

Cost of Living Crisis: Local charity warns people are being trapped in debt

Debt-help charity Christians Against Poverty's (CAP) new report reveals people on the lowest incomes are on 'the edge'

CAP's Suffolk Coastal Debt Centre, based in Saxmundham says the cost of living crisis is crushing those on low incomes.

Laura Knight, the Debt Centre Manager, says, "We know that everyone's feeling the impact of the cost of living crisis right now, but if you're already on a low income, the strain is relentless - plus there's the added anxiety over future rises in living costs."

CAP has been offering free debt-help, along with emotional and practical support, to people across Suffolk Coastal over the past 3 years. "People fall into debt for a variety of reasons," Laura says. "They may have been made redundant, left a job to care for a family member, suffered from a long term illness themselves, or experienced a relationship breakdown - which cuts many household's income in half."

A CAP report released this month exposes the growing impact that the cost of living crisis is having on low income households in Suffolk Coastal, trapping them into debt. CAP's *To The Edge* report reveals that:

- Priority debts in the East of England have increased by 71% over the past year - that's more than anywhere else in England. Priority debts are mostly considered to be basic living costs like rent, utility, council tax, etc. and can lead to more serious consequences - such as court fines, eviction or prison - if they aren't dealt with.
- New CAP clients in the East of England have a peak debt of over £18,952.
- Without free debt help, it would take on average 28 years for an East of England household to repay their debts.

"This report shows the reality of the situation for many people," says Laura. "The cost of living crisis is leaving many families on unsustainable budgets, with little or nothing leftover after covering their basic living costs. People are aware that they could suddenly be plunged into large amounts of debt, and they're scared."

Laura says, "The detrimental impact that these kinds of debts have are significant. CAP's report shows that, unsurprisingly, 71% more people are suffering from depression compared to last year, and those experiencing anxiety or panic attacks have risen by 80%. Most concerning, the number of people who tell us they've attempted or considered suicide, as a way out of their debt, has risen by almost 30% from last year. This is heartbreaking, and doesn't have to be the case - help is available."

Laura urges people, "If you need help to break free from debt, contact debt-help charities like CAP on freephone **0800 328 0006** or visit **capuk.org** today. Discover more about Christians Against Poverty through their social media channels."