



# West Dorset

## Priorities for a New Government & Data Insights

**citizens  
advice**

**June 2024**

# Our Priorities for a New Government

Citizens Advice research shows that nationally, 5 million people are living on a negative budget, falling further into debt just to cover their essentials. A further 2.3 million people are living on empty - cutting back their spending on essentials to unsafe levels.

The rise in clients with negative budgets has been driven by four main factors:

Income from benefits hasn't kept pace with inflation, meaning that benefits have fallen even further behind the real cost of living.

Work isn't paying: for many people we help on low incomes, real terms earnings have stagnated.

High energy costs have had a big impact - with costs doubling for a period and still 40% above their pre-crisis levels.

Private rents continue to rise. The recent rise in interest rates has dragged low income mortgage holders into debt.

This information comes from a major Citizens Advice research paper, 'The National Red Index'. For further information, please ask us, or follow the link [here](#).

Legislate to uprate working-age benefits using inflation data from the Household Costs Indices, so they better reflect the true cost of living for low-income households.

1

Keep increasing the national minimum wage so more people in work can be lifted out of a negative budget.

2

End section 21 'no fault' evictions for renters and deliver reforms that give tenants meaningful security in their homes and protection when things go wrong.

3

Reform the Local Housing Allowance so it better supports people with high private rent costs.

4

Scrap the 5 week wait for Universal Credit claims, which causes hardship and debt.

Reform disability benefits to improve access, with decisions right the first time.

5

Reform the Warm Home Discount, providing greater support to fuel poor households.

Introduce a social tariff strategy, ensuring support in all essential markets.

6



# West Dorset

**5.11%** of residents in a negative budget

This is **4,782** people

The top issues that we are helping West Dorset residents with include:

- Charitable Support & Foodbanks
- Benefits & Tax Credits
- Benefits Universal Credit
- Debt

**51.82%** of West Dorset residents said that cost of living or living standards was one of the most important issues in determining how they will vote.

**79.52%** of people in West Dorset said that negative budgets are an important issue.

**Citizens Advice helped 5,961 people in West Dorset between April 2023 to March 2024, advising on 29,755 issues. 54% had a disability or long term health condition.**



This is a **41%** increase in issues vs. the same period last year.



**Thank you for your time.**

**For more information, please contact:**

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