

Press Release

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Charity warns of looming debt crisis for young people in Northern Ireland

The UK's leading debt charity, Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS), has warned of a looming debt crisis for young people in Northern Ireland, after new figures have revealed that the area's under-25s have the highest levels of debt of their age group anywhere in the UK.

Young people in Northern Ireland who contacted CCCS for help in 2010 owed an average of £8,272 in unsecured debts – a figure significantly higher than the UK average for under-25s of £6,316. Across all age groups, average debt levels in Northern Ireland bucked the UK trend downwards – rising by 4.9 percent, to £18,855.

The charity, which recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of the opening of its Northern Ireland office in partnership with the Limavady Community Development Initiative (LCDI), has previously identified the area as one of the UK's problem debt hotspots. In 2010, the average CCCS client's monthly income in Northern Ireland was £55 short of the amount needed to cover basic living expenses, much less debt repayments, each month.

Debbie Mills, Managing Counsellor for CCCS Northern Ireland, says: "These figures are extremely worrying, and show just how serious the debt problem in Northern Ireland is in danger of becoming.

"I would urge anyone in Northern Ireland who is struggling to cope with their debts to seek free advice from a charity such as CCCS as early as possible."

CCCS Northern Ireland provides free and confidential debt advice via its telephone helpline (0800 027 4990) and anonymous online debt counselling tool, *CCCS Debt Remedy*, at www.cccs.co.uk

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Notes to editors:

1. *Debt View*, an analysis of client statistics broken down by region, by area and by postcode, is now available at www.cccs.co.uk/debtview
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 Northern Ireland free phone helpline number is 0800 027 4990
5. *CCCS Debt Remedy* is available at www.cccs.co.uk
6. Follow us on Twitter: @CCCSPressOffice

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