

LIGHT BITES: Financial Hardship

Financial hardship is when an individual or household cannot meet the basic daily costs without making a compromise on their health and wellbeing.



INTRO: Bracknell Forest Council identified a need for a financial hardship action plan that will provide a proactive approach to tackling financial hardship in the borough. Financial hardship cannot be eradicated completely but an increased understanding will allow for better support to residents, targeted support mechanisms to households affected, whilst also ensuring prevention mechanisms are in place. This is the summary of the findings.

Why is it important?

Anyone can experience poverty and unexpected events such as bereavement, illness, redundancy or a relationship breakdown are sometimes all it can take. Once in these circumstances, financial hardship is difficult to escape. Even short-term but acute pressures can have long term impacts on lives, including, both physical and mental health.

What do we know?

Bracknell is ranked **35th** least deprived out of 317 local authorities, so in the top 10% most affluent places to live. **BUT** there is variation of deprivation within the borough.



Children in receipt of free school meals has **increased** from **6.8%** to **11.8%** in 5 years.

Financial hardship is higher in families with three or more children and lone parent households.

39% of low-income households are in work but still reliant on state benefits. **61%** of low-income working age households were identified as having no adults in employment.



It is evident that those with poor health, disabilities or a carer in the household are at higher risk of poverty.

The poverty rate for informal carers is **24%**. This is higher for working age carers who undertake caring responsibilities more than 35 hours a week, where it is **44%**.



In Bracknell Forest, house prices are:

- **33%** higher than the national average
- **38%** higher for private renting.

There is more hardship social and private rents.



26%

of people state they have a low level of confidence in managing their money.

The worry around essential bills is that just about managing households will also start to face financial hardship and poverty with the significantly increasing bills.

What we recommend...

- 1 Bracknell Forest** plan, to work across the council and with its partners, to develop a financial hardship action plan that will aim to cover the next 18 months.
- 2** Wider work will continue across the council and voluntary and community sector organisations to help alleviate the pressures individuals are facing due to financial hardship. Particularly with the increasing living costs.