

Ashington Town Council - Key Facts and Figures 2022 - 2023

About us:

Citizens Advice Northumberland is an independent local charity offering quality-marked information, advice and guidance services across Northumberland. Our twofold aim is to provide the advice people need for the problems they face, and to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives. We operate from 9 locations across Northumberland and have developed our offering into community spaces such as schools, community hubs, and church halls. We offer generalist advice alongside specialist services in money advice, energy, welfare benefits, and employability.

We are also the commission holder for Northumberland County Council offering VCSE infrastructure support across the county known as Thriving Together

Our local offer:

We currently operate from the Post Office Chambers in Ashington on a Tuesday and Thursday between 10-midday for drop-in and appointment services. Clients are also able to access support online via email or webchat, over the phone, or via video-conferencing. These varying accessible channels ensure that we meet the needs of each individual client.

In addition to the above, our community advice team have been developing a range of local services to see how we can improve client journeys locally and offer a more holistic advice support offering including at the Hirst. Our community team is offering volunteer connector training, access to IT resources, and promotional materials to those they engaged with to strengthen our visibility and accessibility within the community. We have also worked with other local parish and town councils offering them support in case they are contacted by clients in need of support. If this is something you feel could be beneficial, please contact Geoff Crow (Community Advice Service Manager) on geoffcrow@citizensadvicenorthumberland.org.uk.

Citizens Advice Northumberland has continued to make a significant difference and impact to local residents of Ashington throughout 2022-23. We have done this by:

- Delivering tailored advice which is designed to meet the needs of each individual;
- Supporting communities in tackling poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage;
- Bringing in funds for clients and services thereby strengthening the local economy;

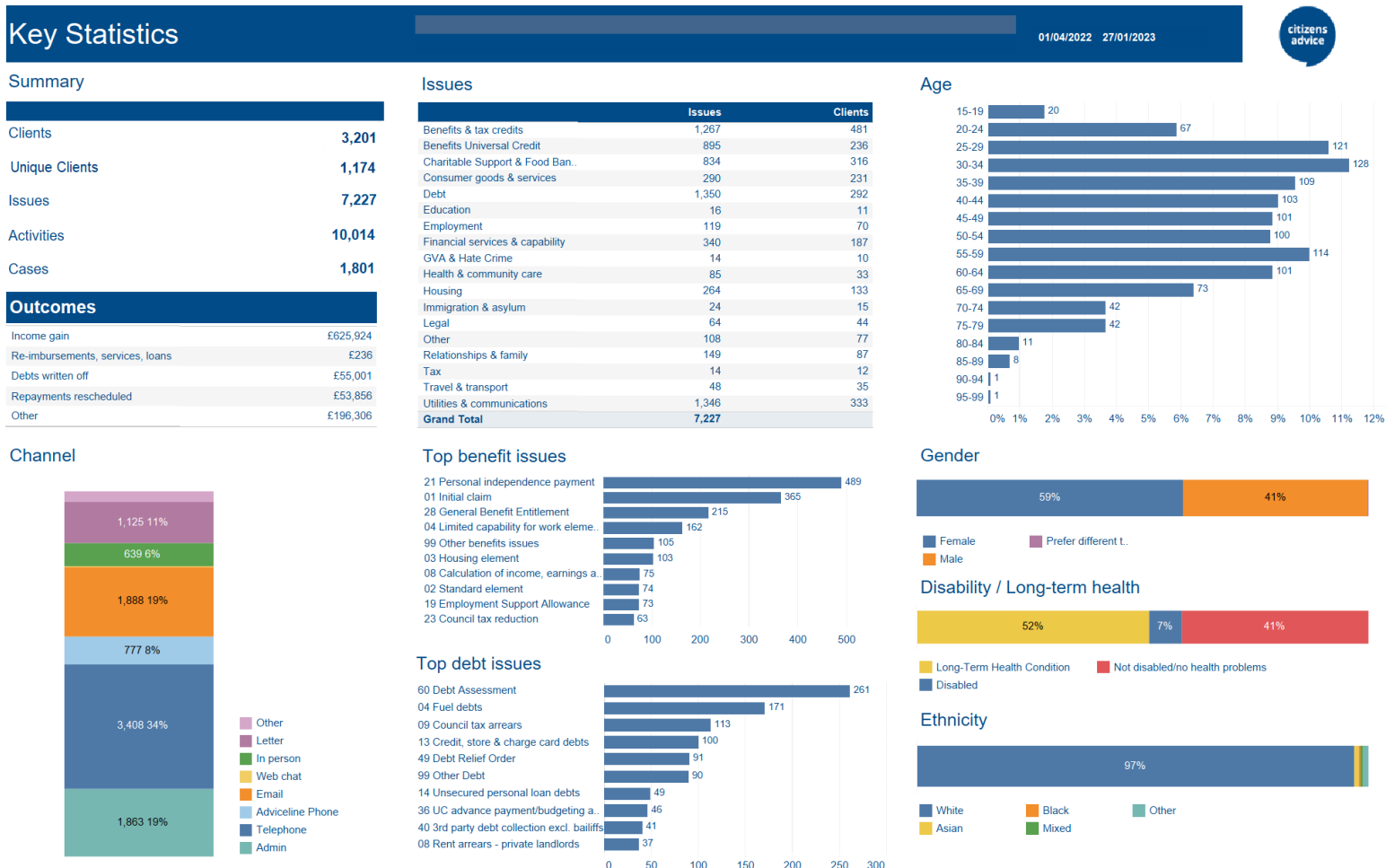
- Providing a range of employment and training opportunities;
- Encouraging community engagement through volunteering;
- Promoting partnership work between agencies and service deliverers;
- Campaigning for changes locally and nationally which improve the lives of local people.

