

CLO/jr
4 January 2023

Dear Parent/Guardian

Re: Help Suggestions and Signposting - Cost of Living

We know that many families are going through a tough time this winter and we want to do everything we can to help you and your child. We are also aware that the aftermath of a busy and financially challenging Christmas period can cause stress and worry within all families during this time. As such, please find below some suggestions and signposting that we hope you, or someone you know, may find useful. All of this information will be uploaded to our wellbeing page on the school website as well.

1. Citizens Advice Bureau.

The CAB can help you with:

- Getting benefits or organising other financial support
- Accessing support for essential costs (food, bills, rent)
- Visit the Citizens Advice website or contact your local branch to book an appointment.

Details:

Citizens Advice Eastleigh (Hedge End Outreach)

United Reform Church, 14 St John's Road
Hedge End
Southampton
SO30 4AB
0808 278 7862

2. Check you're paying the right amount of tax

Make sure you're on the right tax code. If you aren't you might be due a refund. Use the [Money Saving Expert's free tax code](#) calculator to find out.

3. Check you've received all the [government's cost-of-living payments](#)

The government's cost-of-living payments are available for those receiving certain benefits or tax credits. You don't need to apply for these – if you're eligible the money should go straight into your account.

4. Find out what help you can get with your energy bills

Take a look at these resources from the [British Gas Energy Trust](#), the [Money Saving Expert](#) and [Ofgem](#)

5. Check if your child is entitled to free school meals (FSM)

If your child is eligible for FSM you need to get them registered. This will allow them to get a free meal at school, and we'll get extra funding (known as the pupil premium) to support your child's learning. Go to [this government website](#) to check if your child is eligible.

6. Local support for families

Hampshire County Council is using its Household Support Funding from the Government to provide a range of support between now and March 2023, that will help vulnerable households with the costs of food, energy and other essentials.

- [Help with energy costs](#) – local Citizens Advice services are supporting eligible households with the costs of gas, water and / or electricity bills. Households who qualify for support can contact their local Citizens Advice directly.
- [Help with food costs](#) – there are 19 Community Pantries across Hampshire which provide food at a lower cost than supermarkets, in exchange for a small membership fee.
- [Food vouchers](#) – food vouchers will be available to households who receive council tax support, and households who receive housing benefit. These will be distributed by local district and borough councils in the coming months. Those who are eligible don't need to do anything – they will be contacted by their local council.
- [Holiday Activities and Food Programme|Family Information and Services Hub.](#)
- [Housing costs](#) – local district and borough councils can provide support for housing costs in exceptional circumstances. Residents are asked to contact their local council if they think they may be eligible for emergency support.
- [Cost of living support](#) - lots of useful guidance and support from Eastleigh Borough Council.

7. Additional Signposting

[OLIO](#) - App OLIO connects neighbours with each other and with local businesses so surplus food can be shared, not thrown away. This could be food nearing its sell-by date in local stores, spare home-grown vegetables, bread from your baker, or the groceries in your fridge when you go away. For your convenience, OLIO can also be used for non-food household items, too.

[Too Good To Go](#) - App to reduce food waste. When food businesses from supermarkets to restaurants, cafes and bakeries have surplus food they list it on the app as a Magic Bag which allows you to buy the food at a reduced rate so food gets eaten and not wasted.

[YoungMinds](#) - good link signposting to lots of help and support during cost of living crisis.

We hope that, where applicable, these resources will be of some assistance to you. Should you wish to get in touch with the school to discuss any issues relating to the cost of living please do not hesitate to do so. Likewise, if there are any useful resources that we have not included that you would like to share with the rest of the Wildern community please feel free to do so and we will add to our resource bank on our [website](#)

Yours faithfully

Mrs C Oakley
Headteacher