

Press Release

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Sharp rise in council tax arrears despite freeze

The number of people falling behind with their council tax has risen sharply despite council tax freezes across England, warns debt charity Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS). The charity has seen an annual 27 percent increase in the number of people contacting it for help with council tax arrears, from 13,353 in 2010 to 16,958 in 2011. The average amount owed in council tax arrears has also increased, from £675 in 2010 to £717 in 2011.

Much of this has been fuelled by the worsening financial position of renters, with more renters contacting the charity with council tax arrears than homeowners for the first time. A total of 8,841 renters sought advice on council tax debts in 2011, up from 6,084 in 2010.

CCCS director of external affairs Delroy Corinaldi said:

“The financial squeeze is causing more and more households to fall behind with their council tax bills, and this is a problem we expect to get worse over the coming year.

“Council tax is a priority debt and non-payment of it can have very serious consequences. Anyone who is struggling to keep up with their council tax bills should contact their council to discuss the problem, and check that they are receiving any discounts or rebates to which they may be entitled. If you are struggling to cope you should also seek free advice from a debt charity like CCCS as early as possible.”

- ends -

Notes to editors:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. The CCCS free phone helpline 0800 138 1111 is open 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday.
4. CCCS *Debt Remedy* is available at www.cccs.co.uk
5. Follow us on Twitter: @CCCSPressOffice

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