By having multiple channels of support we can best respond to local needs whilst continuing to provide value for money through economies of scale.

Our local impact, 2022-23:

- To date (1/2/23) thanks to the Town Council, we've supported a total of 3,201 clients (2,621 in 2021-22) with information, advice and practical support.

Please find below a summary of the activity within Ashington CAB for this period.



Of those 59% had a disability or health condition. Of those with a disability 37% had multiple impairments and 31% mental health issues.

Those clients had 7,227 issues and we conducted over 10,014 activities on their behalf including 1,801 casework cases.

We have so far generated over £600,000 in income maximisation awards from welfare benefits and a further £200,000 in other financial support and just over £100,000 of debt written off or repayments scheduled.

The top issues for Ashington residents have been consistently welfare benefits and universal credit and debt. However more than ever before we have seen clients requiring charitable support, fuel and food poverty support. Other major issues for Ashington remain housing, employment and financial capability.

The busiest wards in Ashington were Central (23%), College (21%) and Hirst (22%)

For 2022-23 our cost calculator model which is treasury approved has calculated the following return on investment across Citizens Advice Northumberland.

For every £1 invested:	
For every £1, £x in fiscal benefits	£3.31
For every £1, £x in public value	£20.34
For every £1, £x in value to the people we help (financial outcomes)	£10.85

All

of our offices are seeing an increase in numbers and particularly in Ashington in q3 compared to the same period in 21-22 (Oct to Dec):

	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023
Ashington	105	245

We anticipate that given the continuing cost of living and energy crisis the demands on our service and the needs of our clients will continue to rise, as our support is never more needed. Citizens Advice have published national data about the effect of the CoL crisis in different areas which can be seen [here](#). They have also published CoL trends data [here](#) should you wish to view it.

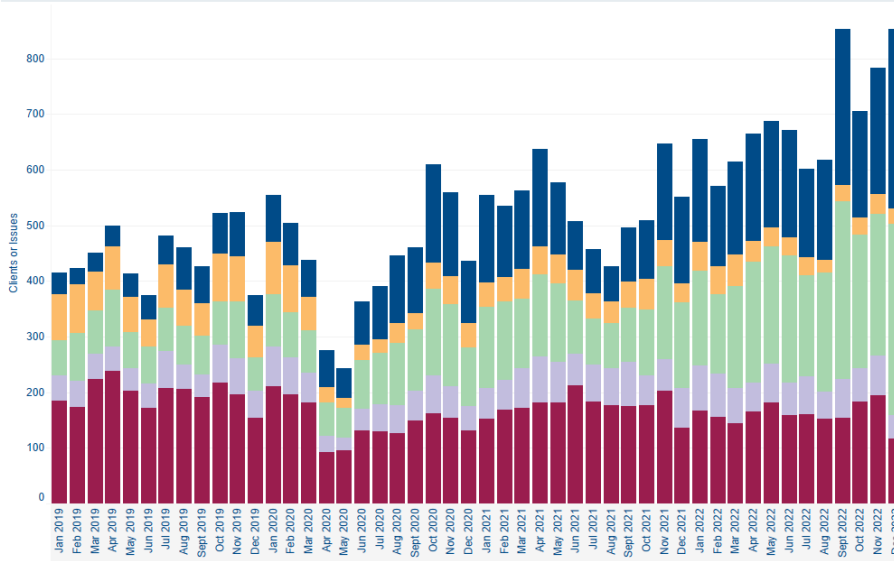
The current cost of living data for Northumberland is as follows and shows the increase in demand we are seeing across charitable support and food banks and energy advice which is reflected in Ashington's statistics above:

