

Press Release

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Energy bills warning as almost a third of struggling debtors in fuel poverty

Leading debt charity Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS) is warning about the impact of energy price rises on struggling debtors as new figures reveal that almost a third of people contacting it are already in fuel poverty.

19,437 of the people seeking its help with their debts in the first six months of this year were in fuel poverty. Their average combined gas and electricity bill was £136 a month, a significant chunk out of their average net monthly income of £847.

The burden of their energy bill was one of the reasons that these clients were, on average, £302 short of the amount needed to cover their basic living expenses each month. This shortfall means that they are not in a position to repay their debts, which averages £15,759 in unsecured debt for this group of CCCS clients.

CCCS says that this shortfall could grow even larger if energy bills continue to rise.

CCCS director of external affairs Delroy Corinaldi said: "The finances of people in fuel poverty are already significantly overstretched – and we are extremely concerned that the current round of energy price rises could plunge them even further into debt.

"I would strongly urge anyone who is struggling to cope over the coming months to contact a free and impartial debt charity such as CCCS as early as possible."

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Notes to editors:

1. Fuel poverty is defined as households who spend more than 10 percent of their net income on fuel to heat their home.
2. CCCS's ethos is to help the "can't pays", not the "won't pays", and does not condone debt avoidance. CCCS always aims to help its clients pay back what they owe, in a realistic timescale and manner that is suited to each individual's situation.
3. CCCS is self-funding. Lenders share with the charity the benefit they receive from its operation, making a donation from the money repaid to them. This allows CCCS to retain its independence and ensure that its advice is always in the best interest of the client.
4. The CCCS free phone helpline 0800 138 1111 is open 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday.
5. *CCCS Debt Remedy* is available at www.cccs.co.uk
6. Follow us on Twitter: @CCCSPressOffice

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