

Hygiene Poverty Report

On Barnsley Residents across the Borough

From January to March 2023



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About Healthwatch Barnsley

Healthwatch Barnsley is your local health and social care champion. From Penistone to Goldthorpe and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

If you recently visited your GP or local hospital, or used any health and social care services in Barnsley we want to hear from you. Whether you've had a good or bad experience we can use your feedback to improve services for everyone and we have the power to make NHS leaders and other care providers listen to what you say.

We're completely independent and impartial and anything you say is confidential. We also offer information and advice to help you get the support you need. Our service is free, simple to use and can make a real difference to people in Barnsley and beyond.

Find out more about us on our website www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk



Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better



Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector serving as the public's independent advocate

Project background

There has been increasing concern over the last few months about the rising cost of living and the ability of many people to afford necessities such as heating, food and medication.

- The cost of living increased sharply across the UK during 2021 and 2022. The annual rate of inflation reached 11.1% in October 2022, a 41-year high, before easing in subsequent months. It was **10.1% in March 2023**, the seventh successive month of double-digit inflation. High inflation affects the affordability of goods and services for households. (Source Commons Library, UK Parliament)



Professor Sir Michael Marmot, Director of UCL Institute of Health Equity warns

“Warm homes, nutritious food and a stable job are vital building blocks for health. In addition to the effect of cold homes on mental and physical illness, living on a low income does much damage. If we are constantly worrying about making ends meet it puts a strain on our bodies, resulting in increased stress, with effects on the heart and blood vessels and a disordered immune system. This type of living environment will mean thousands of people will die earlier than they should, and, in addition to lung damage in children, the toxic stress can permanently affect their brain development.”



- New research by the Independent Food Aid Network (Ifan), shared with the Observer, found that almost **90%** of food banks surveyed reported increased demand in December 2022 and January 2023 compared with a year earlier.

From a short survey we did at the end of 2022 for Hygiene Poverty Awareness week we wanted to look at how people in Barnsley were coping during the crisis.

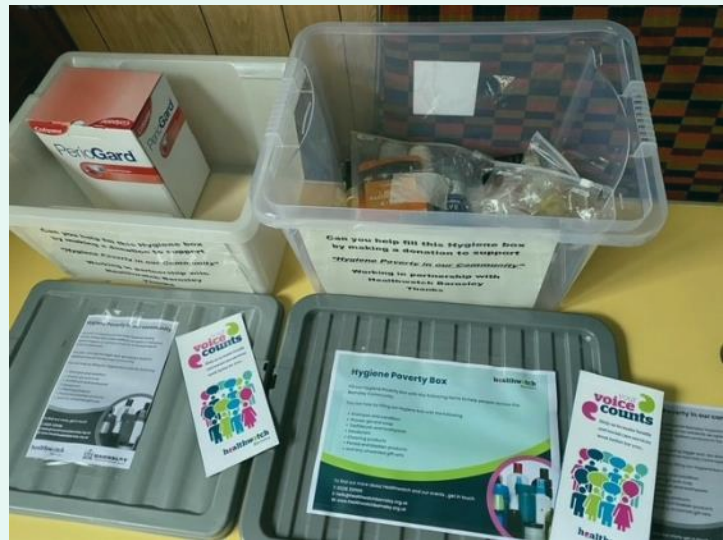
What we did

With funding from the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** administered by **Barnsley Council** we were able to distribute hygiene products to a number of families and single people in Barnsley, these included items such as – shower gel, soap, shampoo, deodorant, sanitary products, personal wipes, household wipes, washing pods and disinfectant.

Residents received a pack dependant on the size of their household in return for completing a short survey. We attended events and roadshows throughout the borough during January, February and March and gave out **506** hygiene packs at **24** different events.



As part of this project we also engaged local employers by asking if we would be able to place a donation box in staff areas which we would then collect at the end of the project (March 2023). We had an absolutely fantastic response to this request and distributed/collected 30 boxes, which will enable us to hold an event and distribute packs again during Hygiene Poverty Awareness week in October.



We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who took part in our survey or donated products for distribution – you are amazing!



