

Surviving Winter

Impact report 2025/26



**Dorset
Community
Foundation**

Thanks to our donors



Our Surviving Winter appeal was supported by 92 donors, including six new contributors

OVER WINTER 2025/26 Dorset Community Foundation raised £24,535.37 through our annual Surviving Winter Appeal, which raises funds to support older and vulnerable people living in fuel poverty in Dorset.

Funds were raised from 92 donors, including 61 who supported the appeal previously, six new donors and 25 anonymous donors. We retain Gift Aid as a contribution to the costs incurred in running the campaign.

Funds raised are significantly lower than

our best year in 2023/24, when we raised £104,105.41.

The cost of living crisis, along with changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance – a great number of donors have historically donated their payment to the appeal – has greatly impacted donations in the past two years.

To mitigate this risk, we have been able to secure funds from a number of other grant-making organisations throughout the UK, to whom we extend our heartfelt gratitude.

I could not have managed without this grant.

We could put our heating on higher when it was really cold.

Without this money I would have had to use food money to pay for my heating.

We were struggling with the rising costs of our fuel bills and inflation and were having to put extra money on our meters to keep warm. We were having problems with our finances also at this time so had to sort that out, which caused more worry and concern for us both. We visited Citizens Advice and they applied for us. We found the grant to be extremely useful, it was so much, appreciated.

Being in fuel poverty means you cannot meet the costs of adequately heating your home. This could be because of low income, the cost of energy, such as expensive prepayment meters, the type or age of the heating system.

Grant recipients include those who live in park homes, poorly insulated or difficult to hear homes and households using oil, coal and bottled gas – the costs for which have risen exponentially.

Regardless of their location, recipients reported that their property is poorly insulated and difficult to heat.

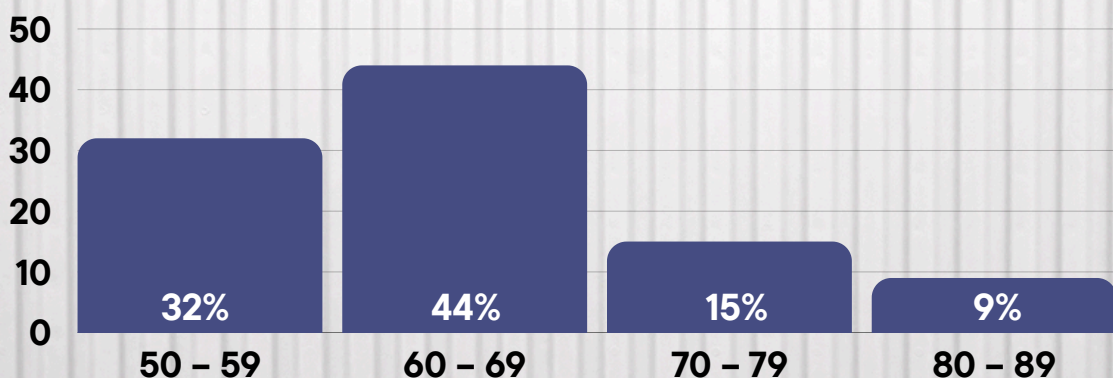
A Surviving Winter grant of £200, distributed through Citizens Advice, supports energy bills and enables households to switch the heating on during cold weather. It can also be used to buy smaller items to help vulnerable people keep warm.

Grants are a vital source of support for vulnerable households who are often choosing between heating and eating.



Park homes are poorly insulated and hard to heat

Grant recipients by age



Life-changing support



Staff at Citizens Advice East Dorset & Purbeck, our partner in the Surviving Winter campaign

THIS WINTER our partners at Citizens Advice East Dorset and Purbeck distributed £48,600 in grants to 243 Dorset residents living in fuel poverty.

The Surviving Winter grants of £200 per household were distributed by co-ordinating applications made via Citizens Advice offices across Dorset. They receive a contribution of £10 per grant awarded toward their costs.

The Surviving Winter Appeal complements statutory funds from the Household Support Fund, via the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which is also distributed by Citizens Advice to households in financial need.