1) Five key cost of living Issues



- Charitable support & Food Banks
- Energy
- Personal independence payment
- Council tax arrears
- Energy debts

Five Key cost of living issues



This report is to show the number of clients per month with the selected issue/s

Filters

- Date: 01/01/2019 00:00:00 to 31/11/2022
- Government Region: All
- Member: All
- Funder: All
- Local Authority: Northumberland
- Select Issue:
 - Charitable support & Food Banks
 - Council tax arrears
 - Energy
 - Energy debts
 - Personal independence payment

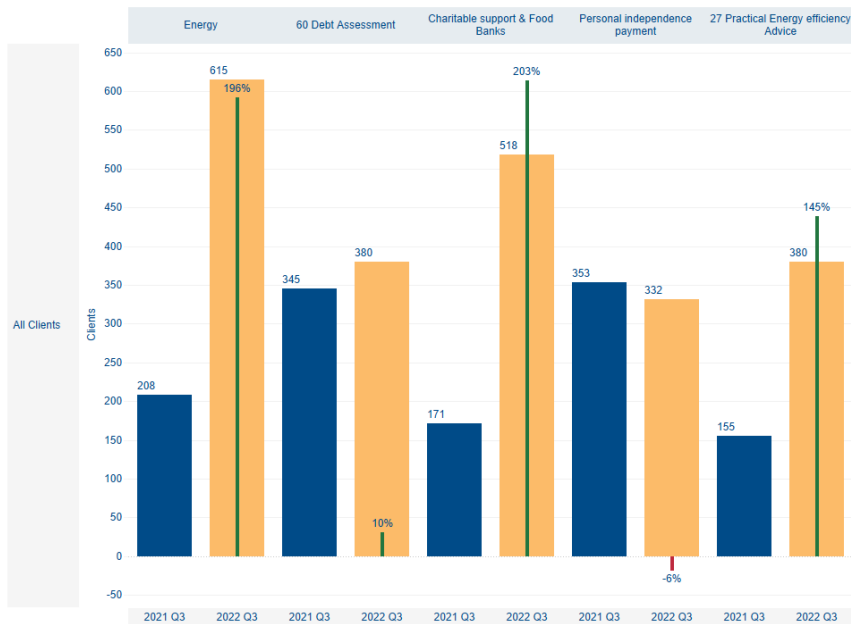
Select an issue above, if all issues are selected the graph will be stacked and the same client may be counted in more than one issue

This following infographic shows the increase of demand across the five key CoL measures in Q3 across the whole of Northumberland demonstrated in the increase in footfall in Ashington

