



Wise Group Report 2023

# LIFTING PEOPLE OUT OF FUEL POVERTY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



**We know what poverty looks, smells, sounds, tastes and feels like, and we know what it costs.**

This winter, our mentors **conducted hundreds of frank and insightful interviews** with those most in need, breaking down barriers with kindness and compassion in search of **viable solutions to the cost-of-living crisis.**

As the UK's leading relational mentoring social enterprise, every year we meaningfully support over **65,000 households** to break the cycle of poverty, at home, at work and in the community. Through this crisis, we have distributed millions of pounds in financial support and cleared **millions of pounds of debt** – with change locked in with relational mentoring.

## OF THOSE WE SPOKE TO:

**1/2**

Nearly half of families in work have visited a foodbank

**80%**

Over 80% of disabled people say their physical health has deteriorated as a result of rising bills

**2/3**

Over 2/3rds of people on prepayment meters said their physical health had been impacted by the **Cost of Living Crisis** or preferred not to say, compared to **less than 50%** on other payment types

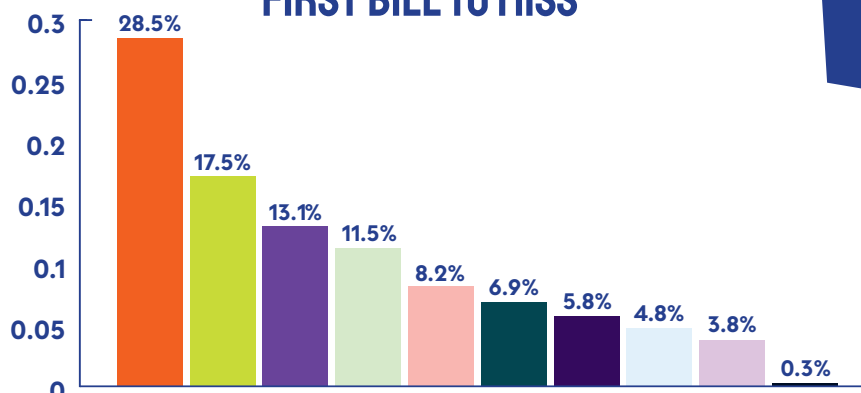
**43%**

43% of retired people say they first ration food when bills are tight, compared to 27% of working-age households

**4/5**

4 in 5 single parents said their mental health had been impacted by the **Cost of Living Crisis** or preferred not to say, **double the rate** of couples with children.

## FIRST BILL TO MISS



Among all groups, people are choosing heating over eating when bills get tight



- Food
- Energy
- Rent
- None
- Internet
- Other
- Debt
- Mobile Phone
- Council Tax
- Mortgage



In focus groups we found that parents and children are **being hospitalised due to issues with heating**, with many children being confused about the deterioration in living conditions. Some people were cut off electricity and gas **for over a year**, and in fear of this some households are **foregoing food** to hoard several hundred pounds on pre-payment meters. People unanimously preferred face-to-face support over online or telephone services.

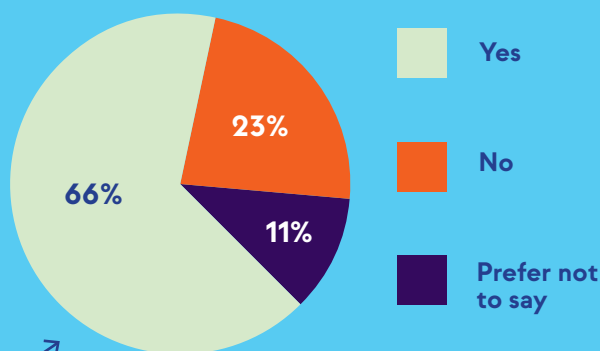


“This lady is undergoing **treatment for cancer** and is poorly. Macmillan’s had contacted us because she had switched off her heating through fear of costs. When I first spoke with her she told me her **heating system had cost her £110 in 10 days**.

When I let her know a couple of days later that she had been awarded **£821.97** she was overwhelmed. Even her daughter had been trying to get her to put the heating on for her health and recovery. With that credit in her account, she promised to put her heating on, and **we will be working on getting her back on her feet** from there”

- *Wise Group Mentor, Yvonne*

### HAS THE RISING COST OF ENERGY IMPACTED YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?



Less than 1/4 of people said their mental health had not been impacted by the rise in bills

## OUR TOP FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE

- 1.** Introduce a permanent ban on forced pre-payment meter conversion
- 2.** Replace or amend the energy price cap so that intervention on price provides benefit proportional to need
- 3.** Phase out one-off payments in favour of longer term financial and mentoring support
- 4.** Ensure low income in-work households are not left out of support schemes
- 5.** Establish an accessible mechanism enabling removal of historic energy debt used in credit scores



Get the full report online

To find out more about our work, contact the Wise Group at: [buildingbridges@thewisegroup.co.uk](mailto:buildingbridges@thewisegroup.co.uk)