Citizens Advice also received some match funding from Southern Gas Network (SGN) allowing them to administer a further 150 grants under the SW criteria, which were distributed by March 18. However, demand for Surviving Winter grants far outstripped the funds available

and if more funds had been available, they would have been used very quickly.

The winter of 25/26 continued to be a challenging time for many people, with the increased household costs for all basic items, the knock on effect from increased rents and mortgages and the varying levels of the Energy Price Cap.

Once again at this period of time of year, low income households with no ability to increase their monthly income (e.g pensioners, those unable to work due to disability etc) continue to be under a huge pressure to meet the increased energy costs.

Citizens Advice officers assisted clients with basic energy advice and referral to the Dorset Energy Unit at Citizens Advice East Dorset and Purbeck for in-depth energy advice.

Energy Advisers carry out a full exploration of the household's situation, provide energy advice to try to reduce costs

and income maximisation checks to help increase household income and prevent the need for future grants.

They look at energy saving measures, assist with supplier problems and make formal complaints or take action further to the ombudsman. DCF contributed to the cost of the dedicated phoneline for the Energy Unit.

“Having the grants enabled us to provide direct support to households in need, giving them much-needed security around their energy provision through the winter months,” said a Citizens Advice spokesman.

“As can be seen from feedback in our case studies, many of these households have reported improvements in both physical and mental health as a result and are extremely grateful for the support provided and to all the donors for their generosity in making these grants available.”



A Citizens Advice Energy Adviser at work at East Dorset and Purbeck

Citizens Advice case study



**citizens
advice**

SOPHIE, who has a one-bedroom housing association flat, lives with anxiety, depression and a number of physical health conditions.

She is on a fixed income of Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment but had fallen into a debt of £227.68 on her prepayment electricity and gas meters.

She was being deducted daily through her meters and with only £80 per month set aside for energy, she was finding it hard to stay on top of bills and would struggle to keep up with energy costs through the winter. She was in fuel poverty.

An adviser found met the eligibility criteria for the Surviving Winter grant due to her age and health conditions. Alongside securing a £200 grant, her adviser helped her apply for three fuel

vouchers, worth £49 each, through the Centre for Sustainable Energy and a £150 Household Support Fund supermarket voucher.

A three-way call to her energy supplier Ovo helped reduce her gas debt repayment rate and update her Priority Service Register details.

She was given advice on managing her energy in the future to ensure she keeps warm.

The Surviving Winter grant represented nearly two-and-a-half months' worth of her energy budget, providing meaningful relief at a time when she was most vulnerable.

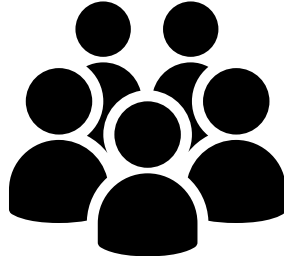
Combined with the other support, she received more than £600 in grants and vouchers to ease the financial pressure of keeping her home warm and safe over winter.

Surviving Winter 2025/26 in numbers



£48,600

Distributed in grants



95

Donors



83%

Grant recipients with a disability or long-term health condition



52%

With multiple impairments



13%

With a mental health condition



16%

With a physical health condition

LIVING IN a cold home puts health at risk, especially for those with health conditions that are exacerbated by the cold.

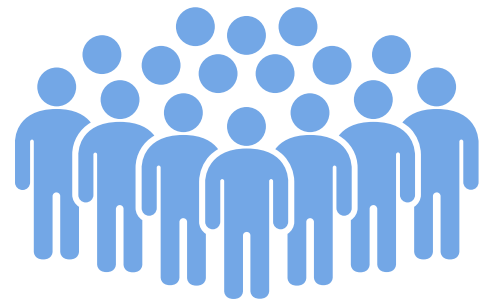
Those aged over 60 are particularly at risk from the impact of cold weather and households in this age bracket who are experiencing fuel poverty, are eligible for a grant.

We also offer Surviving Winter grants to those age 50 to 59 where they have health conditions and are on the highest level of benefits.