1) Top 5 cost of living Issues



All

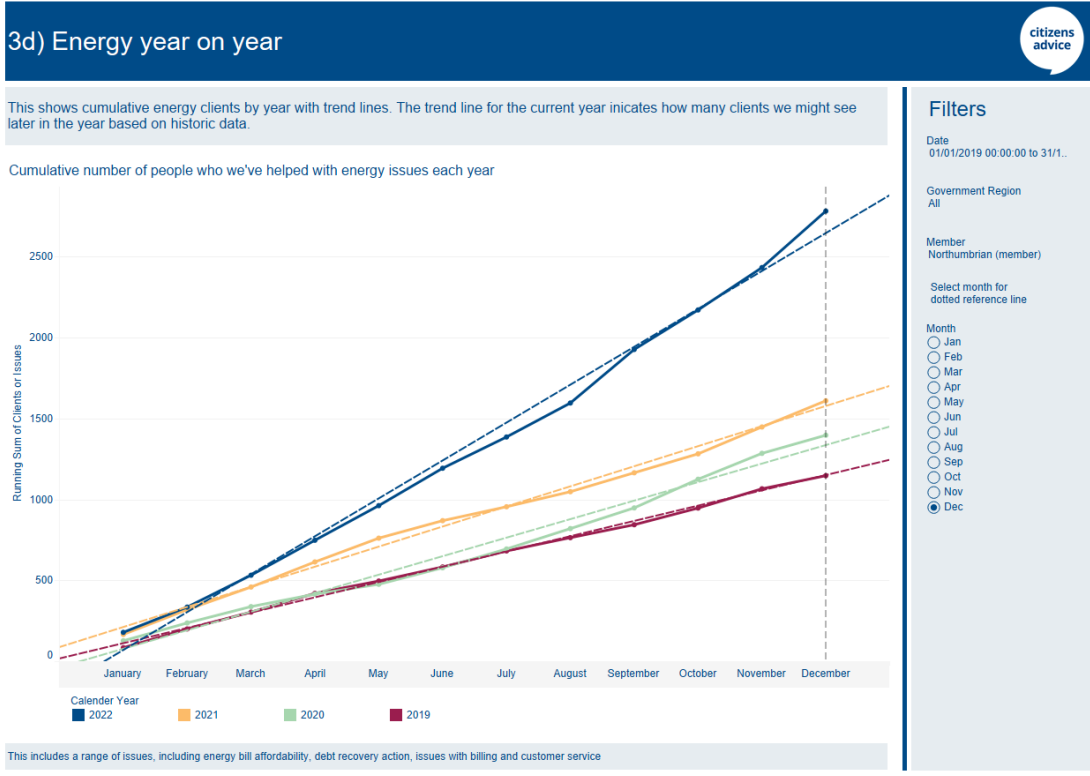


This report shows the change in the number & percentage of clients per quarter with the selected issue/s. The thin lines shows percentage change (green positive and red negative).

Filters

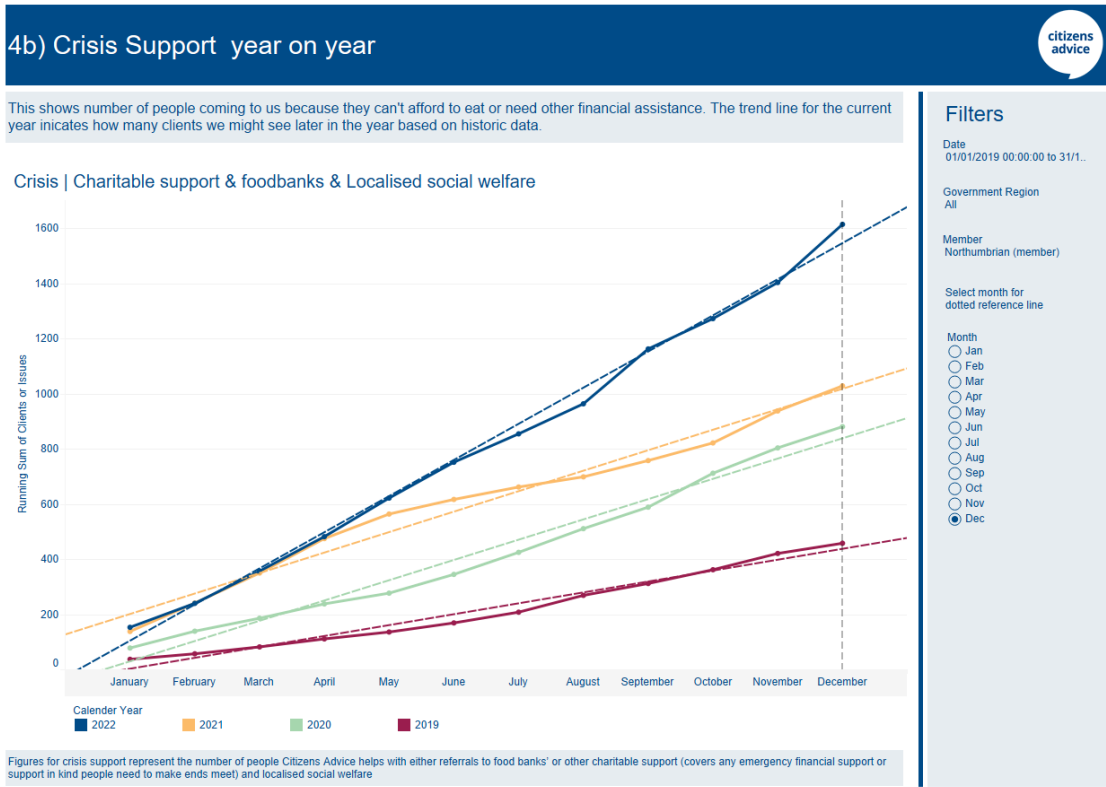
- Date: 01/04/2021 00:00:00 to 31/11/2022
- Calendar Quarter: Q3
- Government Region: All
- Member: Northumbrian (member)
- Profiles:
 - All
 - Age
 - Disability LTH
 - Ethnicity
 - Gender
 - Housing Tenure
 - Household Type

