March CITA CoL Briefing

2023 could leave ‘a real legacy of debt’. That was the chilling prospect underlying the latest national Citizens Advice cost of living briefing.

Policymakers always show interest in Citizens Advice (quite rightly). On this occasion they must have found it easier than usual. The briefing on 21 March took place at the House of Commons and two MPs were speakers.

**Each participant added to the big picture - 2023 could go down as ‘the year of debt crisis’.**

Citizens Advice national CEO **Dame Clare Moriarty** said the crisis was still getting worse for many people. Also, more were asking for crisis support they never expected to need. She talked too about longer term solutions to…

In their sizeable [Dashboard update](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=7def509874&e=6530f8e041) the **CA team** focused on 5 key cost of living issues. Calls for help with debt, energy, personal independence payment, council tax and food/charitable support were growing,

Bristol MP **Kerry McCarthy**, shadow minister for climate change, was hearing from constituents whose first response to rising prices was to economise. This was true for individuals and local business. “Now people just can’t pay.”

**Nigel Mills,** MP for Amber Valley, also worried about people’s resilience. He welcomed the chancellor’s Budget decision to hold down the energy price guarantee until June but (like us) wished it had been December.

Our colleague **Abi Conway**, CEO Citizens Advice Northumberland, echoing Ms McCarthy, pointed to local firms at risk. She welcomed the level of government support to date but more was necessary. Importantly it should include more advice services and efforts to target the cause of problems. The issues facing her clients at the moment were “more complex to sort out and untangle”.

Speaking of causes, **Giles Wilkes**, Fellow at the Institute for Government, questioned the energy price system. He agreed government support had been good but said the market for energy dependent on customers shopping around “just doesn’t work”. Government must anticipate more: energy for homes and business can no longer be “run by what Vladimir Putin does”.

Dame Clare and Giles Wilkes both raised the reform potential of an energy social tariff ([more here](https://wp.me/p949ks-3fm)). Also Giles said it was essential now to treat people in financial trouble well. We agree! Citizens Advice has long targeted bad practice debt collection and will keep pressing for improvement.

A huge thank you to Colletta Smith for chairing, and to our wonderful panellists who joined Dame Clare Moriarty, Chief Executive of Citizens Advice - Kerry McCarthy MP, Nigel Mills MP, Giles Wilkes, Senior Fellow at Institute for Government and ex No.10 and Abi Conway, CEO of Citizens Advice Northumberland.  
  
If you missed the session, [**you can watch the recording here**](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=40001cbdd9&e=6530f8e041). Please skip forwards to 01:16 where the briefing starts. Apologies to those of you who joined online and experienced low sound quality at the start of the briefing, this has been noted for future hybrid events.

You can use [**this link**](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=7def509874&e=6530f8e041) to share our data dashboard on social media - please post using #CitizensAdviceData. You can find a summary of some of our key findings in this [**Twitter thread**](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=1bcc596c94&e=6530f8e041). You can also access all our cost-of-living blogs as well as the dashboard on [**our data page**](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=12885a0f67&e=6530f8e041).

Our next cost-of-living briefing will be held on **Thursday 11 May from 11am - 12pm**. We’ll be joined by special guests Carys Roberts, Executive Director at Institute for Public Policy Reform (IPPR) and Paul Johnson, Director at Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS). [**Register now for our May cost-of-living briefing.**](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=803aabef28&e=6530f8e041)