



JHC autumn-winter 2021 newsletter

"JHC offered us a lifeline and helped us get back on our feet when we needed it the most. From housing to one-to-one advice for getting back on track, the charity is there to support people out there," JHC resident

Welcome to our latest Newsletter which we hope is of interest. This is also available electronically and details of how to update your preferences are shared below.

2021 has been another challenging year so we hope this Christmas will be more sociable, at the very least, for everyone. Nevertheless, JHC knows and understands that life can sometimes seem too much to cope with if you're facing health, debt, work, or housing concerns, when finding a way out seems impossible.

We are also aware that more people than ever are struggling to keep up with rising energy bills - read more below about how to manage this.

Our Support service will remain available for calls and emails right up to midday on the 24th December and will reopen at 9am on Tuesday 4th January 2022 – see our contact information below.

It is always better to get in touch sooner than later and we'll do our absolute best to assist, discretely and in confidence. Please get in touch to make an initial appointment with one of our friendly Support workers.

Did you know?

During 2020 JHC provided almost 1300 food bags - that's over three-times the number in 2019 - and our Support service helped over 400 clients. We also delivered 144 food hampers before Christmas 2020 (an increase of 50 from 2019).

- In the first half of 2021 we saw 330 clients and gave out 441 bags of food
- The top Support service enquiry was about grants closely followed by benefits, with questions relating to utilities doubling during that time!

Donations to the charity have continued to come in thick and fast during 2021. These included unprecedented levels of non-perishable items for our Food bank as well as a large increase in cash contributions.

Thank you to everyone who contributed this year. There really are too many people and organisations to mention individually, but we are very appreciative of everyone's support and never take them for granted. However, a special mention goes to ARM who donated £2,000, Chris Hall from Sawston Discount food, drink and household goods' charity group for the enormous number of items delivered to us recently, as well as Sawston's schools and churches.

Local partners

The charity understands the value of collaborating with local partners to maximise resources and opportunities, and share knowledge and expertise, to support people living and working in Sawston.

For example, we continue to work in partnership with Great Shelford Parochial Charity so if you are a Great Shelford resident and need help or advice, please contact us directly. The same applies to Little Shelford and Duxford residents as we have money available from their Parish Councils. In addition, the Citizens' Advice debt specialist offers remote appointments for those with Debt issues - please call us in the first instance.

All our services are subject to change or adaption depending on government advice relating to Covid. However, we will remain operational, albeit with differing opening hours and working practices, whatever the advice.

More information about all our local partnerships is available on our website.

South Cambs District Council – update

Evictions were banned in the private rented sector throughout 2020, but the restriction was lifted on 31 May 2021. This means that many people will be facing eviction over autumn/winter. We also expect that a number of landlords will now be issuing valid notices where they hadn't previously because of the restrictions. Notice periods have also been reduced from 6 months to 2 months.

We want to encourage anyone who has received a notice to contact us as soon as they can. If you are in a privately rented property or a social tenancy and have been given notice or are likely to be evicted, contact us early and don't wait until eviction.

We would also like to remind landlords that we can give them advice and support on how to end a tenancy legally and how to ensure a notice is valid.

Our Housing Advisors are able to help prevent homelessness in many cases, by either negotiating with the landlord to resolve issues or by helping people to secure alternative accommodation. They can support you to address rent arrears and tell you if the notice from your landlord is valid. And they can help you to access Debt and Benefits' advice, support you through the process of making a homelessness application and collaborating with you to create a Personal Housing Plan to prevent or relieve homelessness. We can also refer you to tenancy sustainment support, CAB and other agencies that may be able to assist.

Please call 03450 450 051 and ask for Housing Advice or email housingadvice@scambs.gov.uk if you are at risk of losing your tenancy.

Importantly - please note that SCDC has a newly appointed Income Maximisation Officer who works within the Benefits team. Together they help people on low incomes struggling to meet their housing costs and/or Council Tax payments to ensure they have accessed all entitlements and benefits.

Please get in touch via welfare.officer@scambs.gov.uk

The Besom

The Besom is a Christian charitable organisation, run by people who want to make a difference to the lives of others. It provides a bridge between those who want to give time, money, skills or things and those local people in need. The service it provides is free.

In Sawston, and within a 10-minute drive radius of the village, people who are struggling can request a Baby Bundle box for babies aged 0-3 or 3-6 months through a referral from a Support Worker, Health Visitor or JHC team member. We can also help by either clearing a garden or painting a room and by passing on items of good quality furniture, white goods, bedding and kitchen starter packs, where we have them available.

For more information go to www.thebesom.com or contact JHC or your Support Worker to access our services.

Relate

Relate Cambridge is delighted to announce it has resumed face to face couples' counselling, based at the John Huntingdon Centre, 189 High Street, Sawston CB22 3HJ. We are offering this as a limited service on Monday mornings.

We are also continuing the option of online counselling for those unable to come to the venue. This service for Sawston residents, and those who work or study locally, is provided free of charge thanks to JHC's generous support.

Those wishing to enquire about all our other services, which include counselling for individuals, couples, families, sex therapy, children and young people can call Relate Cambridge's appointments line 01302 347710

Rising energy prices – managing their impact

As we enter winter 2021, it's important to remain in control of our utilities' bills and know where to get support. Here are some energy top tips to consider:

Stay in touch - Contact your energy supplier to see if you are on the cheapest tariff or discuss energy debt. Keeping communication open with your supplier at this time is crucial, so check with them directly to ensure your tariff is saving you money.

Maximise your income - 45% of people have not checked what benefits they are eligible for and currently up to £15billion of benefits go unclaimed every year. Ask a professional for a benefit check to make sure your income is as it should be or use the Turn2Us tool online: <https://benefits-calculator-2.turn2us.org.uk/>

Check if you're eligible for a rebate - Applying for the 'Warm Home Discount' if you're eligible will mean £140 off your electricity bill in those colder winter months. Call your supplier to ask how to apply or check their website for more details. www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme

Know who to call in a crisis - If you're on a pre-payment meter and run into difficulty topping up, don't panic. You can ask your supplier for an extension of credit. Or you

can apply to the 'Household Support Fund', managed by your local authority, which is there to help with the cost of essentials. Call or check your local authority website for more details.

www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-500m-support-for-vulnerable-households-over-winter

Take a meter reading - Take regular meter readings and submit them to your supplier in order to ensure ongoing accurate bills. You may not be paying the correct amount for your energy.

Sign up to the Priority Service Register - For additional support during a power cut and a range of other services sign up for the Priority Services Register. You are eligible if you or any anyone in your household:

- * are of pensionable age
- * are disabled or chronically sick
- * have a long-term medical condition
- * have a hearing or visual impairment or additional communication needs
- * are in a vulnerable situation including certain mental health conditions, physical injury as well as temporary situations of vulnerability
- * have a child under 5 living with you

www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/getting-extra-help-priority-services-register

If you'd like extra support with your energy bill, consider contacting your local Citizen's Advice or National Energy Action on 0800 304 7159. You can also look at simpleenergyadvice.org.uk for lots of great tips and advice.

Updating your JHC Newsletter preferences

If you'd like to receive copies by email in future please send your email address to office@johnhuntingdon.org.uk. We will update our records but won't share your data with anyone else.

Should you no longer wish to receive a copy of our Newsletter, once again please contact the office and we will remove your details from our mailing list.

**Best wishes for Christmas 2021,
Jill Hayden, Charity Manager**

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"Thank you so, so much I really appreciate everything you do. You are all amazing people and I would be lost without the help I've had from JHC,"

JHC client