How representative were the people we spoke to?

We tried to include as many residents as possible in the survey and made sure that we attended events in all six Area Councils. We tried to target specific groups of older people, children and young people and families by attending different groups including;

- Barnsley College
- Dearne Family Centre
- Jolly Boys



We facilitated or attended events for underserved communities including;

- Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
- Recovery Steps
- TransBarnsley
- Humankind
- Chilypep



We attended events in market places, village halls and warm places including;

- Tankersley Welfare Hall
- Barnsley Market (Atrium)
- Mapplewell Village Hall
- Thurlstone Methodist Church
- Royston Warm Place



Key Findings

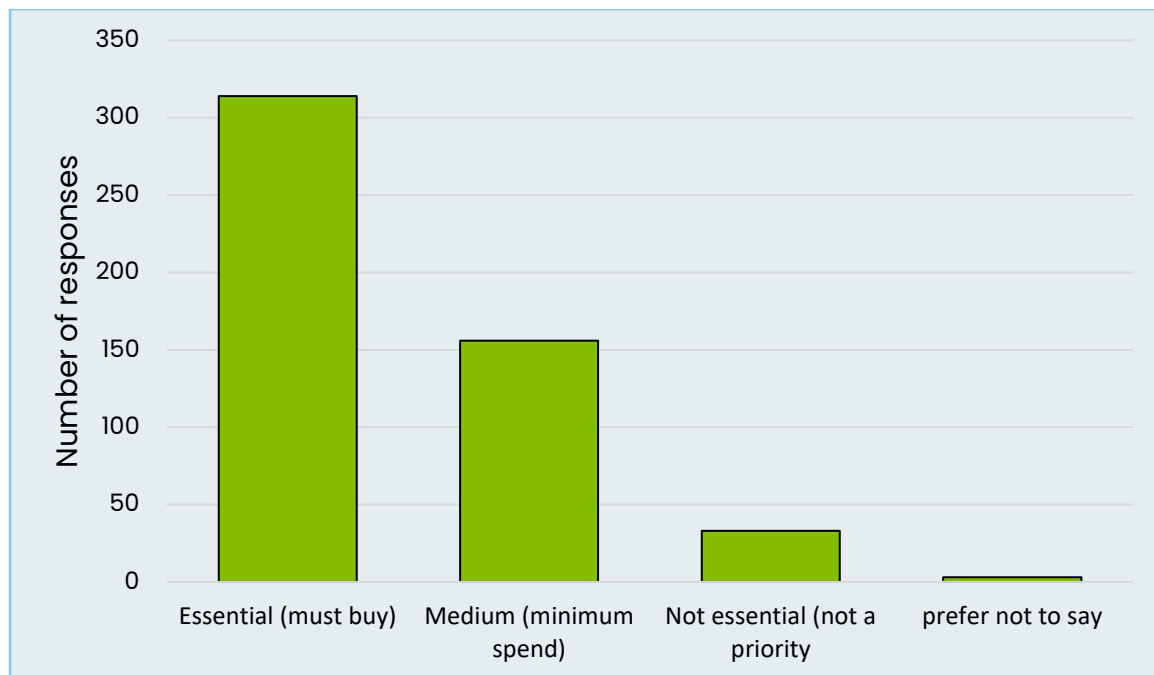


Hygiene poverty

The first 3 questions on our survey were looking in particular about hygiene poverty and how residents had or were being affected.

We asked “Have you ever had to go without essential hygiene/sanitary products?” All respondents answered this question with **175 people (34.5%)** saying yes, they had, had to go without essential hygiene products.

We then asked where on the list of priorities does buying hygiene products sit.



And finally on this section we asked if the residents thought that the cost of hygiene products had increased over the last year – a resounding **477** people said yes.