The following graph shows the cumulative number of energy and crisis support clients we have supported year on year showing the increase in both as a percentage of issues faced.



Filters

- Date
01/01/2019 00:00:00 to 31/1/..
- Government Region
All
- Member
Northumbrian (member)
- Select month for dotted reference line
- Month
- Jan
 - Feb
 - Mar
 - Apr
 - May
 - Jun
 - Jul
 - Aug
 - Sep
 - Oct
 - Nov
 - Dec



Filters

- Date
01/01/2019 00:00:00 to 31/1/..
- Government Region
All
- Member
Northumbrian (member)
- Select month for dotted reference line
- Month
- Jan
 - Feb
 - Mar
 - Apr
 - May
 - Jun
 - Jul
 - Aug
 - Sep
 - Oct
 - Nov
 - Dec

Case Studies for Ashington

Client A is recently bereaved. She encountered difficulties with seeking Bereavement Payments (which is quite topical at the moment). Client receives ESA and PIP and thinks she pays council tax, but her deceased husband paid for things like her phone and he had a motability car and she was struggling to know what and how to do things including claiming for bereavement allowance. Client also needed help to complete the forms for a blue badge and bus pass, which we supported her with. Client was informed by DWP that she was ineligible for bereavement support as they believed her estranged as she and her husband lived separately, however with support from Citizens Advice she was able to prove that they were still married and she was entitled to this benefit. Client has recently returned as she has just been informed that the cancer she had 2 years ago has just returned and so we've supported her to receive a Macmillan grant and are providing other support for her which is ongoing.

Client B has been knocked back many times for PIP in recent years despite clear medical evidence of physical, mental and learning difficulties, with the benefit returning only once the tribunals intervene. With CAs help we completed a mandatory reconsideration in Sep which was rejected in October. We fought this on her behalf and due to the evidence provided have managed to get an award for the client without the need of a long wait for a tribunal hearing. The existing award of PIP SR DL has been changed. The CI is now in receipt of PIP ER DL, currently £92.40/wk (2022/23) and SR Mobility, currently £24.45/wk. This has been backdated to 3 March 2022 and will be reviewed by 11 July 2025. Client has been advised to return to CitAN when DWP writes to her to request a review of her award which will be July 2024 so only in 18 months.

Client C has multiple issues, and has come to us with food insecurity requiring support with welfare benefits issues and financial support. We've supported him with a claim for discretionary housing payment, where he was awarded £1690.89 to clear rent arrears to stop UC deductions. Client has also been supported to complete an appeal and we helped arrange an ADHD/ASD assessment with Valens mental health team who submitted a report to support his PIP appeal. He was awarded 9 points (std rate) daily living component, (£61.85/wk) backdated to May 2021 (approx £4500) until 2025. We helped to calm his financial situation down, reducing stress, anxiety and exacerbating his medical conditions and our generalist service provided assistance with his PIP tribunal hearing as the client stepped out of the hearing to speak with our supervisor and as a result, the clients financial problems are greatly relieved.

