FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Citizens Advice North Lancashire: Budget welcome in parts, but "does not go far enough to meet the scale of the challenge"

Local charity urges Government to be bold as people in Lancaster and Morecambe face a difficult Winter

Citizens Advice North Lancashire (CANL) has welcomed some of the measures in Wednesday's Budget, but warns they do not go far enough to meet the scale of the challenge facing local households.

CANL's CEO, Joanna Young, appeared on Sky News and BBC Breakfast this week to give the charity's reaction and to describe what advisers are seeing every day in Lancaster and Morecambe.

The Budget includes £100 of support for households in council tax bands A to D. Almost 90% of people in the Lancaster and Morecambe district live in these bands. But with energy prices set to rise in January, CANL says the payment will not stretch far.

Joanna Young, CEO of Citizens Advice North Lancashire, said:

"We welcome this £100, but with energy prices set to rise in January, it isn't going to go very far. It doesn't even cover the average weekly shop. We need urgent, targeted support. Every day we are seeing people in Lancaster and Morecambe who are facing destitution, and the money simply isn't adding up. Energy and rent costs have soared, yet wages and benefits haven't kept pace. People are going further and further into debt, and that means they're not turning the heating on, sometimes to dangerous levels, which risks their health. We need the Government to be bold."

CANL was disappointed that there was no mention of unfreezing the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). This is the part of the benefit system that helps people with their rent, and it has been frozen since 2024.

Joanna Young added:

“The Government is taking measures to reduce homelessness, but by not moving on LHA rates it will likely push more people into the threat of eviction and homelessness. Unaffordable housing, energy debt and the cost of living are hitting local people hard, and we are expecting a tough and busy winter at the charity.”

“We used to talk about the cost-of-living crisis as something temporary, but it’s no longer a one-off event that people live through and come out the other side. It’s now baked into the fabric of people’s lives. It’s a monthly reality for millions, and it is pushing debt to record levels.”

CANL urges the Government to go further and to Turn the Tide for households across the Lancaster and Morecambe District.

Joanna urged people who are struggling to reach out:

“It’s completely understandable to feel worried about bills, but you do not have to face it alone. If you are struggling, contact us at Citizens Advice North Lancashire. Don’t ignore bills or letters about money you owe, and if you can’t afford your energy bills, speak to your supplier or look for a cheaper tariff. Our website has advice on which bills to prioritise and how to manage debts, and our frontline advisers can help you understand what support you may be eligible for.”

You can listen to CANL’s Budget Briefing podcast here: https://open.spotify.com/episode/7FLd59f8qOftTlckxV8L88?si=ell_DzO1SJOx_fQNjUf8dw

ENDS

Notes to editors

- Citizens Advice North Lancashire is a local, independent charity providing free, confidential advice in the Lancaster and Morecambe District.
- Joanna Young is available for interview. Contact caroliner@northlancashirecab.org.uk