



Richmond

Campaigning Update No.8 2021

CitizensAdviceRichmond.org

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In August 2021 we helped over 750 people in Richmond with advice about nearly 1,800 issues. Benefits (630 issues) and housing (249 issues) continued to generate the most enquiries, while debt (175 issues) featured prominently. In just one month we helped local people gain £180,000 to which they are entitled.

The poorest people in Richmond face preventable hardship



The Government is planning to cut the amount people on Universal Credit receive by £20 a week – that's over £1,000 a year – on 1 October. This is devastating for those on low incomes, coming days after the end of furlough, and when energy, food and other prices are rising. We have supported over 1,400 people with Universal Credit over the course of the pandemic – 34% of whom we hadn't seen before. So we know how badly the cut will hit some of our clients. For example, one client is a single mum with one child who worked in hospitality but lost her job when she caught Covid. She had to seek help with a charitable grant when an appliance broke down. On a weekly basis she receives a total of £304 from Universal Credit and Child Benefit and pays rent of £141, leaving her £163 for all bills and living costs — this will reduce to £143 if the £20 a week cut goes ahead.

Our call for action: Cutting Universal Credit in October risks sweeping low-income families into more hardship, just as they're getting back on their feet. The government must continue to support struggling households by keeping the £20 a week lifeline. It's the fastest and most efficient way to support living standards in the UK.

A better deal for disabled people – have your say!



The government published the long-awaited [Green Paper on Disability Benefits](#) on 20 July 2021 and is seeking views on its proposals for providing more support to disabled people, improving employment support and making improvements to the disability benefits system. We know from our advice work that the current system needs urgent reform — particularly the way in which health assessments are done. It is also clear that the administration of disability benefits needs improvement so that simple errors, which cause distress to vulnerable people, are avoided.

Have your say! – Both organisations and people with disabilities and long-term health issues can respond to the proposals. We encourage partner organisations to send in a response, and to encourage their disabled clients to send in individual responses. [Here is the link to the online form.](#)

Landlords continue to discriminate against people on benefits



The eviction ban has ended — many of our clients will lose their homes. It's made worse for those on benefits because many Richmond landlords and their agents refuse to let to them, even though they could afford the rent. This is unlawful and makes it even more difficult for people facing eviction to find their next home. One of our clients, a single mother with a serious illness, is facing a "no fault" eviction from her privately rented flat. She is finding it very difficult to find a new home because many landlords tell her they won't deal with people who receive benefits.

Our Call for Action: This discrimination is unlawful and must stop. Many people on benefits are good tenants, so it is unfair that so many Richmond landlords and agents impose a blanket ban on them. We are planning a campaign to help get the message across to landlords. We'll also help people facing discrimination to challenge this treatment and show them how to demonstrate that they can afford the rent.

Our Current Campaigns

- **#KeepTheLifeline** – We are researching the extent to which local people who receive benefits can make ends meet. This local information forms part of Citizens Advice's national #KeepTheLifeline campaign to retain the £20 a week increase to Universal Credit from October 2021.
- **Disability benefits Green Paper consultation** – We are preparing a Richmond response to the DWP's consultation on disability benefits, as set out in the Green Paper published in July 2021. We are also encouraging our clients to respond individually. Many of our clients with disabilities or long-term health issues struggle with a benefits system which is not currently fit for purpose — so we welcome the opportunity to take part in this consultation.
- **Social housing tenants' issues** – We are working with local housing associations in Richmond to address recurrent problems with tenants' rent arrears, repairs, and neighbour harassment issues. We have regular meetings with the major social landlords in Richmond to find practical ways to address these concerns.
- **Stop "no DSS" policies** – We are developing a campaign to increase private landlords' and prospective tenants' awareness that it is unlawful to discriminate against people who receive benefits. We also want tenants to know how to challenge this unfair practice and how to demonstrate to landlords that they can afford to pay the rent, even though they receive benefits.

About Citizens Advice Richmond

Citizens Advice Richmond gives free, impartial and confidential advice to anyone who lives, works or studies in Richmond borough, or cares for someone who lives in the borough. As well as providing advice, we aim to spot emerging problems affecting local people, and to set out new ideas to improve policy and delivery for all.

Feedback: We welcome feedback and suggestions – [click here](#).

Free advice: Please call us on Freephone 080 82 78 78 73 or fill in the form [here](#).

Benefit calculator: Find out what benefits you can claim [here](#).

Partner organisation referrals: Refer clients to us via [this form](#).