



COST OF LIVING

SUPPORT & ADVICE

How to help with the cost of living

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A guide for those who work directly with Portsmouth residents

Wherever you work, if you work directly with people in Portsmouth, you might spot signs that someone is struggling. This guide is designed to help you to ask the right questions and signpost people to one of the many sources of help and support available.

Whether they are customers, residents, tenants, service users or patients, if you work with people as part of your day-to-day role, this guide is designed to help you to signpost them to the help and support that's available in the city.



What is the council doing

Standing up for Portsmouth by supporting our residents through the cost of living crisis is a clear priority for Portsmouth City Council.

As a council, we are taking a collaborative approach, bringing together information and advice about services from across the organisation, and from our partners, into one place and helping residents to navigate their way through the help on offer.

The approach includes:

- a single cost of living online help hub – www.portsmouth.gov.uk/costofliving
- a cost of living helpline providing information and advice – **023 9284 1047**
- a cost of living support worker
- information for frontline staff
- warm spaces to help people stay warm through the winter



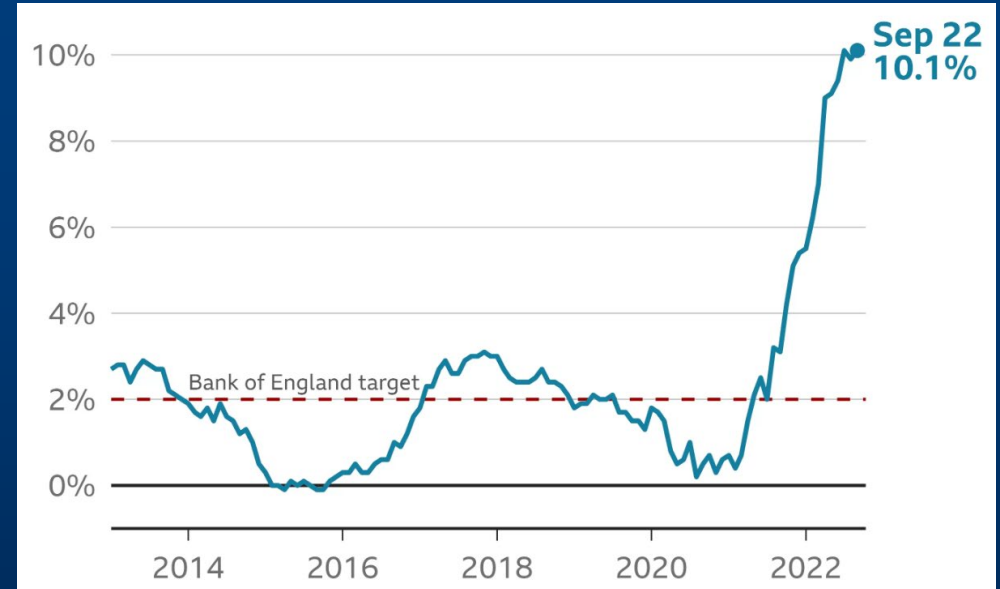
Cost of living

The cost of living is increasing at its fastest rate in 40 years

The rising prices of food and energy are the main causes, due to inflation, conflict in Europe and lasting effects of the Covid pandemic.

The price of food and non-alcoholic drinks rose by 14.6% in the year to September 2022

