



Do you look after someone who couldn't manage without your help?

Cost of living support fact sheet

Many people are feeling the effects of the current cost of living crisis and carers are amongst those who are really feeling the pinch. In this fact sheet we provide details of some of the main sources of support that we are aware of in East Sussex across these four broad areas: ***Overall Support, Money, Food and Utilities.***

This information sheet was written in January 2023 and updated in March 2023.

About this fact sheet

Support available is subject to change, and whilst we will regularly review and update this information, we recommend that you use the links or contact details provided to get the most up-to-date information. Care for the Carers does not recommend or endorse any of the organisations, services or resources referred to in this fact sheet.

If you require any other information, support or services, please call our Carers Hub on 01323 738390 or email us at: info@cftc.org.uk.

Overall support for the cost of living

These two websites provide comprehensive information to support with the cost of living both locally and nationally:

<https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/> and the East Sussex County Council web pages: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/cost-of-living-support>

Government cost of living support from Spring 2023

The new £900 cash boost for over eight million eligible means-tested benefits claimants, including those on Universal Credit, Pension Credit and tax credits, starts in Spring and will go direct to bank accounts in three payments over the course of the financial year. There will also be a separate £150 for over six million disabled people and £300 for over eight million pensioners on top of their Winter Fuel Payments.

Please see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-low-income-households-to-get-new-cost-of-living-payments-from-spring-2023> for further details.

Specific grants for carers

As the Carers Centre for East Sussex, Care for the Carers is able to access and administer a selection of grants specific to different carers' needs, the urgency of support required, and eligibility criteria. Please contact us on our Carers Hub Carers Hub on 01323 738390 or email us at info@cftc.org.uk to find out how we may be able to help.

Discretionary East Sussex Support Scheme (DESSS)

If you need **urgent** help with food or utilities (gas, electricity or water) you might qualify for emergency support from the Discretionary East Sussex Support Scheme. To find out more you can call on 0333 344 0681 between 9am and 5pm from Monday to Friday, email benefitseastsussex@harcuk.com or visit bit.ly/40afOCF

Money

Are you missing out on benefits?

Did you know that it is estimated that an astonishing 13 billion pounds in benefits remains unclaimed? In these challenging times it is now more important than ever for carers to get the help they are entitled to. As the benefits system is undergoing a great deal of change, expert advice can make all the difference in helping you to get what's rightfully yours.

How about a benefits check?

Our partners at the East Sussex Citizens Advice Bureaus and the Hastings Advice and Representation Centre (HARC) can provide benefits checks for you. Checks are free and confidential.

To contact HARC, visit The Advice and Community Hub, Renaissance House, London Road, St Leonards on Sea, TN37 6AN or telephone Benefits Helpline: 0333 344 0681 or the Advice Line: 01424 428375. Information is also available online: www.harcuk.com

Citizens Advice - General Advice Freephone: 0800 144 8848, or CAB Consumer Helpline: 0808 223 1133, www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Or you could try using an online benefits calculator such as Entitled To bit.ly/3JIXW0X or Turn2us <https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/>

For more Information about benefits

Please also see our fact sheet which details the support available for carers. This is available here: <https://www.cftc.org.uk/benefits>

Food

Making savings

With the rising costs of food and drinks, everyone is seeking to make savings where they can. Some carers tell us that they make use of the food-waste saving sites Too Good to Go www.toogoodtogo.co.uk/en-gb and the local sharing App OLIO www.olioex.com

Community Fridges

People from all walks of life visit their local community fridge to pick up surplus local food at bargain prices. A Community Fridge is a space that brings people together to eat, connect, learn new skills and reduce food waste. You can find your nearest one here: www.communityfridgemap.org.uk

Food Banks

If you are struggling to afford food, food banks could help. You will usually need a food bank voucher referral to use one. These can be issued through us here at Carer for the Carers by contacting our Carers Hub, or your local Citizens Advice Bureau: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/using-a-food-bank/

Utilities

Warm spaces

Warm Spaces are free to use and will provide a warm welcome to all. Some venues will also offer hot drinks, activities, and other services such as offering information and advice. Warm Spaces will be heated, safe, friendly, and neutral places and they are available across East Sussex. Find your nearest Warm Space here: www.warmwelcome.uk

Current government support schemes

Energy Bill Discount

£400 off energy bills for all households in UK from October 2022 (administered by energy suppliers, paid to consumers over 6 months).

Cold weather Payments

£25 extra per week if you are in receipt of certain means tested benefits during the winter when the temperature reaches zero or below for more than 7 days.

Warm Home Discount

You should receive this £150 electricity bill rebate automatically if you get the guarantee element of Pension credit or if you are on other qualifying benefits and have high energy costs. If you are a prepayment meter customer, you should receive a voucher that can be redeemed onto your credit meter. More information available from: <https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

The Priority Services Register

This a free support service for people who may be vulnerable – perhaps because of their age, health or disability, or for other reasons:

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/get-help-your-supplier-priority-services-register>

Warm Home Check Service

East Sussex County Council's warm home service check is available all year round, it offers advice and support to anyone who struggles to keep warm at home. If you are on a low income you may also be eligible for a free Covid-secure home visit which would include:

- Advice on getting help to pay for heating
- An assessment on your home to identify how to keep warm
- Small works such as improving insulation or repairing boilers
- Emergency temporary heating

To find out more and to apply online visit:

<https://warmeastsussex.org.uk/services-and-support/winter-home-check-service/>, text WARM to 80011 or phone 0800 464 7307.