Financial situation

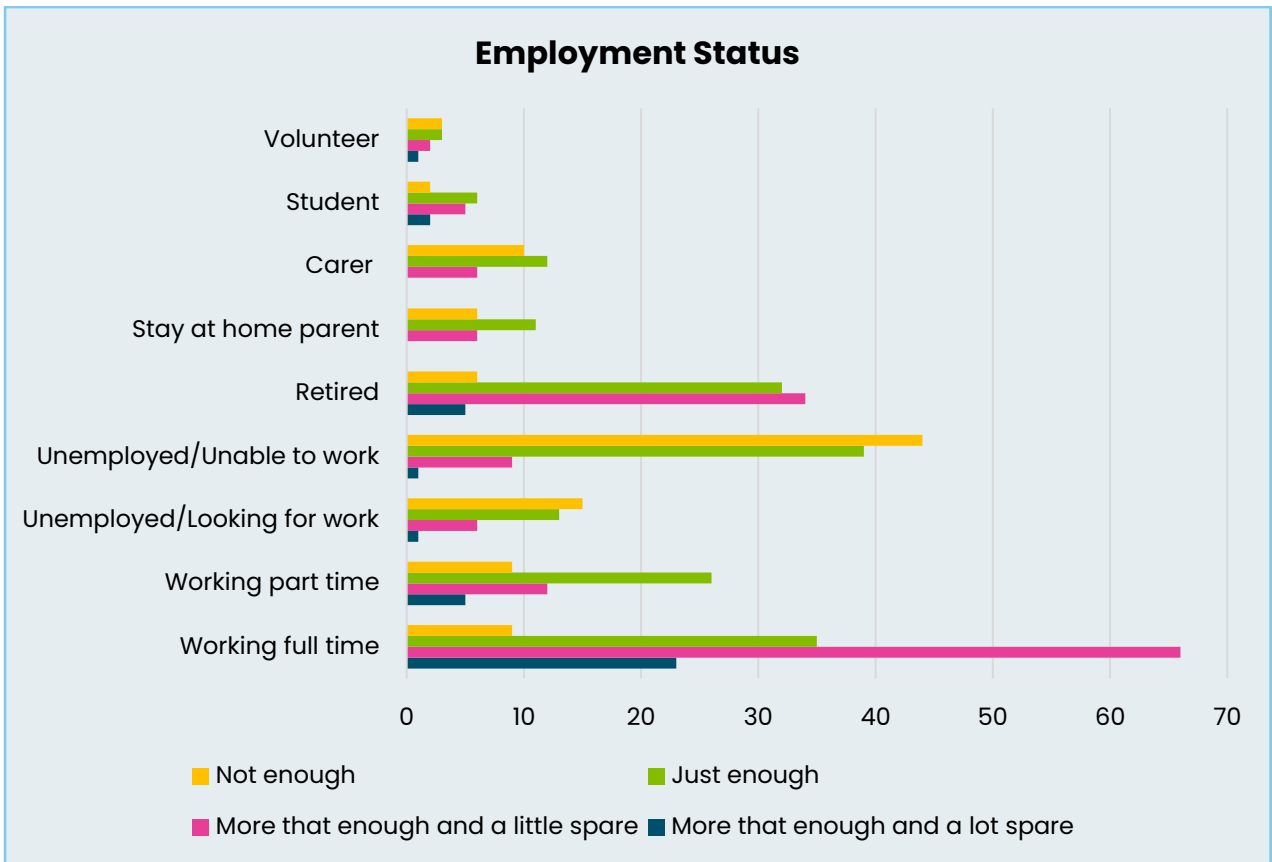
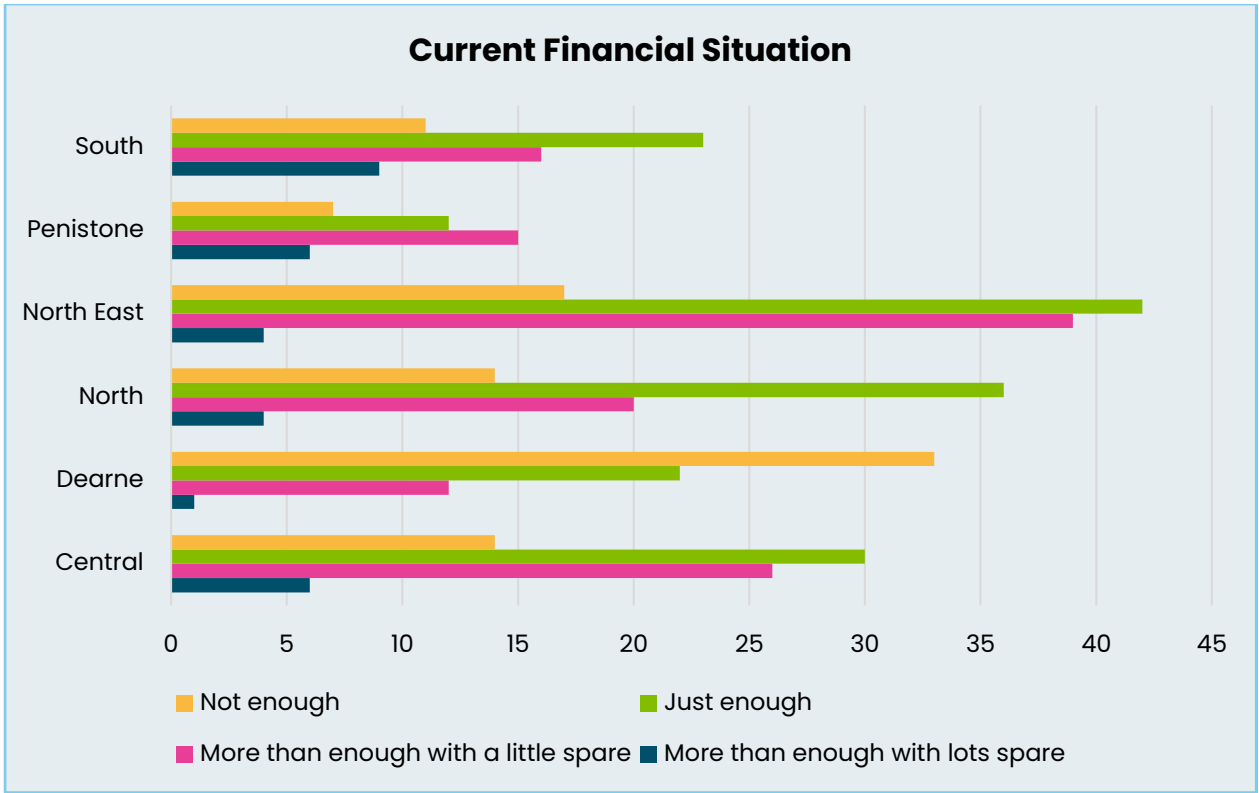
We asked the residents which statement best described their current financial situation.



