

## **COST OF LIVING (CoL) BRIEFING**

This briefing covers the period up to mid-January 2023. We will now produce a CoL update once a month for the Stroud District. The CoL response for Stroud is a partnership between the statutory and voluntary sectors. Our efforts have been helped by the working relationships formed through the Community Hubs development project. Many of our partners have turned away from other funded work to respond to the CoL crisis. SDC aims to support with funding, time or influence. Our partners have agreed to provide regular data for these monthly briefings, but at times their capacity may make this difficult.

### **Data**

**Stroud Foodbank** – **700** Food parcels given out in December and **700** Christmas hampers. See graphs over page for monthly increase data over 2022. In 2022, the Foodbank saw a **73.7%** increase on 2021 and a **123%** increase on 2019 (pre-pandemic).

**Stroud Citizens Advice** – See detailed data report overleaf. In Quarter 4 of 2022 Stroud Citizens Advice saw a **103% increase** in the number of clients needing to access charitable support and foodbanks compared to the same period in 2021. They also saw a small reduction in the number of clients coming for an initial debt assessment but anticipate this rising in Q1 of 2023 as clients are faced with post-Christmas bills.

**SDC Household Support Vouchers** – **£35,100** of supermarket vouchers distributed to front line services and community groups since October 2022. This includes Community Hubs, Foodbanks and Citizens Advice.

**GCC Household Support Fund Individual Grant** - GCC are collating data on many Stroud residents who have applied for this emergency funding. Their data should be ready for the verbal update at CS&L Committee.

**Energy Vouchers** – After a break in provision due to lack of funding, Severn Wye have now received extra funding from GCC so are again supplying energy vouchers by referral. Stroud Foodbank also supply energy vouchers. Verbal data on this to come.

**Community Hubs** – Community Hubs continue to distribute supermarket vouchers and food through their pay as you feel pantries. Food donations are scarce, so most are paying for food supplies every week. We are seeking more funding for this. Sustainable food pantries are part of our Community Hubs development plan.

Some Hubs chose to close between Christmas and New Year due to worries of volunteer burn out. Since the New Year, demand in the Hubs has been high. One Stroud Hub did 10 energy voucher referrals in one morning in week of 9<sup>th</sup> January.

**Warm Spaces** – 15 Warm Spaces have replied with feedback on demand over Christmas. Of those who did offer sessions between Christmas and New Year, a few had only a couple of visitors, many had 10+ and some had more than 25 each session. The learning seems to be that established social groups or clubs get better attendance than venues not used to hosting social groups. While some venues suggested the

**Emma Keating Clark, Community Health & Wellbeing Manager**  
**Ext: 4177, Email: emma.keating.clark@stroud.gov.uk**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES & LICENCING COMMITTEE**  
**INFORMATION SHEET (NO.6)**  
**Wednesday 18 January 2023**

main need for attending was for company, a few said that their visitors had serious need of food and financial support.

**Cost of Living Support Developments**

**Vouchers** – SDC have extended the scheme to new partners including schools and organisation supporting young people.

We now supply Iceland vouchers which has been welcomed in Stroud town.

Independent shops – we are trialling a local voucher scheme for Miserden Community Shop as the only shop in a very rural area.

**Warms Space Area Coordinators** – 4 leaders have come forward from Community Hubs or Town Councils to coordinate Warm Space work for their areas and surrounding parishes, Stroud Town Council, Stonehouse APT Hub, Wotton Keepers Hub and Cam GL11 Hub.

A small payment has been made to coordinators to:

- Disseminate sign posting material
- Gather usage data for Warms Spaces
- Trial methods of evaluating impact
- Develop and deliver ‘one stop’ basic training for Warm Spaces

While Warm Spaces are potentially a short-term measure, the development of the area coordinators group is part of the Community Hubs Development programme and supports the development of the Hubs network.

**Cost of Living Working Group**

Now that CoL support mechanisms are up and running, the working group agreed to reduce the number of officers attending the meetings. The core group will meet with CS&L and Housing Chairs and Vice-Chairs monthly. Officers and partners involved in specific work streams will meet when needed. Written briefings will be provided to the wider group monthly. Written briefings will also be shared on the SDC Elected Members Hub and the new Town and Parish Council Hub and also via the Community Hubs network and Know Your Patch network to ensure our front line voluntary and community sectors stay informed.