Consistent with previous years, 83 per cent of grant recipients were recorded as having a disability or long-term health condition.

In the 50 to 59 age group, it was not the same for those aged over 60.

Yet most of those receiving the grant were recorded as having a disability or LTHC.



27%

Aged 50 to 59 with a health condition



47%

Single people



Grants by postcode area

THE HIGHEST number of grants were awarded to households living in Weymouth & Portland. It's consistent with previous years as these are to have the highest levels of fuel poverty and vulnerable households. There was an increase in grants allocated in Bridport, where we have had many clients struggling due to being off mains gas supply.

Post code	Post code area	No. of grants	Area
BH1	Town Centre, Springbourne, East Cliff	4	
BH2	Bournemouth Central, West Cliff	0	
BH3	Talbot Woods, Winton	0	
BH4	Westbourne, Branksome Woods	1	
BH5	Boscombe, Pokesdown	3	
BH6	Southbourne, Tuckton, Wick	2	
BH7	Littledown, Iford	2	
BH8	Malmesbury Park, Queens Park, Strouden Park, Townsend, Holdenhurst, Throop	3	
BH9	Winton, Moordown, Throop, Muscliff	0	
BH10	Kinson, East Howe, Northbourne, Redhill, Ensbury Park	4	
BH11	Kinson, Bear Cross, West Howe, Wallisdown	5	Bournemouth: 24
BH12	Branksome, Alderney, Upper Parkstone, Wallisdown, Newtown	1	
BH13	Canford Cliffs, Sandbanks, Branksome Park	0	
BH14	Lower Parkstone, Lilliput, Penn Hill	1	
BH15	Town Centre, Hamworthy, Oakdale	3	
BH16	Upton, Turlin Moor, Lytchett Minster, Lytchett Matravers	3	
BH17	Canford Heath, Creekmoor	1	
BH18	Broadstone	0	Poole: 9
BH19	Swanage, Studland, Langton Matravers	14	
BH20	Wareham, Wool, Bere Regis	12	Purbeck: 26
BH21	Wimborne, Corfe Mullen	6	
BH22	Ferndown, West Moors, West Parley	9	
BH23	Christchurch, Mudeford, Highcliffe	5	
BH24	Ringwood, St Leonards, Ashley Heath	0	
BH31	Verwood, Three Legged Cross	5	
SP5	Sixpenny Handley	0	
SP6	Alderholt, Fordingbridge	0	Christchurch & East Dorset: 25
DT1	Dorchester	18	
DT2	Dorchester	11	
DT6	Bridport	25	
DT7	Lyme Regis	4	
DT8	Beaminster	10	
DT9	Sherborne	4	West Dorset: 72
DT3	Chickerell, Broadwey, Radipole, Osmington, Preston, Littlemoor, Portesham, Abbotsbury, Langton Herring	10	
DT4	Weymouth town centre, Melcombe Regis, Wyke Regis	41	
DT5	Portland, Fortuneswell, Easton, Southwell, Weston, The Grove	9	Weymouth & Portland: 60
DT10	Sturminster Newton	12	
DT11	Blandford Forum	5	
SP7	Shaftesbury, Compton Abbas, Fontmell Magna, Donhead St Andrew, Donhead St Mary, Berwick St John, Motcombe	5	
SP8	Gillingham, Stour Provost, East Stour, West Stour, Kington Magna, Buckhorn Weston, Milton on Stour	4	North Dorset: 27

*Thank you for your grant
from a very grateful
family*

We really appreciated this grant since my husband became disabled and unable to work so any financial help take a lot of worry away from me as I deal with all the bills for our household.
Thank you for your help



WE WOULD like to thank everyone who donated to the 2025/26 Surviving Winter Appeal, including DCF fundholders.

Our grateful thanks go once again to Citizens Advice East Dorset & Purbeck for distributing grants.

We would also like to thank all the organisations and individuals who helped us publicise the appeal and the grants available – including BBC Radio Solent, Bournemouth and Dorset Echo, Dorset View, Wessex Water and BCP and Dorset Councils.

We could not reach the people who need our help without you.