- I have **more than enough** money for basic necessities and **a lot spare** that I can save or spend on extras or leisure. **(7.5%)**
- I have **more than enough** money for basic necessities and **a little spare** that I can save or spend on extras or leisure. **(30%)**
- I have **just enough** money for basic necessities and little else. **(36%)**
- I **don't have enough** money for basic necessities and sometimes or often I run out of money **(21.5%)**
- Prefer not to say **(5%)**

38 people told us that they have more than enough money for basic necessities and a lot of spare cash that they can save or spend on extras or leisure. **150** people told us they have more than enough for basic necessities and a little spare cash that they can save or spend on extras or leisure. The majority of people (**182**) told us they have just enough money for basic necessities and little else. Just over a 5th of the people that took part in our survey (**110**) told us they do not have enough money for basic necessities and that they sometimes run out of money.

The South, North East, North and Central areas people mainly telling us they are receiving just enough money to cover their basic needs with nothing left over for leisure activities or extras. The Dearne is the hardest hit with most people telling us that their income is not meeting their basic needs and that they often run out of money. Penistone which is seen as one of the more affluent areas of the borough is the only area where the majority of people are telling us that they have more money than they need with a little spare to spend on extras and leisure activities.



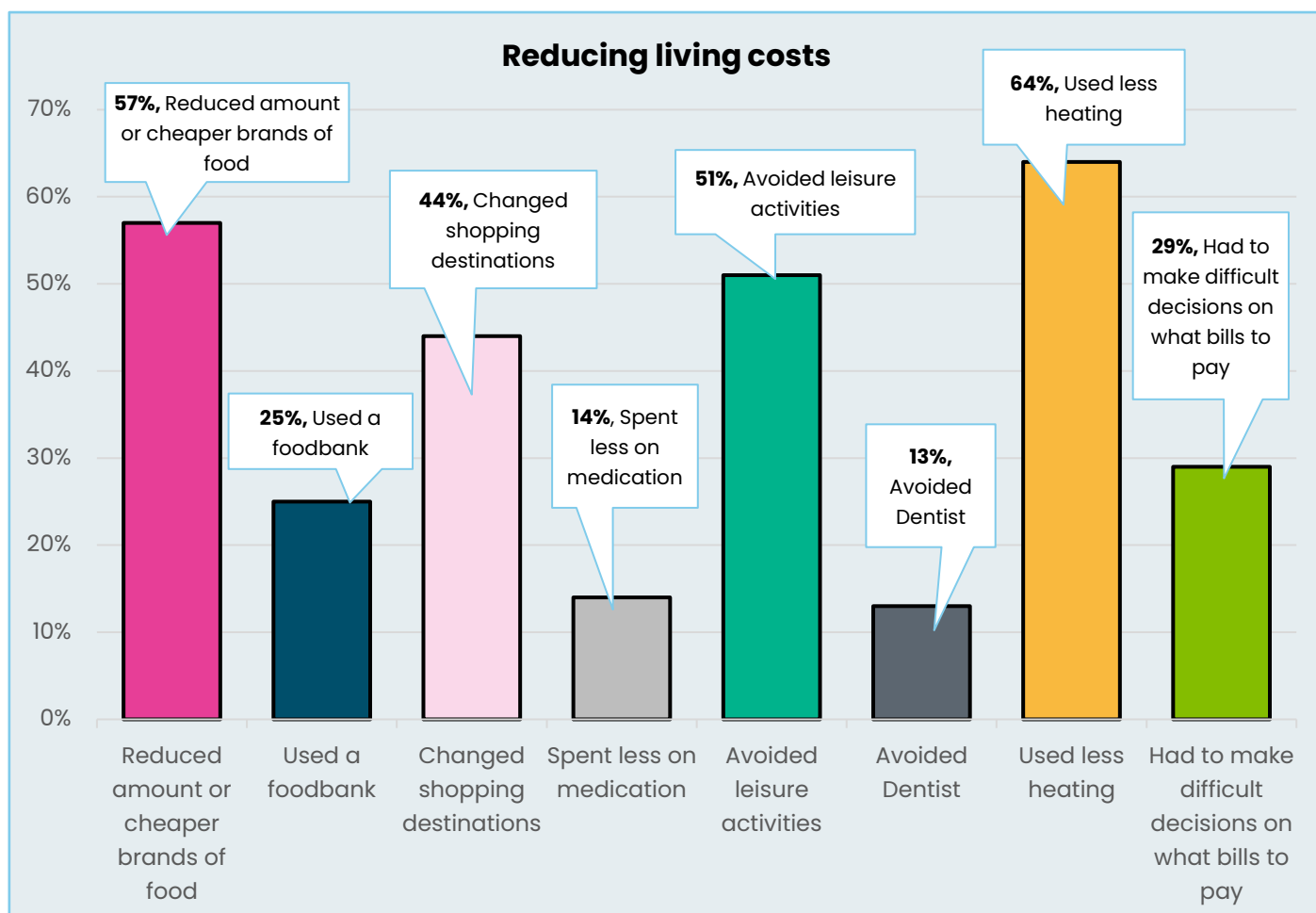
Cost of living

Next we asked people what measures they have taken to keep their costs down. A large number **64% (325 people)** told us that they have used less heating or made other choices to reduce their energy bills.

50% of the people who completed our survey also told us that they had avoided doing things they enjoy like going to the cinema or out with friends to try and cut down on costs.