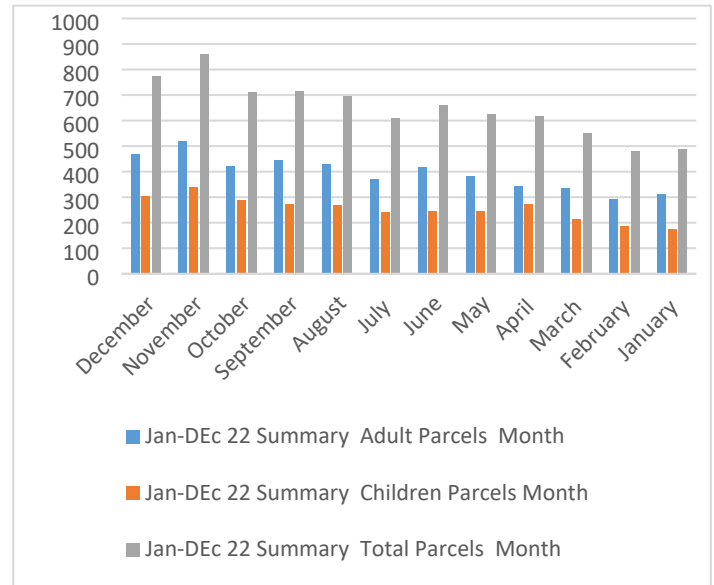
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**COMMUNITY SERVICES & LICENCING COMMITTEE  
INFORMATION SHEET (NO.6)  
Wednesday 18 January 2023**

**Stroud Foodbank Data**

**Jan-Dec 2022 Parcels**

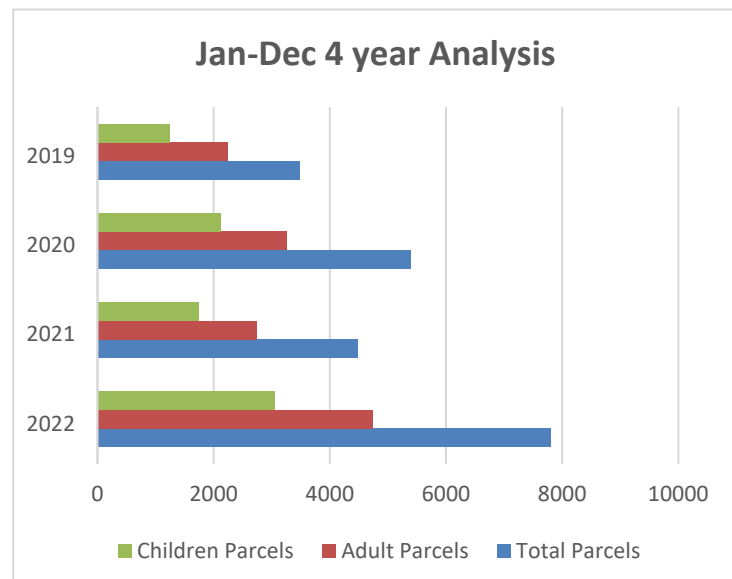
2022 Month	Adult Parcels	Children Parcels	Total Parcels
December	468	304	772
November	518	340	858
October	423	289	712
September	445	271	716
August	428	269	697
July	370	240	610
June	416	245	661
May	382	244	626
April	342	273	615
March	336	214	550
February	293	186	479
January	312	175	487



**Jan –Dec 4-year Analysis**

**(2022-2019)**

Jan-Dec	2022	2021	2020	2019
Total Parcels	7801	4491	5390	3494
Adult Parcels	4740	2748	3259	2239
Children Parcels	3061	1743	2131	1255



