

## **Transcript: Navigating the cost of living crisis**

My name's Jane Goodwin, and I'm one of the area services managers at the Charity for Civil Servants.

We've been hearing a lot about the cost of living crisis in the news recently. Inflation is at a 40-year high, and this is due to global economic factors such as pandemic recovery, the war in Ukraine, supply issues. And not only have we seen an increase in the cost of energy, but everyday items such as food and fuel have also gone up in cost dramatically.

This means that people's budgets are being increasingly squeezed. Essentially, the money we have has to stretch a lot further. Most of us will have to find ways of reducing our expenditure, of trying to cut back. And this may even mean cutting back on essentials such as energy.

One of the best ways of dealing with the cost of living crisis is to look at your budget. Your budget will tell you what income you have coming in, what your outgoings are, where you might need to make cutbacks.

If you need help with budgeting, you can speak to a money advisor. And on our website, we have lots of resources and tools to help you with budgeting, including a link to the Money Helper budget planner and information about budgeting and managing money.

If you need help with budgeting, or if you're struggling with debts, the Charity for Civil Servants money advice and guidance service can help you. The government announced a cost of living support package earlier this year. This included one-off payments to people who are on means tested benefits. That includes pension credit, and also one-off payments for people who received disability benefits.

Everybody with a domestic electricity supply will receive a payment of 400 pounds, which will be credited to your electricity account between October and March.

There is also the Household Support Fund. This is a fund of 500 million pounds, which local authorities and in the Devolved Nations, other administrations can use to help people most in need. And this can be used to help people with the cost of food, fuel, and other essentials.

If you or a member of your household are vulnerable, you can apply to go on the Priority Services register. This is a scheme that is run by energy companies and enables them to protect people in vulnerable situations. In particular, it can mean that you won't get disconnected under any circumstances, because there's a vulnerability in the household.

There are billions of pounds' worth of benefits that are left unclaimed each year. We would advise that you do a benefit check. Make sure you're getting everything you're entitled to. You can use a benefit calculator. These are available either online or Age UK has one on their website. Or you can speak to a money advisor or a benefit advisor who can do a benefit calculation for you.

Benefits will depend sometimes on your income, so some benefits will be means tested. But there are some benefits which will depend on your circumstances and your needs, so for instance, disability benefits. And you may be entitled to help with housing costs, council tax, and day-to-day living expenses.

Since the cost of living crisis, there has been an increase in scams. We all need to be particularly vigilant and ensure that we don't part with money or personal details unless we're sure that the person we're speaking to can be verified.

Particularly you need to be aware of scams that target pensions or equity release, or even claiming government support. Government support will be paid automatically if you're eligible. So if you receive a text or a phone call saying that it's to claim government support, it's not. It will be a scam. So be vigilant, be careful, and check who you're talking to before parting with any of your personal information.

It's also important to look after your wellbeing, and staying in touch with friends and family is really important to stop feelings of isolation and loneliness. The Civil Service Retirement Fellowship and Age UK both provide befriending services, and also can run local groups that you can access to help keep in touch with people. These are tough times, and for some people, they're even tougher times. If you do need support, you can get in touch with the charity through our website, and you can also access a wealth of information and support.