

COL CATCHUP

COST OF LIVING NEWSLETTER FOR CALDERDALE SUPPORT PROVIDERS

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General and News:

This is the third of our Cost-of-Living newsletters, and it is our late winter edition, covering the rest of January and February. We are hoping over time it will be shaped by you, the providers, to be what you would like it to be. If you have anything to promote, whether it be a scheme, a drive, an event, or even a celebration or milestone, anything at all, or general feedback/criticism, please contact tia.metcalfe@cvac.org.uk or jane.woodcock@vsialliance.org.uk.



A big well done to the finalists of the **Community Spirit Awards** for the Best Response to the Cost of Living Crisis: EdShift, Focus4Hope, Food For Families, Halifax Community Fridge. And a big congratulations to **Noah's Ark** for winning the award!

The next issue of the COL Catchup will be in **early March**.



This month's spotlight: The Outback Pantry

The Outback Kitchen opened its new Food Pantry on 1st December 2023.

Opening every Tuesday afternoon 1-3pm, it stocks lots of basic store cupboard essentials alongside its supermarket surplus food donations which usually include fresh vegetables, fruit and bakery items.

Customers need to give proof of genuine low income and pay a small £1 a year membership fee, then a weekly visit payment of £4 for 10 items.



The aim of the Pantry is to address the continuing blow of rising food and fuel costs that the Outback hear from their surrounding Park Ward neighbourhood. Pantries are also helping to strengthen communities by forging friendship and creating opportunities to get involved and give back.

There is also time and space to share other support ideas that relieve the effects of poverty and poor health to create happier, healthier residents.

The Outback continue to have volunteering opportunities in the garden, Pantry and kitchen

<https://www.regen.org.uk/wellbeing/the-outback-garden/>

They also have a direct link to Staying well health projects and a busy weekly programme of activities, launching 31st January at their Apna Staying well Hub next-door at Hanson Lane Enterprise center <https://www.regen.org.uk/halifax-opportunities-trust-expands-community-and-wellbeing-delivery-with-new-community-space/>

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Food Poverty:

- Demand for food parcels remains high with several providers reporting increases up to and after the Christmas period. Too early to say if this will return to 'normal' levels or if this is a sign of things to come.
- Data: Thank you to everyone who has submitted data, it's much appreciated. The link for the form can be found [HERE](#) or numbers can be sent via email to Jane Woodcock.
- What a great way to highlight food poverty over the Christmas period <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-67559228>
- Feeding Britain Webinars – Feeding Britain have monthly webinars on a variety of topics. The next couple may be of interest.
 - * 25th January, 3.30pm-5pm – **Supporting a transition from food banks to food clubs and reducing dependency on emergency food provision.** You can sign up to attend or to receive a copy of the recording [here](#).
 - * 22nd February, 3.30pm-5pm – **Culturally appropriate food for food clubs.** You can sign up to attend or to receive a copy of the recording [here](#).
- Food Poverty Forum Reminder – our next meeting is on Wednesday 24th January at 10am via Teams.
- Finally, whilst it's a sign of difficult times for so many, it has been humbling to see and read about all the fantastic things groups across Calderdale did to help those in need over the festive period.

October 2023 Stats

Food parcels given: 1292 (based on 5 providers data)

Community meals served: 4679 (based on 5 providers data)

Supermarket Customers: 797 (based on 3 providers data)

Source: Food Poverty Data



Affordable Warmth:



Citizens Advice have an Energy Affordability line, which aims to provide Energy advice via telephone or webchat to clients who live in the West Yorkshire area and this is a free advice service. They provide advice on understanding fuel bills, settling fuel debt, reducing costs, accessing more support, and more, with more information to be found on their [website](#).

The FuelBank foundation have launched a report on the '**Cold, Dark Truth about Winter 2023/24**', which can be found on their [website](#). They have plenty of statistics from their client base, and some recommendations based on their findings.



VCSE organisations can now apply for a **free Independent Energy Assessment** as part of a Government package of support to help VCSE organisations deal with the cost of living crisis. For more information, visit the Groundwork [website](#).

In partnership with Green Doctor, [Noah's Ark](#) have had funding extended for another twelve months so that their clients will continue to receive **free energy efficiency surveys**.



Money and Debt:



For access to the **Citizens Advice Bureau slides and resources** from the Cost of Living event in November, please email tia.metcalfe@cvac.org.uk. It has lots of useful graphs and information, including one which shows trends in cost of living issues since 2014 in Calderdale, with a worrying increase in energy and food costs in particular.

The [Money Helper](#) website has a range of **tools to help with financial hardship, budgeting, debt, pensions**, and more. Some of their tools include:

- [Credit card calculator](#)
- [Benefits calculator](#)
- [Bill prioritiser tool](#)
- [Articles on insurance](#)
- [Redundancy pay calculator](#)



And many more!



Starting in February 2024, funded by Northern Gas Networks, [Noah's Ark](#) will be starting a **new project working with local food banks in Calderdale** to understand why their clients are using their services. It is a two year project, and will include money and debt advice, budgeting courses, and financial support for fees relating to bankruptcy and debt relief orders.



Living Costs:

The [Money Helper](#) website has some good **toolkits to help people with their living costs**.

These include:

- [Benefits to help with housing costs](#)
- [Budgeting](#)
- [Buying and running a car](#)



And more!



[Noah's Ark](#) have had more provisional funding with UKSPF to help support their **carpet scheme**, offering free carpets to clients who are struggling and in need of carpets.



Family and Children:



Support with childcare costs:

From 2 January 2024, eligible working parents can apply for **15 hours of childcare** for their two-year-old. Parents have until 31 March 2024 to apply for a code, with mid-January to the end of February being the optimum time to apply in case they need to provide further information to support their application.

