

Surviving Winter

Impact report 2023/24



**Dorset
Community
Foundation**

Our continuing support



The 13th year of our Surviving Winter appeal saw grants awarded to 170 people living in fuel poverty

DURING winter 2023/24 Dorset Community Foundation raised £52,017.56 via our Surviving Winter Appeal.

Funds were raised from 170 donors, including 79 who had supported the appeal previously, 33 new donors and 58 anonymous donors.

Gift Aid is retained by DCF as a contribution to the costs incurred in running the campaign.

Funds raised were significantly lower than last year (by £52,087.85). This is largely due to one-off larger donations made last year, totalling £40,000, which

helped address a decline in public donations. We believe this decline is due to the ongoing impact of the cost of living crisis, leaving some of our donors less able to contribute.

The appeal raises funds to support older and vulnerable people in Dorset over the age of 50 who are in fuel poverty.

We especially encourage those in receipt of the government's Winter Fuel Allowance who feel they can manage without it, to consider donating to the appeal and helping someone in less fortunate circumstances.

"We were very grateful to receive help during a very difficult period of my life."

"It was such a relief to receive help as my living budget is very limited."

Being in fuel poverty means being unable to meet the costs of adequately heating your home.

This could be because of low income, the cost of energy (for example, expensive prepayment meters), or the type or age of the heating system. Surviving Winter grant recipients include those living in homes that are poorly insulated or difficult to heat, park homes or households using oil, coal and bottled gas – the costs for which have risen exponentially.

The appeal works with Citizens Advice to distribute grants of £200, helps

bills in the coldest months.

The grants bring certainty and allow recipients to switch on their heating during cold weather, as well as paying for smaller items such as electric blankets and warm clothing to help vulnerable people keep warm.

Feedback from grant recipients illustrate that receiving a Surviving Winter grant not only enables households to keep warm over the winter but supports improved mental health.

The stress and worry about affording to pay their bills has an enormous impact on mental health so recipients are extremely grateful for the grant.

Living in a cold home puts health at risk, especially for those with health conditions that are exacerbated by the cold.

People over 60 are particularly at risk from the impact of cold weather. We also offer Surviving Winter grants to those age 50 to 59 where they have health conditions and are on the highest level of benefits. Some 28 per cent of this year's grant recipients were in this group.

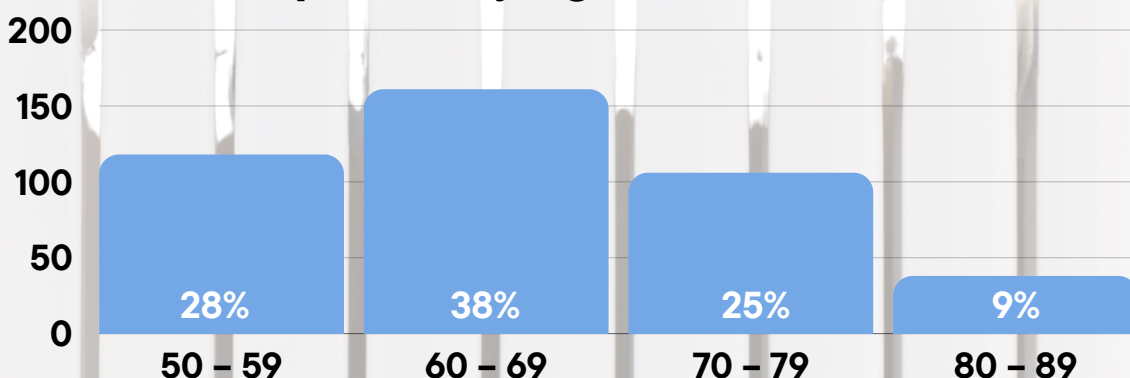
They often fall outside criteria for extra support, experience difficulties with Universal Credit and are frequently identified as being in or at risk of fuel poverty.

"This grant helped me pay some of the high winter energy costs, bought me a small electric heater and helped with rising food costs."

"I could not have managed without this grant."

"I felt I had to send a thank you card but it doesn't even begin to cover the peace of mind their help afforded me."

