

Research and Campaigns Management Report: Q1 – 2022 - 23

Report by: Paul Clark

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Research and Campaigns CAMV Staffing

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Update on Cost of Living (CoL) Crisis

We are pleased to report after Tim wrote a letter to Sir Paul Beresford that he has agreed to meet us on the 28th July. Paul has asked Citizens Advice Policy Team if they could provide data to identify the number of people who are currently getting by but are likely to be pushed into crisis in the autumn (as a result of the worsening cost of living crisis, high energy bills, etc) and any preventative measures. A similar Tableau Report was created in 2020 for Covid to predict demand but not sure if a review was conducted to find out if the assumptions came true.

However CA have an online briefing on the CoL crisis the morning we are meeting Sir Paul which Debbie, Christine and myself are attending so we should be able to brief Sir Paul with the latest information and any preventative measures.

CA welcomed the additional support announced <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-most-vulnerable-households-will-receive-1200-of-help-with-cost-of-living> to help people cope with the increased living costs. This is something we've all been campaigning for to help our clients. It's a real testament to all the MP meetings, news coverage, policy work and data crunching that's happened over the past few months.

However, looking forward, there is still plenty of work needing to be carried out. For example on 10th June CA released [research](#) exploring the issues tenants in the private rented sector face in the energy market. They found tenants have experienced consistently worse outcomes, including high fuel poverty.

One significant factor was that 13% of tenants have their landlords managing their energy account. This can block tenants from receiving vital cost of living support, including the Warm Home Discount, and the October Rebate.

CA are [calling on the government](#) to make sure tenants can take control of their energy bills so that they can receive support directly. The research drew on evidence from Local Citizens Advice to demonstrate the challenges tenants face.

Local Issues

We will be supporting a campaign first recognised by Epsom and North Leatherhead Food Bank that quite a few of their clients have been moved into empty housing association properties without any flooring or curtains.

In some cases, perfectly good carpets or laminate flooring has been ripped out just before the new tenants move in. As a result, people are having to live for months or years without any flooring, or are getting into debt to furnish their new home. As well as causing hardship, it makes it harder to keep their home warm and comfortable, and is environmentally wasteful.

At Leatherhead we were fortunate that Leatherhead United Charities (LUC) would give very generous grants to help our clients when they faced this issue. However Debbie was informed by a Trustee at LUC that this grant will no longer be available.

Debbie and myself will be attending the first campaign meeting on the 14th July and this could be something we can draw to Sir Paul's attention.

Surrey R&C Team

We are pleased to report that we held our first Surrey R&C Team meeting on June 1st 2022 after a 2 year absence. Though attendance was disappointing we hope to grow in the coming months. Paul will be giving a brief update at the next Surrey Managers Meeting to update them on what the team are doing and encourage that they send their R&C leads to the next meeting which is going to be held in August, where we will be discussing a survey for advisers to ask clients how they are coping with the rise of living costs. With the results from the survey Lizzie and myself will analysis the results and create a report similar to our Personal Independence Payment report which we will distribute to all Surrey policy makers both locally and to ministerial level.

CAMV Annual R&C Meeting

Christine, Debbie and Paul had our annual R&C Meeting where the R&C Action Plan was finalised and Christine will present this to the Board.

Evidence forms

10 evidence forms were submitted to Citizens Advice this quarter, again rather lower than desired but expected as many of the evidence forms submitted previously were from our Help to Claim team.

Paul gave a talk at May's Staff meeting to update the team on R&C developments and reminded them of the importance of completing Evidence Forms and how they are used by CA's Policy Team. Also emphasised was the importance of recording Advice Issues Codes (AICs) as not only are they essential for us to monitor why clients are coming into see us but important to report to our funders and also useful for future funding in the bidding process.

Count of Issues on Evidence forms

Please note from 24th of April it is possible to add more than one issue to an evidence form. This report is a count of issues added to evidence forms.

AICPart1	AICPart2	AICPart3	
Benefits & tax credits	19 Employment Support Allowance	B Poor administration	1
		Z Other	1
		Total	2
	21 Personal independence payment	H Renewals & reviews	1
		Y Making and managing a claim	1
		Total	2
Total		4	
Benefits Universal Credit	01 Initial claim	AT Transitional SDP (severe disability payment) Amount	1
		TP Transitional protection	1
		Total	2
	03 Housing element	Z Other	1
		Total	1
	13 Post Initial Claim	A Post claim evidence & verification	1
Total	Total	4	
Debt	04 Fuel debts	B Dealing with debt repayments	1
		Total	1
	50 Bankruptcy	B Form Filling	1
		Total	1
	99 Other Debt	AA Vulnerable debtor	1
		Total	1
Total		3	
Housing	07 Housing association property	A Rents & other charges	3
		C Complaints	1
		Total	4
	Total		4
Relationships & family	05 Social Services & support	C Local authority/social services	1
		E Complaints	1
		Total	2
	Total		2
Utilities & communications	02 Fuel (gas, electricity, oil, coal etc.)	C Billing/meter reading	1
		K Customer service	1
		Total	2
	Total		2
Grand Total			19

Recent Calls for evidence from Citizens advice

Migration / moving to Universal Credit

As of May 2022 the DWP has started moving small numbers of people (500 in Bolton and Medway) over to Universal Credit as part of Managed Migration. Simultaneously, DWP are encouraging legacy benefit claimants, particularly Tax Credit claimants, to investigate if they would be financially better off on Universal Credit, and are encouraging Voluntary Migration to Universal Credit. People are also required to move to the benefit if they have a change of circumstances that would trigger Natural Migration.

Moving from legacy benefits to Universal Credit can be a nerve wracking and disruptive process for claimants, and it is important that DWP provides the right support for people to claim.

There have been no local Calls of Evidence requirements this quarter.