

Research and campaigns quarterly report Q3 Nov 2024- January 2025

The major issues which emerged from Evidence Forms completed by advisers were benefit poverty and its close relation debt, and homelessness.

Benefit poverty

This can sometimes mean lack of access to benefits as well as indication that benefit levels are too low to provide the essentials for life. One client coming for help to feed and clothe his family was in work, and his partner also, but they were both in such low paid jobs they struggled to provide for their 4 children. Their immigration status meant they had no recourse to public funds and were therefore ineligible for any of the household support funds or additional income supplements which might have assisted them.

Children living in poverty often have a single female parent, who may be unable to work due to childcare and/or poor health and the family is therefore dependent upon means tested benefits.

It is difficult to see how some of these families would survive without the charitable support of foodbanks, school uniform banks, energy vouchers and the like.

Homelessness

Under this heading were clients who were street homeless, and those who were facing homelessness, being private tenants who had been served with section 21 or no fault eviction notices. The Research and Campaigns team is currently undertaking a survey of letting agents in the area in order to have a more accurate picture of the rental market locally.

Although not yet complete, a by now familiar picture is emerging, that demand far outstrips supply, that letting agents are able to select 5 or 6 applicants from the 40 to 50 who would apply for a 2 bedroomed property within hours of it being advertised and present them to the landlord, that in such a competitive environment only the most financially secure tenants are likely to be successful.

The use of a guarantor is a means to compensate for any lack of income in a tenant, but many clients would struggle to find a relative or friend with the income level required, 35 times the monthly rent.

For those who are street homeless, or living in a tent or shelter, help could be offered with making a homelessness application to LDC, or applying for a cash fuel voucher to buy some warmth, or clients could be directed to the emergency accommodation in Eastbourne, opened temporarily in severe weather.

Pension credit

Eligible clients have requested help with **Pension Credit** applications, some have had difficulty with the online application process, and some have been prompted to apply when they have been in contact with Cit A over an Attendance Allowance application. This has been a valuable part of Cit A work over the past few months as not only has it increased weekly pension income for these clients, but it has also enabled them to receive the means tested Winter Fuel Payment.

We have also established a link with the District Councillor with responsibility for Social Housing and Tenants which has secured us clarifying information about LDC policy for court costs incurred during eviction proceedings.

This will be pertinent to the information we give to a client dealing with a section 21 eviction notice who is eligible to apply to LDC for homelessness help.

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