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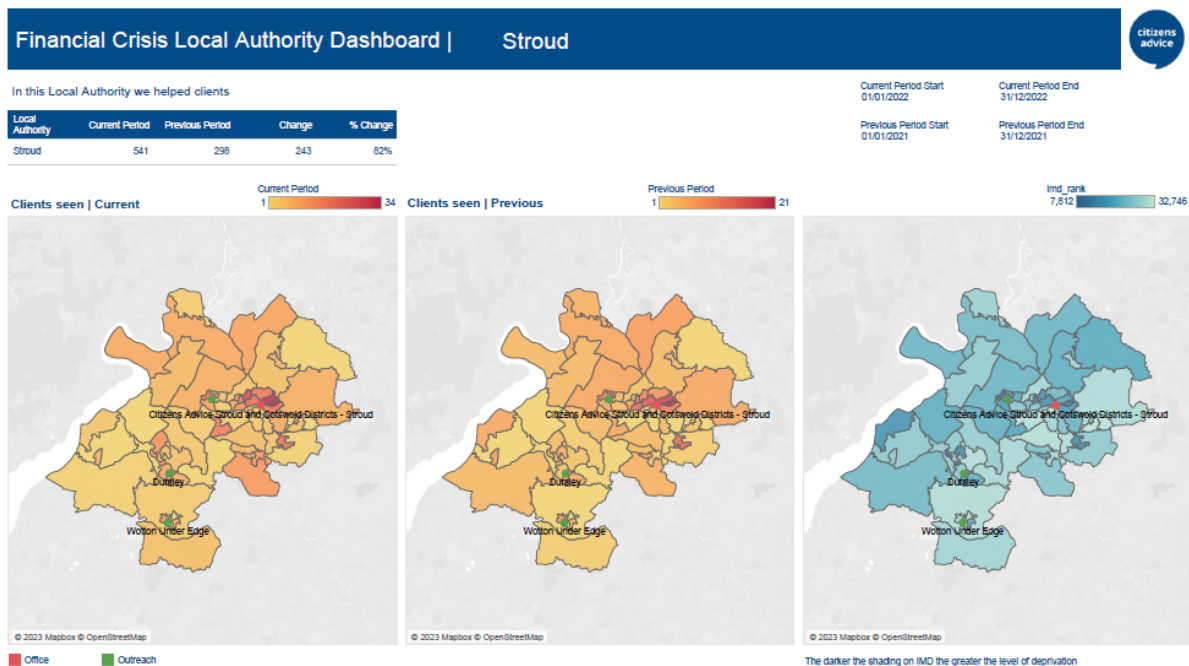
**Stroud Citizens Advice Data**

**Financial Crisis Local Authority Dashboard**

This report is based on issues that the national Citizens Advice policy team has identified as indicating a financial crisis. These include:

- Benefits – localised social welfare
- Charitable support and Foodbanks
- Debts – including mortgage and rent arrears; council tax arrears; credit card debt; payday loans, fuel debt etc
- Housing – actual and threatened homelessness
- Utilities – fuel (gas, electricity, oil, coal etc)

This maps below show an 82% increase in the number of Stroud residents who came to the CA for advice on a financial crisis issue in 2022 compared to 2021. The blue map indicates levels for the Index of Multiple Deprivation (darker = more deprivation).



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### Financial Crisis by Ward

This table shows the number of clients by ward who are presenting with a financial crisis issue in the current period (1 January 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022) and the number of clients with a financial issue in 2021. This report shows that CA have advised clients in financial crisis in every ward in the Stroud District.