To apply for a childcare code each parent needs to be working and earning the equivalent of 16 hours a week at national minimum/living wage and under £100,000 adjusted net income per year. This means that each parent needs to earn from just over £8,600 per year to be eligible for 15 hours a week of childcare during term time.

There is more information on the childcare support available to parents on the [Childcare Choices website](#), where they can explore the early education entitlements and other government help with childcare costs.

EdShift are running the [Bravebox](#) Initiative, which is in response to the cost of living crisis. This aims to **reach children living in high risk households**, by providing training to schools, and a box of fact sheets, toys, and other resources to vulnerable children. To request a Bravebox to be distributed by your organisation to children in high risk households, visit their [website](#).



Unicef report card on Child Poverty - not easy reading, especially with the significant increase in families accessing emergency food provision. The UK was the worst performer among 39 high-income countries with an increase in our rates of relative child poverty of nearly 20%. Compared to reductions in up to 30% in other countries we are seriously doing something wrong. In 2022, 1 million children in the UK were classed as 'in a state of destitution' an increase of nearly 3 times over a 5 year period. Further information can be found [HERE](#)



Other:

The [Money Guider website](#) offers a list of **letter templates** that can be used by clients who are unsure of how to address their bank, employer, loan company, etcetera. The letter templates include:



- Letter to cancel an insurance policy.
- Letter of appeal for community care.
- Letter to set up a standing order.

And more!

Congratulations to Noah's Ark on being chosen to be a **Glasspool Trust grant distribution partner!** More information will follow in the coming months.



Funding and Grants:

The VSI Alliance offer free advice on what grants are available, assist with editing and forming policies and procedures, support organisational governance, and can assist with bid writing. For more information and specific grants available for your organisation, as well as support writing applications for funding, contact pat.akerman@cvac.org.uk or matthew.orford@cvac.org.uk.

[Calderdale Council's Small Grants Scheme 2023/2024](#)

- Up to £3,000.
- For: Three themes – Strong, thriving towns and places; Reducing inequalities; Climate action.
- Deadline: Sunday 4th February.

[Inman Charity](#)

- Up to £5,000.
- For: Care for the elderly, general welfare, hospices, the deaf and blind, and care of the mentally and physically disabled.
- Deadline: Thursday 29th February.

[Asda Foundation Cost of Living Grant](#)

- Up to £1,600.
- For: Local community groups with volunteer-related costs, rent/utilities expenses and food/essentials.
- Deadline: Friday 1st March.

[Britford Bridge Trust Grant](#)

- Up to £50,000.
- For: The prevention or relief of poverty; the advancement of education; the advancement of health or the saving of lives; and the advancement of the arts, culture, heritage, or science.
- Deadline: Saturday 30th March.

[Grow Wild Community Programme Grant](#)

- £2,000.
- For: transforming an urban space with UK native plants, encourage wildlife and engage your local community.
- Deadline: Tuesday 30th January.



Events and Training:

[VSI Alliance Trustee Open Day](#)

- Thursday 25th January, drop-in 12pm – 6pm, VAC Resource Centre, Hall Street, Halifax, HX1 5AY.
- Find out more about being a trustee, who the trustees are, and local trustee opportunities.
- Run by VSI Alliance.

[UK Poverty 2024 – The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK](#)

- Thursday 25th January, 10am – 12pm, Zoom Webinar.
- Run by Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

[Calderdale Adult Learning Courses](#)

- Varied start times, see [website](#) for more detail.
- Include professional development, digital skills, cooking, arts and crafts, and languages.
- Run by Calderdale Council.

Noah's Ark Budget Like a Boss Courses

- 8th February – 15th February, 20th February – 27th February, or 7th March – 26th March.
- Learn how to manage money and how to budget.
- Run by Noah's Ark, email debt@noahsarkcentre.org.uk for more information.

Lloyds Bank Free Financial Training Course

- Tuesday 30th January, 9:30-12:30 or 1:30-4:30, VAC, The Resource Centre, 8B Hall Street, Halifax, HX1 5AY.
- Learn banking essentials, budgeting skills, saving essentials, and banking online.
- Run by [Lloyd's Bank](#).



Free Events and Activities:

Free Walks for Wellbeing – Healthy Minds

- Ryburn Valley: Sowerby Bridge – 25th January, 22nd February, 21st March, 10:30am. Meeting point – Tuel Lane Lock (Car Park behind B&M), HX6 2LA.
- Central Halifax: Shibden Park – 13th February, 12th March, 10:30am. Meeting point – Outside Mereside Café.
- Lower Valley: Cromwell Bottom, Brighouse – 7th February, 10:30am. Meeting point – Bethel Street car park, next to the canal.
- Upper Valley: Hebden Bridge – 27th February, 10:30am. Meeting point – Hebden Bridge Picture House.
- Women's Only Walk: People's Park, Halifax – 19th February, 18th March, 9:30am. Meeting point – Outside King's Church Café.



You must book beforehand, please email: likeminds@healthymindscalderdale.co.uk.



Useful Links, Contacts, and Information:

To submit anything to the newsletter, such as a promotion, a community ask, a new scheme, or to ask for more information, please contact jane.woodcock@vsialliance.org.uk (Food Poverty Coordinator) for food-related queries, or tia.metcalfe@cvac.org.uk (Cost of Living Coordinator) for any others.

For more information on Calderdale forums and regional anti-poverty work, contact antipovertyaction@calderdale.gov.uk.

For help finding grants and funding, and writing bids, contact pat.akerman@cvac.org.uk or matthew.orford@cvac.org.uk.

If you would like a bespoke news story written about a case study from your organisation promoting some of the amazing work you have been doing, contact jordan.baker@cvac.org.uk who is the Community Journalist at VSI Alliance for more information.