For information, please find a summary of some of the other financial benefits gained for Ashington residents:

Financial Outcome Category	Outcome	Clients	Number of outcomes	Total Value	Outcome per client	Avg outcome
Debts written off	Debt write off - other	7	8	£14,025	£2,004	£1,753
	DRO - debt relief order	3	4	£40,976	£13,659	£10,244
	Total	10	12	£55,001	£5,500	£4,583
Income gain	£150 Council Tax Rebate	1	1	£150	£150	£150
	£150 Disability payment	1	1	£150	£150	£150
	£400 Energy Support payment	3	3	£1,200	£400	£400
	£650 Cost of Living payment	3	3	£1,950	£650	£650
	Application made to govt scheme for financial help/energy efficiency measures	144	149	£22,260	£155	£149
	Benefit / tax credit gain - a new award or increase	72	125	£481,958	£6,694	£3,856
	Benefit / tax credit gain - award or increase following revision or appeal	13	27	£81,981	£6,306	£3,036
	Benefit / tax credit gain - Money put back into payment	2	2	£5,725	£2,862	£2,862
	Better deal with same supplier	2	3	£228	£114	£76
	Budgeting change	3	4	£1,240	£413	£310
	Charitable payment	12	12	£2,934	£245	£245
	Compensation or remedy awarded by court/tribunal	1	1	£1,739	£1,739	£1,739
	Financial gain	1	1	£100	£100	£100
	Fuel Voucher	2	2	£84	£42	£42
	Macmillan Grant	4	4	£1,630	£408	£408
Other (financial)	4	5	£10,259	£2,565	£2,052	
Reduced costs from energy efficiency behavioural change	6	6	£2,411	£402	£402	

	UC claim submitted	5	5	£9,925	£1,985	£1,985
	Total	238	355	£625,924	£2,630	£1,763
Other	Access to, or provision of accommodation bid successful	1	1	£0	£0	£0
	Benefit / tax credit maintained	4	4	£12,509	£3,127	£3,127
	Benefit award/Income gain	17	17	£41,681	£2,452	£2,452
	Benefit check completed	63	72	£6,440	£102	£89
	Blue badge - obtained	14	15	£40	£3	£3
	Client familiarised with how UC works and what it means for them	19	58	£27,834	£1,465	£480
	CO advice given	33	35	£0	£0	£0
	Complaint resolved	1	1	£0	£0	£0
	Creditor action stopped/suspended/prevented	1	2	£0	£0	£0
	Debts repaid	1	1	£2,631	£2,631	£2,631
	Energy Efficiency Survey completed and advice given	162	167	£60,340	£372	£361
	Energy Project local fund	9	16	£198	£22	£12
	Enforcement action avoided/suspended	1	1	£0	£0	£0
	Engaged in further energy advice	21	21	£0	£0	£0
	Eon Energy Fund (Charis grants)	1	1	£0	£0	£0
	Financial situation stabilised / debts under control	5	7	£1,049	£210	£150
	Fuel Voucher	200	498	£19,981	£100	£40
	Full and final settlement	1	1	£1,480	£1,480	£1,480
	Homelessness prevented - remained in home	1	1	£0	£0	£0
	Household Support Fund	19	23	£520	£27	£23
	Housing - Tenancy sustained following advice	1	1	£0	£0	£0
	Improved health / capacity to manage	23	52	£1,870	£81	£36

	Individual budget plan created	57	58	£0	£0	£0
	Legal fines /costs imposed	1	1	£20	£20	£20
	Money saved through challenging incorrect energy bills	1	1	£50	£50	£50
	NPg Hardship Fund - Fuel vouchers	1	2	£49	£49	£25
	Other	1	1	£0	£0	£0
	Other (non-financial)	12	29	£1,023	£85	£35
	Request to be added to Priority Services Reg / Special Ass Reg	160	169	£0	£0	£0
	Savings enabled through small energy efficiency measures	7	9	£1,570	£224	£174
	Scottish Power Hardship Fund	1	3	£1,665	£1,665	£555
	Scottish Power voucher fund scheme	3	5	£98	£33	£20
	Smart meter - connection issues	1	1	£0	£0	£0
	Smart meter advice/information given	57	57	£0	£0	£0
	Smart meter leaflet/website provided	20	20	£0	£0	£0
	Suspended possession order	1	1	£0	£0	£0
	Taken through switch/tariff change process	68	69	£0	£0	£0
	universal credit	1	1	£15,258	£15,258	£15,258
	Total	310	1,525	£196,306	£633	£129
Re-imburs ments, services, loans	Food provision / referral	26	42	£236	£9	£6
	Road tax exemption	1	1	£0	£0	£0
	Total	27	43	£236	£9	£5
Repayments rescheduled	DMP - debt management plan	2	23	£49,811	£24,905	£2,166
	Repayment negotiated	11	28	£4,046	£368	£144
	Total	13	51	£53,856	£4,143	£1,056