citizens advice South Hams

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Autumn Newsletter

Citizens Advice South Hams

Get Help Early

As this year's long, hot summer draws to a close, many people will be starting to think about how to meet ever rising energy bills, particularly with the Ofgem energy price cap to rise by 4% from October.

If you're worried about how you're going to pay your bills this winter, keep up with Council Tax payments or are falling behind on rent it's important to seek help and advice early.

This is one of the reasons we're teaming-up with South Hams District Council for our Seek Help Early! campaign.

Many of the people who come to us at Citizens Advice for help leave it to the last minute when things may already spiralling out of control.

Sometimes it's a case of trying to keep your head above water while in danger of drowning in debt, or just not really knowing where to turn, but often there is help and support and available to turn your situation around at an early stage.

We know for some people it's difficult to reach out and seek help, especially if you've been used to successfully managing your affairs, but we can all hit difficulties at any moment in our lives.

Our highly trained advisers are non-judgmental and all our advice is free, independent and completely confidential.

Help and support ranges from the new Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) to our RESET energy project, our professional debt advice service and our schools outreach service, while South Hams Council can can help with housing advice, Council Tax Support and their own CRF scheme.

So, as we approach the colder winter months, don't forget local advice and support is available when you need it.

Best wishes,
Janie

JANIE MOOR
Chief Officer
Citizens Advice South Hams
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RESET survey

As part of our RESET Energy Advice project, we're researching how well people understand their energy bills. Your responses will help us lobby energy companies to simplify their bills for everyone. Take the survey online — it only takes a few minutes.

Once you've completed the survey, you'll have the chance to enter a prize draw to win a cosy Winter Warmer hamper worth £80, including:

- Thermos King Flask
- Thermos King Food Flask
- Hot Water Bottle
- Cozytime Microwavable Soft Toy
- Snuggle Blanket

The winner will be notified in November 2026.

Festival of Social Sciences

Citizens Advice South Hams and the University of Plymouth are holding a special event in Ashburton Town Hall on 3 November as part of the government's Festival of Social Sciences.

The event is open to all members of the public and will look at the causes and potential solutions to rural poverty in Devon. There will be two sessions (10am-12pm and 2pm-4pm) where participants will hear different scenarios based on real-life cases we see at Citizens Advice and discuss what solutions could be available.

The scenarios covered include lack of affordable housing, seasonal work and low pay, access to transport and childcare and rural isolation.

Please come along and let us know your views in an informal and friendly atmosphere. Free refreshments included.

For more information please contact: wailim.wong@southhamscab.org.uk.

How we helped Donna

Donna came to Citizens Advice to seek help for her elderly mother and stepfather, who were in significant financial distress.

Her mother has dementia and several chronic health conditions and her stepfather is her primary carer.

Donna recently broke her wrist and had difficulty filling out benefits forms. The family were unaware of any available benefits or how to apply for them.

Their CA adviser helped Donna apply for power of attorney for the couple and advised them to request the **Attendance Allowance** form by phone. Benefits staff subsequently met with Donna and Alan to complete the application.

The adviser also found they were eligible for **Pension Credit** because of their low income, and helped them successfully apply.

Because of Donna's mum's dementia, they also qualified for **Council Tax Discount** and were also able to claim the **Winter Fuel Payment** to help out with their energy bills.

The advisers also verified that Donna was connected with **local carer support networks** for emotional and practical help.

The Attendance Allowance for Donna's mum and stepdad was calculated at **£5,900-a-year** which is a significant relief on the household finances, while a Council Tax **reduction of 25%** further improved their situation.

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If you need help with your energy bills, call our RESET energy line and leave a message.

HOW TO GET ADVICE

0808 278 7948 (freephone)
Monday to Friday
10am to 4pm

Check out information on a wide range of subjects on our **website:**
southhamscab.org.uk

Come and see us
Follaton House, Totnes
Monday to Friday
10am - 1pm, 2pm - 4pm

Weekly outreaches in Totnes Ivybridge, Dartmouth and Kingsbridge.
See our website for details of times and locations.