

Hello,

Welcome to the new edition of our newsletter for the North West debt advisor community. It's been a busy summer for our outreach team and we've provided an update on some of the events we've been supporting alongside our partners. We've also been working closely with Jobcentre Plus, identifying customers who would benefit from our affordability support.

As ever, if you have an event coming up that you would like us to attend please get in touch using the contact details at the end of this email.



Spreading the word in our communities

It's been a busy few months for our outreach team who have been getting out and about across the North West talking to our customers and sharing lots of useful information.

Many of our colleagues spend a lot of time on the phone talking to customers, so we're getting out into communities and supporting local events – sharing more about what we do and what help and support is available for customers who are struggling to pay their bills along with information about our Priority Services scheme and tips on using water wisely to help reduce water and energy bills.

Amber Cairns, affordability manager said: "We know that a lot of people who are struggling with their bills may be reluctant to pick up the phone so attending events is a great way to speak to customers about the help we can provide.

"We've been out far and wide this summer, attending events such as Pride, Operation Respect and Summer Park fun days, having some great conversations with customers and providing help to those who need it.

"It's not stopping there. The team will continue to reach out to communities to build relationships and drive a wider engagement, especially in those areas where we know customers need a little extra support."

The power of partnership working

We've been working with Jobcentre Plus across the region to help identify those customers who most need support with their bills.

Our outreach team have been attending regular appointments with people visiting their local Jobcentre Plus and who are looking to see what support is available with water charges.

Through one meeting (see story below), the team were able to remove the fear of dealing with arrears and support the customer to get back on track with their water payments.

The face-to-face conversation provided time for the customer to open up about their circumstances and allowed us to put together a package of support – not only with water affordability but also raising awareness of other local support schemes to help their benefit income go further. We were also able to support the customer with an application to our Trust Fund along with signposting to help with furniture and carpets.

The customer was surprised and grateful for the support available to him and the reduction in his water bill, saying that our help had 'made my day'.

We run appointment sessions across the region and customers attending a Jobcentre should speak with their work coach to book an appointment.



Debi's debt support makes big difference

Addressing fears of water affordability is an important aspect of our outreach work. Debi, one of our outreach officers, has a great example of where we made a big difference through awareness of the support available to our customers.

"I had a really positive experience with one of our customers," said Debi. "The customer was really concerned about using water as they didn't think they could afford it. After speaking to the customer, I was able to confirm he was eligible for our Help to Pay scheme and reduced his regular payments to make his bills much more affordable. He couldn't believe we'd been able to take away his worries and was really thankful that we'd made such a big difference to this life.

"It's moments like this which make my job so rewarding."

A little respect goes a long way

This year we've been taking part in various Operation Respect events across Cumbria.

The Operation Respect events included community clean-ups, lots of advice, sport, activities, food and interaction from agencies across Cumbria.

The housing association-led events ran in five locations across the Cumberland Council patch – Egremont, Whitehaven, Workington, Aspatria, and Carlisle.

Amber Cairns, affordability manager said: "It was great to attend these events which encouraged the community to get out and about into shared spaces and talk, take part in local clean-ups and raise any concerns while being able to speak with various partners including United Utilities to address affordability worries.

"Our volunteers were keen to take part and raise awareness of the support we offer to customers struggling with water bills. The team were out in force at these events, taking part in clean-ups and speaking with lots of customers. Most people were surprised at the support schemes and tariffs we have available to reduce water charges, save water and stop sewage blockages. It was a great way of sharing information with customers and our partners in a relaxed setting."

Upcoming events

Over the next few months you can catch up with our Outreach Team at the following events:

- **Tuesday 15th October 10 – 2pm**
Lancashire Hill / Heaton Norris Job Fair and Money Max Roadshow
- **Thursday 17th October**
Food Community
The Brick, St George's Church, 65 Water St, Wigan WN1 1DN
- **Tuesday 22nd October**
Thrive55 – connecting with local services
At the Grange Community Centre, 2a Bathurst Ave, FY3 7RW
- **Tuesday, 5th November 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM**
Job Fair & Fuel Poverty Event
Location: Leigh Sports Village, Sale Way, Leigh, WN7 4JY
- **Thursday 28th November**
Olive Branch Pop UP
2c Castle Street, Stockport, England, SK3 9AB, United Kingdom

If you are planning an event and would like to invite us along to talk about water affordability, please get in touch by completing our online form.

[GET IN TOUCH](#)



[Help from the Hub](#)

Don't forget to recommend the [Hardship Hub](#) to any of your clients who are looking for support within their local areas.

The Hub – originally created to assist debt advisors when helping clients to find the most appropriate support – contains information on hundreds of schemes from lots of organisations including housing associations, energy companies, charities and local authorities.

If your organisation is featured on the Hub, please take a few minutes to check that your content is still up to date and contact the website if you need to make any changes.

We're always keen to hear examples of how your clients may have obtained help via the Hardship Hub, so please let us know if you have any good news to share. You can find our contact details at the end of this newsletter.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Get in touch

You play a key role in identifying and supporting people across the North West who are struggling with debt and we hope that by working together, we can provide support to even more customers who need help with their water bills.

If you'd like to get in touch with our Outreach Team, or are keen for us to attend an event to talk to customers about our support schemes, please use the [contact form](#) on our website.

To catch up on our previous newsletters please visit [our website](#).

Many thanks,

United Utilities



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