgeting, borrowing or debt?

If you need to borrow money, have you considered the cost of borrowing and where you would source this from?

### Assist

Would you like some further information on the many different free and recommended debt advice service that are available either nationally or locally?

### Act

[National Debtline](#) has helped millions of people with debt. They'll talk you through options and give clear advice on how to take back control. Tel: 0808 808 4000

[StepChange](#) helps change the lives of thousands every week. Their expert advice is impartial and personalised to each individual situation. Tel: 0800 138 1111

# How can you provide brief support in everyday interactions?

- Provide a **brief intervention**
- Use open questions with the **Ask, Assist, Act** model

## Use an example: For non-urgent mental health support

### Ask

How are you?

How are you feeling at the moment?

What's been happening for you recently?

### Assist

You mentioned you are feeling low, why do you think this is?

Would you like some more information on services that may help you?

### Act

- Encourage the person to contact their GP. Their GP will be able support the person in many ways
- **Mind** The charity for better mental health' has an extensive range of self help resources available
- The **NHS** have has a range of self-help tools available
- Birmingham City Council **Wellbeing resources** and support with access to **Mental Health Services**

**Connect** people to support through web-pages and services



# Connect employees to Crisis support

Birmingham City Council's [Local Welfare Provision \(LWP\) scheme](#) helps vulnerable people in short-term crisis. If you are experiencing immediate problems, please call 0121 303 1116.

Further local sources of help are:

- [Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid](#)
- [Betel UK](#)
- [The Project Birmingham](#)
- [Birmingham Central Foodbank](#)
- [Birmingham City Mission](#)
- [Financial assistance grants from the Harriet Loxton Trust](#)



# Connect employees to Council support

Birmingham City Council's Contact Centre is open 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday, and supports on a range of topics including:

- Support with emergency food
- Benefits enquiries
- Council tax enquiries
- Accommodation and homelessness

They can be contacted on:

**0121 216 3030**

There are also two walk-in advice centres at:

- [67 Sutton New Rd, Erdington](#)
- [1a Vineyard Rd, Northfield](#)

Please check the website for information about opening times and support offered.

# Connect employees to support with bills

## Information about UK government schemes:

- Find out how the [Energy Price Guarantee](#) limits your energy prices
- Find out about the [Energy Bills Support Scheme](#)
- Find out about the [Warm Home Discount Scheme](#)
- Apply for the [Cold Weather Payment](#)
- Find out about the [Winter Fuel Payment](#) and [Pensioner Cost of Living Payment](#)

Available schemes in Birmingham to help with energy bills [Getting help with your energy bills | Birmingham City Council](#)



## Phone bills:

Find out if you can are eligible for cheaper phone and broadband on the [Ofcom](#) website

## Water bills:

Find out how to [reduce your water bill](#) and financial support you may be able to get

# Connect employees with income and debt support

## UK Government information:

- Check if you're getting the [minimum wage](#)
- Apply for support with savings if you're on a low income ([Help to Save](#))
- [Apply](#) for support with interest payments on a mortgage or home improvement loan
- Contact the [MoneyHelper service](#) for free, confidential and impartial advice. **Support provided over the phone and online, live [webchat](#) and WhatsApp ([+44 77 0134 2744](#))**

## Debt advice:

- [National Debtline](#)
- [StepChange](#)
- [PayPlan](#)
- [Debt Advice Foundation](#)

# Connect employees with support with work

## **Trade Union Support:**

If you're a member of a [trade union](#), you should contact them to see if they can help with your problem at work, before trying to find help elsewhere.

## **Local [Citizens Advice](#) :**

Get help with an employment problem or an employment tribunal claim

## **Professional Bodies:**

Contact your professional body if you are registered with one

## **Support for disabled people:**

[Scope](#) - the disability equality charity has a free online and telephone support programme for disabled people who are looking for paid work.

## **Support for unpaid carers:**

Find support from condition-specific charities and organisations at [Mobilise](#)

# Connect employees with additional support

Birmingham City Council's [Cost of Living support page](#) has information on income support, debt and money advice, and advice and support on benefits and housing

## **Mental health and wellbeing support:**

Birmingham City Council [Wellbeing resources](#) and support with access to [Mental Health Services](#)

## **Travel:**

Claim 50% off rail journeys from [National Rail](#) if you're on Universal Credit. Apply for a [railcard from National Rail](#) to save money on rail journeys

## **Families with young children or who may be pregnant:**

[Healthy Start](#) vouchers for help to buy healthy food and milk

# Connect businesses with resources and support

## Birmingham City Council

- Apply for a [Heavy Duty Vehicle \(HDV\) Fund](#)
- [Wellbeing resources](#) for staff

## Resources for businesses


- [Living Wage Foundation](#)
- [Reuse Network](#)
- [Business in the Community \(BITC\)](#) have a range of toolkits; Engaging employees and listening to lived-experience, Supporting carers in the workplace, Wellbeing at work, Homelessness

## UK Government resources

- Find out how the [Energy Bill Relief scheme](#) limits the energy prices of your small business
- Find out about support to [improve the energy performance](#) of your business
- Find out about support with your energy bills on the [Ofgem](#) website
- Claim [tax relief](#) on work-related expenses


# Case Study 1

John is a Bolder Healthier Champion working at a local estate agents in the City Centre. He is close friends with the owner David and over lunch one day David explains to him that he is anxious about the rising costs of living and the impact this has on him as a small business owner.



"I don't know Dave, It's gotten harder to cover energy bills in this office space, I'm worried in the next year this businesses just won't be able to run."


"I know some Government resources for supporting businesses with energy costs, as well as national resources for helping businesses stay energy efficient, would you like to know about them?"






# Case Study 2

John uses this opportunity to listen and ask questions, and then assisted David by signposting him to resources relating to support for businesses as well as general signposting for mental wellbeing support



“Thanks...I’m just not sure what to do, it’s really getting me down and I don’t want to worry my family”

“I’m really sorry to hear you are feeling overwhelmed with everything, would you like some information about mental wellbeing support and services in case you need it?”



**Feedback to us** where more help is needed so we can continue to improve the support for citizens

Email the Bolder Healthier team on:  
[BolderHealthierChampions@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:BolderHealthierChampions@birmingham.gov.uk)

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