Household Support Fund

If you are over the age of 18 and finding it difficult to keep warm, buy enough food or pay essential bills, you may be able to get extra help.

The available funding is time limited though as the scheme will end on the 31st March or when the funding is used. This scheme is overseen by your local district or borough council.

You must be in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction but not receiving one of the following benefits: Universal Credit; Pension Credit; Working Tax Credit; Income Support; Income Based Job-Seeker's Allowance; Income Based Employment & Support Allowance or do not qualify for any means tested benefit but have a low household income.

For more information and to apply visit:

Hastings Borough Council: www.hastings.gov.uk/benefits/hsfund/

Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/HSG

Rother District Council: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/benefits-grants-and-funding/financial-support-for-residents/household-support-fund-3/>

Wealden District Council: www.wealden.gov.uk/benefits/household-support-fund/

Are you struggling to pay your utility bills?

If you are getting behind with your bills or repayments your local CAB can help: www.citizensadviceeastsussex.org.uk/. It's important to act as soon as you start finding it difficult to keep up with these payments.

Advisers can help by:

- explaining your rights and options for dealing with debt issues including contact from bailiffs or responding to court action
- advising on debt solutions such as repayment plans, debt relief orders or bankruptcy
- negotiating with the people you owe money to agree an affordable level of repayment
- making sure you have enough money to afford your daily essentials
- look at options for enabling you to become debt-free

For General Advice freephone: 0800 144 8848

For advice on goods and services including gas and electricity issues contact the Consumer Helpline: 0808 223 1133

You can also send a message via www.eastsussexcab.co.uk

Support from your energy provider

If you owe money and you're struggling to pay, you should speak to your energy provider who has a duty to help you. Suppliers must offer payment plans you can afford and you can ask for 'emergency credit' if you use a prepay meter and can't top up. If you receive certain means tested benefits, you may be entitled to help with energy efficiency measures such as insulation, white goods and even a new boiler (if your boiler is over 10 years old and not a condensing boiler).

<https://www.gov.uk/energy-company-obligation>

Grants and trust funds

You might also be able to get a grant from a charitable trust to help pay off any arrears, indeed some energy companies run their own trusts for example:

EDF Energy: <https://www.edfenergy.com/about/support-for-customers>

British Gas: <https://britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/fuel-and-money-advice/>

E.ON: <https://www.eonnextenergyfund.com/>

Charis Grants at <https://charisgrants.com/individuals/> administers many of these schemes on behalf of the energy providers.

Fuel vouchers for pre-payment meters

If you are struggling financially, have a pre-payment meter, have less than £4 on it, and not due a payment for a while, you can seek help. You can phone your utility company and ask for a fuel voucher – worth up to £49 – which you can apply for twice a year and does not have to be repaid. A PIN number is sent to your mobile phone. You show this at your top-up shop, along with your gas card or electricity key. Referrals for fuel vouchers are also available from the CAB:

www.eastsussexcab.co.uk.

Energy scams

It is a sad reality that there are people out there who will try to use the energy crisis as a way to scam people into sending money or setting up direct debits to supposedly receive discounts: bit.ly/3yFJoo7. Look out for fake emails and text messages that claim to offer discounts on your energy bills. Often these can look genuine and may even appear to come from the energy regulator, Ofgem. Never click on any links or give your bank card details. *Any discounts from the government are provided automatically through your energy supplier.*

If you have inadvertently provided any of your bank details contact your bank **immediately** for help. If you are ever suspicious about an email or a text message or think that you have been a victim of fraud, contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or visit the Action Fraud website to use their online reporting tool.

Care for the Carers

Care for the Carers is an independent charity and the Carers Centre for East Sussex. We have been supporting and representing unpaid carers in East Sussex since 1989.

What do we do?

Our team of staff and volunteers can provide free practical and emotional advice and support – face-to-face, by telephone, or online. We can put you in touch with other carers, and help you navigate the range of services available locally. We also run support groups and events for carers in East Sussex and training for health and social care professionals and volunteers working with carers.

Care for the Carers represents carers and raises awareness of caring, working with a variety of local communities, organisations and service providers to build a carer friendly East Sussex.

All our work is developed with carers, and in response to their expressed needs reflecting local and national strategy, legislation, research and best practice. We work with carers so that they are empowered and can have a say in the policies and services that affect them.

We are here to support all carers and offer our services in person, by phone or online.

How to contact us

Call our Carers Hub on 01323 738390, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm to request a call back from one of our team of dedicated support workers.

Email us: info@cftc.org.uk

Text us: 07860 077300 to request a call back.

More information and carer resources at: www.cftc.org.uk.