Grant recipients by age





Staff at Citizens Advice East Dorset & Purbeck, our partner in the Surviving Winter campaign

OUR partners at Citizens Advice East Dorset & Purbeck distributed £84,600 of Surviving Winter funding to 423 Dorset residents living in fuel poverty.

They distributed Surviving Winter grants of £200 per household by co-ordinating applications made via Citizens Advice offices across Dorset. They receive a contribution of £10 per grant awarded toward their costs.

The Surviving Winter scheme compliments statutory funds from the Household Support Fund, via the Department for Work and Pensions, also distributed by Citizens Advice and prioritising

families and younger households. These vital sources of support supported households who were forced to choose between heating and eating.

Due to high demand outstripping income from our appeal, the grant application process was closed in early March, a month before the usual closing date. This is the first time this has happened since the scheme began 12 years ago. If more funds had been available, Citizens Advice would have been able to distribute them very quickly.

The increasing cost of living crisis continues to have a significant impact on

households already struggling to make ends meet, with continuing uncertainty in the energy market, added to by changes in the energy price cap by Ofgem.

Low income households with no ability to increase their monthly income (such as pensioners or those unable to work due to disability etc) continue to be under pressure to meet the increased energy costs.

Cost of Living Payments (which ended in February) are not enough to cover all the increases households are facing in food, fuel and energy costs, so the Surviving Winter grants felt for many like a lifeline.



Further support and advice is provided to households applying for a Surviving Winter Grant by the Dorset Energy Unit, which is run by Citizens Advice East Dorset & Purbeck.

This enables advisors to conduct a full exploration of a household's situation, offer relevant energy advice to try to reduce costs and carry out income maximisation checks to help increase the household income and prevent the need for future grants.

The Dorset Energy Unit covers the whole of Dorset and advising households throughout the winter was an ongoing challenge.

The Energy Team adapts to the latest updates and guidance but there has been little choice in tariffs being offered by suppliers for the last couple of years.

Energy Advisers also look at other energy saving measures and can assist households with supplier problems and help to resolve complex billing or metering issues.

They can assist households with making formal complaints or taking action further to the ombudsman.

A spokesman for Citizens Advice said: "We are again very grateful to Dorset Community Foundation and to all the donors for their generosity in making these grants available."

Case study

ALICE lives alone and has health conditions including mental health issues, COPD and Emphysema that are impacted on by the cold.

She lives on a low income and had not been able to top up her prepayment meter to keep warm.

Citizens Advice were able to offer an Energy Advice appointment and

as part of this Alice was supported by an advisor to apply for a Surviving Winter grant.

Thanks to the Surviving Winter grant, Alice was able to have the heating on more often and felt less anxious about her bills.

She was very grateful and said this had helped her manager her health condition better.

Case study

BARBARA lives with her husband, she has cancer and lung problems but also cares for her husband who has a heart condition.

Their conditions are both heavily affected by the cold. B is reliant on Pension Credit and disability benefits for income. Their only source of heating is expensive electric space heaters as their storage heaters had broken down.

Citizens Advice offered an Energy Advice appointment and helped her apply for a Surviving

Winter grant. B was also referred to Ridgewater Energy's LEAP scheme for a home visit to look at free energy saving gadgets that could help keep the house warm.

The grant meant she and her husband felt more comfortable putting the heating on when needed. Ridgewater Energy were able to provide them with heated blankets, energy saving bulbs, and draught excluders.

Barbara said it had a positive impact on their health, both mental and physical.

Surviving Winter 2023/24 in numbers



£52,017.56

Raised in 23/24



170

Donors in 23/24



81%

Grant recipients with a disability or long-term health condition



11%

With a disability



70%

With a health condition

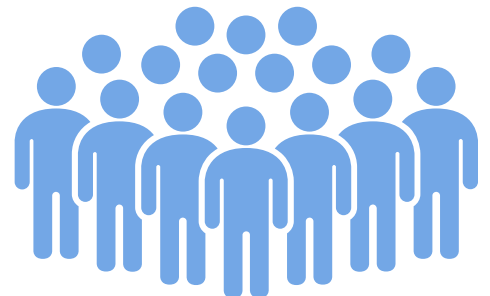
LIVING in a cold home puts health at risk, especially for those with health conditions that are exacerbated by the cold.