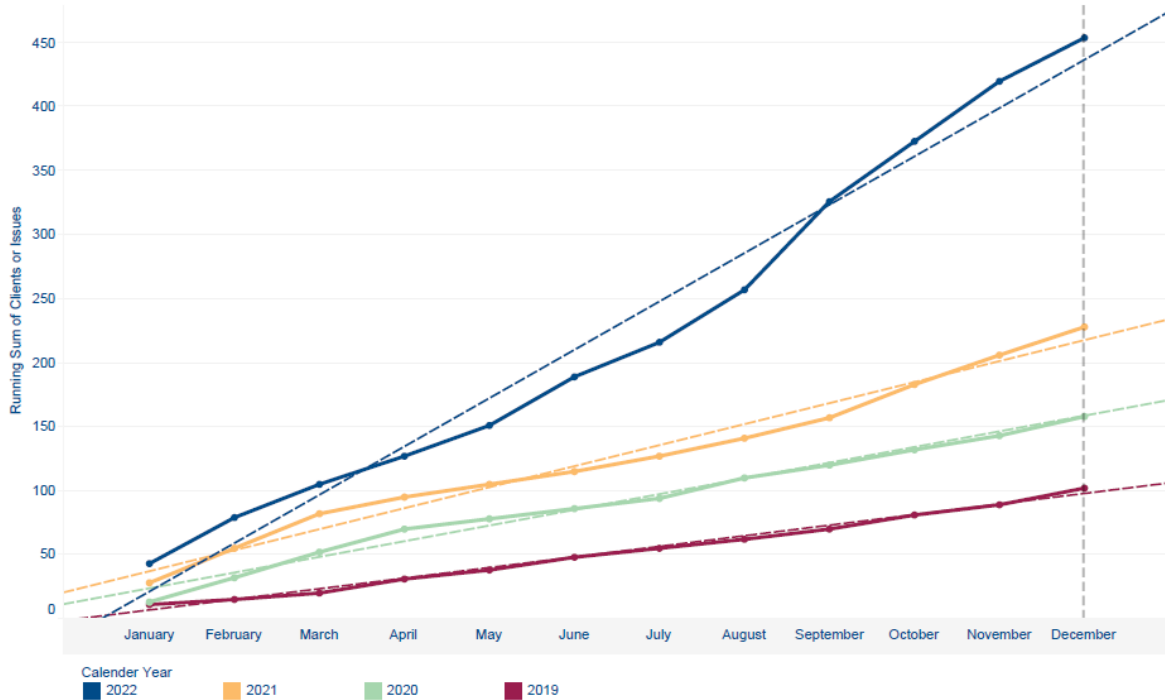
Local Authority Ward	Current Period	Previous Period	Change	% Change
Amberley and Woodchester	5	4	1	25%
Berkeley Vale	13	15	-2	-13%
Bisley	8	6	2	33%
Cainscross	43	31	12	39%
Cam East	19	11	8	73%
Cam West	21	8	13	163%
Chalford	14	5	9	180%
Coaley & Uley	5	2	3	150%
Dursley	42	20	22	110%
Hardwicke	16	15	1	7%
Kingswood	5	2	3	150%
Minchinhampton	24	14	10	71%
Nailsworth	38	16	22	138%
Painswick & Upton	21	13	8	62%
Randwick, Whiteshill & Rus..	6	3	3	100%
Rodborough	13	7	6	86%
Severn	21	11	10	91%
Stonehouse	40	31	9	29%
Stroud Central	21	14	7	50%
Stroud Farmhill & Paganhill	30	12	18	150%
Stroud Slade	42	23	19	83%
Stroud Trinity	19	11	8	73%
Stroud Uplands	18	8	10	125%
Stroud Valley	23	16	7	44%
The Stanleys	22	9	13	144%
Thrupp	13	4	9	225%
Wotton-under-Edge	25	13	12	92%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>82%</b>

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**Year on Year comparison for the month of December, 2019-2022.**

Showing clients who came to the CA because they couldn't afford to eat or were in need of other financial assistance.

Crisis | Charitable support & foodbanks & Localised social welfare



Figures for crisis support represent the number of people Citizens Advice helps with either referrals to food banks' or other charitable support (covers any emergency financial support or support in kind people need to make ends meet) and localised social welfare

**Briefing from Elizabeth Hall, CEO, Citizens Advice Stroud & Cotswold Districts**

**Accessing advice**

We are advising the majority of clients via telephone and email. We are having to monitor the clients placed on the call back list for advice as we simply cannot always manage the demand. When we reach capacity clients hear a voice message that gives them information as to where they can access help, including the Help Through Hardship Helpline which can issue Trussell Trust foodbank vouchers.

We are seeing clients in our offices in Stroud, Dursley, Stonehouse APT, Wotton and Paganhill. We would like to offer more outreach advice but have struggled to resource outreach work with volunteers. We are now looking at how we can increase our outreach provision, concentrating on those locations where we are most concerned

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about access to advice, for example Berkeley. Rachel, our dedicated foodbank adviser advises clients referred to her by the Stroud Foodbank. She advises clients by email, telephone and in person. Rachel sees clients in our Stroud office, outreaches and also sees clients in community hubs including the Trinity Rooms.

**Further information from January 2023**

Our Core Service Manager has reported that in January 2023:

- We have seen our usual increase in clients presenting with relationship problems.
- We usually see an increase in the number of debt clients from the end of January and through February. However, the number of clients in financial crisis has increased earlier in January than previous years.
- We are seeing a number of clients who are really fearful about their energy bills and usage -they are not yet in debt but can see that they are going to be in debt in the very near future.
- We are seeing a number of clients in park homes who are really struggling – the government support has not yet kicked in for these clients.
- We are seeing a high number of clients who want to ensure that they are accessing all the benefits they are entitled to. Clients are conscious that the government cost of living payments are made to people on certain benefits and these payments are worth a considerable amount.
- Our Research and Campaigns team are currently looking at cases where clients are presenting with damp and mold issues in their rented property. We are seeing an increase in the number of clients affected and anticipate this rising as clients are unable to afford sufficient heating to prevent damp issues.

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