

Cost of Living Support

Find out below what support is available to help you and your family get through the cost-of-living crisis.

Let us know if you're in financial difficulty

We know that many families are going through a tough time this winter and we want to do everything we can to help you and your child. If you're struggling with your finances, please get in touch to let us know, as there may be things we can suggest which will help.

Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Family Hub

Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB)

You don't have to be a UK citizen to get support from your local CAB, you just need to be a resident of the local area. The CAB can help you with:

- Getting benefits or organising other financial support
- Accessing support for essential costs (food, bills, rent)

Visit the [Citizens Advice](#) website or contact your local branch [citizensadvicetaunton](#) to book an appointment. [Citizens Advice \(casort.org\)](#) or contact the advice line 0300 330 9073 (Adviceline)

Family Hub

Contact your local Family Hub to get help accessing all the support you might need as a family. [Find your local hub](#) here.

Check you're paying the right amount of tax

Make sure you're on the right tax code. If you aren't you might be due a refund. Use the [Money Saving Expert's](#) free tax code calculator to find out.

Claim any benefits you're entitled to

Use 1 of these benefits calculators to determine whether there are any benefits you could be claiming:

- [Turn2us](#)
- [Policy in Practice](#)
- [Support for migrant families](#) – use this calculator if you are a migrant family, or if you have no recourse to public funds (meaning you're not entitled to the majority of welfare benefits)

You may be able to get benefits paid early if you need cash urgently – this is known as 'a short-term benefit advance'. You will need to contact the Department for

Work and Pensions (DWP) office at [Taunton JobCentre Plus and Jobs in Taunton \(jobcentreguide.co.uk\)](#) that's dealing with your claim.

Carers and SEND Support

In Somerset you are considered to be carer if you give up your time without pay, to look after a family member, a friend or a neighbour who is ill, frail or has a disability. You can be a parent carer, a young carer or care for an older person or other adult with care needs. For support with this, visit: [Carers in Somerset](#)

Cost of Living Support in Somerset

The rising cost of living is affecting everybody across the County in a variety of different ways. We want to support those most impacted, including those who may have not faced financial challenge in their lives before.

Throughout these pages, you can find useful websites, community organisations, advice and guidance to help you through the rising cost of living. If you need help, contact us or one of the organisations in this guide. There's advice, support and information available across Somerset.

[Cost of Living Support in Somerset](#)

Check you've received all the government's cost-of-living payments

The government's [cost-of-living payments](#) are available for those receiving certain benefits or tax credits. You don't need to apply for these – if you're eligible the money should go straight into your account.

If you think you're due a payment but haven't received one, [report a missing payment](#) to the government here.

Be aware of scams! If you receive any emails, texts or phone calls asking you to fill in an application form or asking for your bank details to receive a cost-of-living payment, **do not talk to them or send a reply**. Get more information on [cost-of-living scams](#) on the Money Saving Expert's website.

Find out what help you can get with your energy bills and Broadband

Take a look at these resources from the [British Gas Energy Trust](#) and the [Money Saving Expert](#) for energy and Money Saving Expert for [Broadband](#) support.

Check if your child is entitled to free school meals (FSM) and get uniform support

If your child is eligible for FSM you need to get them registered. This will allow them to get a free meal at school, and we'll get extra funding (known as the pupil premium) to support your child's learning.

Go to [this government website](#) to check if your child is eligible. If they are, or if you're not sure, you can submit a request with Somerset County Council to see if you are eligible for FSM [Free school meals \(somerset.gov.uk\)](http://somerset.gov.uk)

Information about free school meals can also be found on [The Castle School website](#).

School Uniform

The Castle School also encourages families to donate uniform back to the school so that we can support other families who may be struggling with uniform costs.

Our sizes are limited to the donations received. We can help with:

- PE Kit
- Blazers
- Skirts

[Grown out of it](#) is a site where you can buy or sell second-hand uniform. This is similar to an ebay site but does not charge commission. When you sell your items, you can request for part or all of the purchase price to be donated to our school.

The Bishop Fox's Educational Foundation is dedicated to improving educational opportunities for the young people of Taunton, Somerset, through the provision of grants to individuals and organisations supporting young people. For more information visit: [Bishop Fox's Educational Foundation \(bfef.org.uk\)](http://bfef.org.uk)

The Taunton Heritage Trust provides almhouse accommodation for the over 60's but also runs a grant scheme for the benefit of Taunton Deane residents who are in financial need. To apply you will need to request a referring agency to complete an application form on your behalf. This could be a Family Centre, Social Services or Citizens Advice [Grants - Taunton Heritage Trust](#)

See what other support you can get from your local authority

Local authorities have many schemes that you might be eligible for, including:

- The [Holiday Activities and Food Programme](#) – access to food and activities over the school holidays. Note that if your child is eligible for free school meals (see above), they'll also qualify for this programme
- [Help with transport to school](#)
- [Help with school uniform costs](#)

Get free or low-cost food

If you're worried about not having enough food to feed your family, you're not alone. There are a number of places offering support.

1. If you have a child under 4, and meet the eligibility criteria, you may be entitled to [healthy start food vouchers](#)
2. [Taunton Foodbank | Helping Local People in Crisis](#)
3. Use food waste apps and websites like [Olio](#) (for free food and household items from your local community), [Too Good To Go](#) (for low-cost food from local restaurants), or [Low Price Foods](#) (food that has passed its best before date, but is still safe to eat)
4. Become a member of a community shop. These organisations sell food to their members at a reduced price. Some shops are free to join if you meet certain criteria, and others ask for a small contribution. Find out if there's one near you by checking these websites: [Community Shop](#), [Your Local Pantry](#), [Community Grocery](#)
5. [Food-support-for-families-in-Somerset](#)
6. Get more tips on free and cheap meals from [Which](#)

Free hygiene products

- The Castle School offers free period products to students, these can be requested from the main office or PE Department by any student who needs them.
- Food banks may offer free toiletries and sanitary products. Check with your local food bank to see what's available
- Find the cheapest disposable sanitary products on [Sanitary Saver](#)

Replace or repair household items at a low cost or for free

Check if you can get broken household goods replaced or repaired by your local community.

- Get free household goods on [Freecycle](#)
- Get help with DIY repairs at a [Repair Café](#)

Local Facebook groups

Often preloved items will be given away for free and requests for items can be made. A popular page within the Taunton area is: [Life is a gift - Taunton and surrounds | Facebook](#)

Find a warm space to beat the chill

Some community spaces open their doors to provide a safe and warm space for a few hours. Many also offer hot drinks and Wi-Fi.

Find a warm bank here [Where are all the warm banks in the South West? These are the confirmed locations so far | ITV News West Country](#)

Further information:

Contact [StepChange](#) for debt advice

Contact [Shelter](#) if you're having issues related to housing
Contact the [Salvation Army](#) for emergency assistance
See if you're eligible for [grants from Turn2us](#)
Single parents can get support from [Gingerbread](#)