Those aged over 60 are particularly at risk from the impact of cold weather and households in this age bracket who are experiencing fuel poverty, are eligible for a grant.

We also offer Surviving Winter grants to those age 50 to 59 where they have health conditions and are on the highest level of benefits.

A total of 28 per cent of this year's grant recipients were in this group, who often fall outside any criteria for additional support, even though those with a long term health condition or disability are frequently identified as being in or at risk of fuel poverty.

Some 63 per cent of grant recipients were single people with no dependents - a 13 per cent increase from last year.



28%

Aged 50 to 59 with a health condition



63%

Single people

Grants by postcode area

THE highest number of grants were awarded to households living in Weymouth and Portland. This is consistent with previous years as these are known to be the areas with highest levels of fuel poverty or vulnerable households.

There has been an increase in grants allocated in Bridport, where we have had many clients struggling due to being off mains gas supply.

Postcode	Post code area	Grants	Area
BH1	Town Centre, Springbourne, East Cliff	9	
BH2	Bournemouth Central, West Cliff	1	
BH3	Talbot Woods, Winton	0	
BH4	Westbourne, Branksome Woods	0	
BH5	Boscombe, Pokesdown	6	
BH6	Southbourne, Tuckton, Wick	4	
BH7	Littledown, Iford	1	
BH8	Malmesbury Park, Queens Park, Strouden Park, Townsend, Holdenhurst, Throop	7	
BH9	Winton, Moordown, Throop, Muscliff	2	
BH10	Kinson, East Howe, Northbourne, Redhill, Ensburry Park	0	
BH11	Kinson, Bear Cross, West Howe, Wallisdown	5	Bournemouth:35
BH12	Branksome, Alderney, Upper Parkstone, Wallisdown, Newtown	6	
BH13	Canford Cliffs, Sandbanks, Branksome Park	2	
BH14	Lower Parkstone, Lilliput, Penn Hill	6	
BH15	Town Centre, Hamworthy, Oakdale	5	
BH16	Upton, Turlin Moor, Lytchett Minster, Lytchett Matravers	8	
BH17	Canford Heath, Creekmoor	2	
BH18	Broadstone	0	Poole: 29
BH19	Swanage, Studland, Langton Matravers	20	
BH20	Wareham, Wool, Bere Regis	31	Purbeck: 51
BH21	Wimborne, Corfe Mullen	29	
BH22	Ferndown, West Moors, West Parley	21	
BH23	Christchurch, Mudeford, Highcliffe	13	
BH24	Ringwood, St Leonards, Ashley Heath	1	
BH31	Verwood, Three Legged Cross	7	
SP5	Sixpenny Handley	7	
SP6	Alderholt, Fordingbridge	1	Christchurch/East Dorset: 79
DT1	Dorchester	29	
DT2	Dorchester	22	
DT6	Bridport	33	
DT7	Lyme Regis	3	
DT8	Beaminster	3	
DT9	Sherborne	18	West Dorset: 108
DT3	Chickerell, Broadwey, Radipole, Osmington, Preston, Littlemoor, Portesham, Abbotsbury, Langton Herring	20	
DT4	Weymouth town centre, Melcombe Regis, Wyke Regis	51	
DT5	Portland, Fortuneswell, Easton, Southwell, Weston, The Grove	25	Weymouth/Portland: 96
DT10	Sturminster Newton	6	
DT11	Blandford Forum	9	
SP7	Shaftesbury, Compton Abbas, Fontmell Magna, Donhead St Andrew, Donhead St Mary, Berwick St John, Motcombe	5	
SP8	Gillingham, Stour Provost, East Stour, West Stour, Kington Magna, Buckhorn Weston, Milton on Stour	5	North Dorset: 25



Dorset Community Foundation

WE would like to thank everyone who donated to the 2023/24 Surviving Winter Appeal, including DCF fundholders.

Our grateful thanks go once again to Citizens Advice East Dorset & Purbeck for distributing grants.

We would also like to thank all the organisations and individuals who helped us publicise the appeal and the grants available – including BBC Radio Solent, Bournemouth and Dorset Echo, Dorset View, Dorset Biz News, Wessex Water and BCP and Dorset Councils.

We could not reach the people who need our help without you.