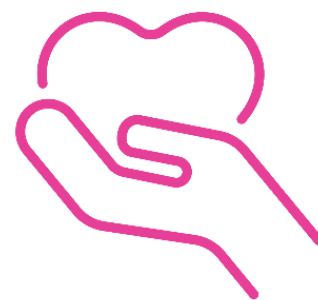
A quarter of people who took part in the survey told us that they had used a food bank while **57%** had reduced the amount of food they ate or bought cheaper brands. **44%** also told us they had changed their shopping destinations using cheaper supermarkets and charity shops.

Avoiding visits to the dentist and spending less on medication/prescriptions also featured in ways people have tried to keep costs down.



Health and Wellbeing

We asked if people's mental or physical health has been affected by the cost of living crisis. **44% (218 people said it had)** with a **further 21% (106 people)** telling us it could potentially affect them.



We also asked if people felt that not having access to basic cleaning products could have a detrimental effect on their health, **62% (311 people)** told us yes, whilst **21% (105 people)** said it could potentially.

Additional comments

We asked people if they had any experience or additional information to add of how hygiene poverty had impacted on them to share with us – the comments can be found at the end of this report (Appendix 1)

A little more about the people who completed our survey

30% of people told us they had a disability

43% of people told us they had a long term condition

Age Groups

Age	No of people	Percentage
16-17 years	26	5%
18 – 24 years	69	14%
25 – 49 years	209	41%
50 – 64 years	113	22%
65 – 79 years	70	14%
80+ years	12	2%
Prefer not to say	7	2%

Sexual Orientation

Are you?	No. of people	Percentage
Man	160	32%
Woman	324	64%
Non binary	6	1%
Transexual	9	2%
Prefer not to say	7	1%

Ethnicity

Ethnic Group	No. of people	Percentage
Arab	2	0.4%
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	4	0.8%
Asian/Asian British: Indian	2	0.4%
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	1	0.2%
Black/Black British: Another Black/Black British Background	1	0.2%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups Black African and white	3	0.6%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Any other mixed/multiple ethnic groups background	1	0.2%
White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh	471	93%
White: Irish	2	0.4%
White: Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller	3	0.6%
White: Roma	1	0.2%
White: Other White background	3	0.6%
Other Ethnic Group (Please specify) Brazilian	1	0.2%
Prefer not to say	5	1%

People whose voices are not normally heard

We asked people which of the following statements apply to you (People were able to tick multiple boxes if the statement applied to them)

Statement	No. of people	Percentage
I belong to the LGBTQ+ Community	34	7%
I don't have a support network (friends and/or family)	40	8%
I consider myself to be neuro-diverse (e.g, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette's etc.)	49	10%
I am a veteran (have been in the armed forces)	7	1%
I am homeless	11	2%
I live in a rural/isolated setting	12	2%
I am an ex-offender	10	2%
I am a refugee or asylum seeker	2	0.3%
I am a serving member of the armed forces	0	-
I have experienced domestic abuse (e.g, violence, psychological or financial)	38	7.5%
I am a sex worker	2	0.3%
None of the above	301	59%
Prefer not to say	32	

Next Steps

We will continue to ask people how they have been affected by the cost of living crisis as part of our conversations when out in the community. Our Engagement Officers will continue to promote and signpost to other services where necessary including;

- BMBC More Money in Your Pocket
- Citizens Advice Barnsley
- DIAL Barnsley
- Employment Support Services
- Help with Energy bills
- Household Support Grants



During Hygiene Poverty Awareness Week which takes place in October 2023, we will host an event in Barnsley Market where we will distribute the donations we have received from local employers and undertake another survey to measure how things have or haven't changed in 6 months.

Want to know more about our work in the community?