Rate of inflation

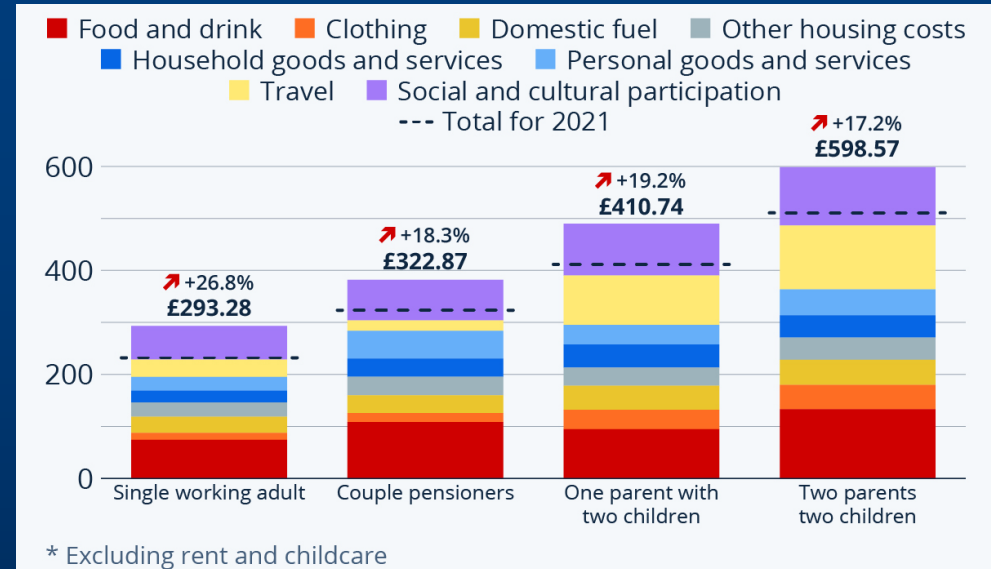


Energy price per therm



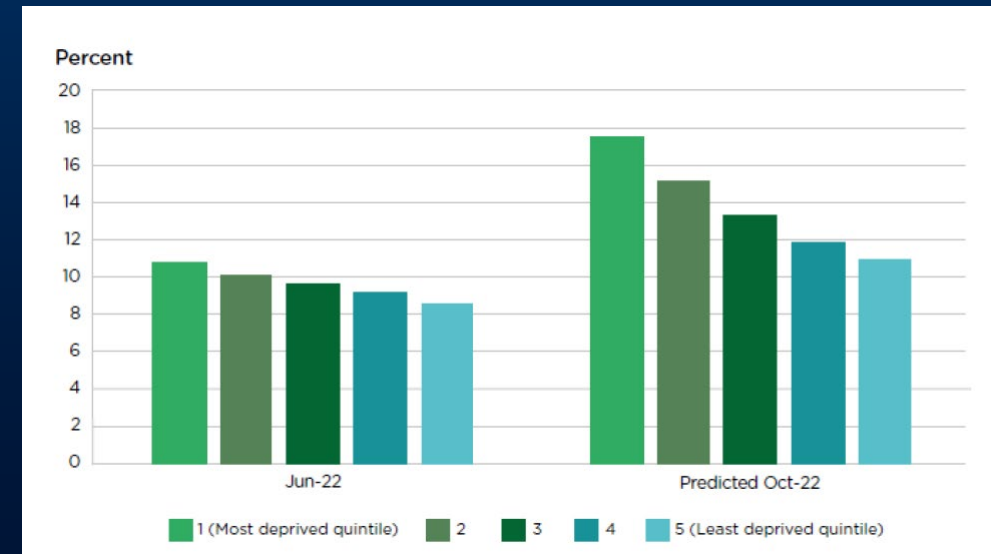
The cost of living affects everyone but its affects are felt most by the least well off...

Amount needed each week to reach minimum standard of living in the UK in 2022.



Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Inflation by income quintile, UK, June 2022 and prediction October 2022



Source: Institute for Fiscal Studies based on Office for National Statistics



What can we do to help?

We can make every contact we have with people in the city count.

If you work directly with people, you might spot signs that someone is struggling. We want to support you to help the people you are in contact with, so you have the confidence to ask questions and provide information.

Making Every Contact Count (MECC) uses brief and very brief interventions, delivered whenever the opportunity arises in routine appointments and contacts.

Very brief interventions take from 30 seconds to a couple of minutes. The person is encouraged to think about changes to their life and offered help such as a referral or further information.

A brief intervention involves a conversation, with negotiation and encouragement, and may lead to referral for other interventions, or more intensive support.



Making every contact count

Making Every Contact Count is about altering **how we interact with people** through learning **how to recognise opportunities** to talk to them about their wellbeing more generally



Healthy conversation skills enable people to use a **different approach** to working with people to improve health and wellbeing or deal with problems



Use open questions to help someone explore an issue, problem or concern



Listen more than talking and giving instructions – what do they really want to achieve?



Consider how your words and actions might make people feel if they are in a crisis



Support someone to access the right service or the correct information



How do I make every contact count?

In order to support people in making changes to their life, use the 4As.
Anything can be a 'door opener' for a MECC conversation.

ASK

Use the opportunity to strike up a conversation or respond to a comment or situation during day to day contact with someone.

E.g. "You mentioned that you can't pay your council tax because you have a lot of debt, have you got time for me to ask about that."

ASSESS

Decide if you feel the time is right to continue the conversation, if not leave the door open for another time.

E.g. "It sounds like you may be interested getting support with that." or "It sounds like this is not the right time, if you need any information in the future please ask."

ADVISE

A cost of living checklist is available on the intranet at <https://intranet.portsmouth.gov.uk/hr/wellbeing/money-and-debt-advice/cost-of-living-checklist/> providing a list of things to consider when talking about issues related to the cost of living.

ASSIST

Share information or signpost people to where they can find local support.

This can be found via the online cost of living hub of the helpline. If you think someone needs additional support, contact the Cost of Living Support Worker.



Online cost of living help hub

Having used your healthy conversation skills to understand more about the situation someone is facing, you can guide them to information and advice to meet their needs.

The council has a cost of living hub on our website at www.portsmouth.gov.uk/costofliving which contains all the most up-to-date information on services, help and support for people in the city.

If the person you are working with can use online information confidently, signpost them to the hub first – the hub will be regularly updated, and will enable them to continue to access support independently

The online help hub will be constantly updated, so you know you can rely on the information to signpost people on to.

If you have a suggestion for an update or for information you think it would be good to add to the hub, please contact the council's digital customer team on costoflivinghub@portsmouthcc.gov.uk – your help in making the hub as useful and relevant as possible for people will be absolutely vital as you are the ones who are closest to people and communities.



Online cost of living help hub

The hub contains sections on:

Money and debt – information on how to get debt advice, benefits and managing money

Food and essentials – information on where to get help if struggling with food or essentials, including information about where to get help with household items/repairs, school uniform and help for parents

Energy and bills – information on where to get help with the cost of energy bills, with making homes more energy efficient, and with bills more generally for anyone who is struggling

Health and Wellbeing – information on support around mental health, as well as on things like help to stop smoking, maintain a healthy weight on a budget

Skills and employment – information around how to develop skills and find work

The hub also contains information about low cost travel and free/cheap things to do in the city.



Helpline

If the person you are working with is not able to confidently use information online, you can signpost them to the cost of living helpline on 023 9284 1047

The helpline is open from 9am-5pm Monday-Thursday and from 9am-4pm on Fridays.

Staffed by the council's customer services team, the cost of living helpline is designed to give initial information and advice, and will be able to refer anyone who needs additional help to the council's dedicated cost of living support worker.