[Facebook.com/HealthwatchBarnsley](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchBarnsley)

We use Facebook to engage with people in Barnsley

[@HWatchBarnsley](https://twitter.com/HWatchBarnsley)

We use Twitter to engage with services in Barnsley

[linkedin.com/in/healthwatchbarnsley/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/healthwatchbarnsley/)

We use LinkedIn to show our engagement with



Appendix 1



Here is the exact wording that people told us in their comments;

1	I have damp in my home
2	I now wait until it's all gone before renewing
3	Turning on the hot water cost too much electricity
4	Friends have been telling me I smell which has made me feel small and poor
5	I always have a bottle of hand sanitiser to keep me safe from other peoples germs
6	Depression, not getting washed to save money on utilities
7	Low self esteem
8	I have to use cheap shower gel to wash my hair as shampoo is too expensive, my daughter and I sometimes buy shampoo together and share it, we don't live together.
9	Before Christmas I didn't have enough money to buy hygiene products so had to wash with just water
10	We sometimes have to go without toilet roll because we can't afford it
11	I can't afford to have my hair cut
12	I don't have enough money to purchase products I have to borrow money and cut cost where I can
13	Stressful
14	Not having enough products to be able to clean
15	Sometimes I have to go without hygiene products if we need food or if an unexpected bill comes up.
16	I struggle with my daughter
17	I buy cheaper products
18	I have had periods of not washing or changing my clothes which has affected my mental health
19	I cannot afford to go to the dentist for the work I need doing

20	The cost of hot water and washing clothes is a big expense
21	I can't afford to buy Tenna pants
22	Yes, I'm cracking up
23	I am being very careful
24	Working part time but not declaring my earnings to Universal Credit being paid cash in hand to help me out
25	I use products sparingly
26	I'm fine at the moment
27	I have reduced the amount of times I visit friends and family as driving is too expensive. I am concerned for other people who are worse off than myself. Basic hygiene is essential for the wellbeing of individuals and groups of people.
28	Problems with drains affecting my bungalow
29	Made fewer car journeys because of price of fuel
30	I now buy cheaper brands
31	I often run out of toothpaste and deodorant so I avoid people
32	I've stopped buying products I used to enjoy like moisturiser
33	Less shampoo
34	I am a single parent and my daughter is mixed race her hair products are a lot more expensive, it is hard to afford everything with the cost of living.
35	I walk everywhere as I cannot afford the bus
36	Poor oral hygiene has affected my teeth
37	F**k knows, I'm homeless
38	They have shut my water off because I can't pay the bill so now I am p***ing in the mop bucket
39	I only turn the gas on for hot water for a bath
40	Female hygiene products are forcing us to use ones we don't prefer
41	Couldn't cope without being clean, I hate to be dirty
42	I have incontinence and I have been unable to pay for products to keep myself clean
43	Basic hygiene is a must. Warm open spaces where people have access to washing facilities would be helpful

44	sanitary/period products should be free
45	I hate not having money to buy sanitary products for my daughters
46	Refugee £200 per week to support a family of 5
47	Always look for the cheapest
48	Sanitary products are so expensive and I have to buy for my teenage daughter and myself. My daughter suffers from heavy periods so it is really expensive.
49	My own fault, drug use, can't be bothered with anything
50	I have been lucky enough not to be affected
51	I am homeless so struggle every day. I struggle mostly with sanitary products
52	DIDN'T WASH MY HAIR FOR 2 WEEKS
53	WORKING IN SOUTH AFRICA, WHERE COLLEAGUES AND STUDENTS DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO SANITARY PRODUCTS AND WERE USING TOWELS AND PIECES OF CLOTH
54	Changed to using same bar soap for shampoo because cheaper. Not having heating on, but sitting in a room where sun shines through
55	I have watered down my shampoo and conditioner so much it does not lather anymore
56	Reduced shopping, no luxury items. Prioritise on things needed
57	I don't buy as much as usual so I am buying more throughout the week
58	I have to go without hygiene products sometimes for a few weeks
59	I am a single parent with no support network
60	I have had no gas for the last two years and my landlord has put the rent up twice in two years.
61	Incontinence products should be free I now have to wear for longer, they have increased the price but lowered the number of pads in the pack.
62	Struggling to pay for basic essentials
63	I feel ashamed to go out in case people see how I am now

64	I feel uncomfortable socialising in case people realise I need my hair and body washing
65	My daughter has started her periods and I am not in a position to be able to buy products
66	Not having thing in the cupboard like I used to. We run out of things and have to wait to buy them



For more information

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