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STIRLING

**citizens
advice
bureau**

Charity No. SC007270

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Heat & Eat Campaign

A world of food banks and fuel poverty has unfortunately become the norm in recent years. In the past 18 months, the Stirling Citizens Advice Bureau made over 1,000 food bank referrals and the number of households estimated to be in fuel poverty in the Stirling area is 12,900. We at the Stirling CAB decided to conduct research in order to identify ways in which we can attempt to break the cycle of dependency which has become so prevalent in not only the Stirling area, but also across Scotland and the UK as a whole.

We carried out a survey on a number of our food bank clients between April and October 2016. Our main findings were;

- Over 75% of food bank referrals were due to 'budgeting reasons'
- At least 27% of our food bank clients were repeat referrals
- 50% of clients had went without electricity/gas in the last 6 months, of this 50%;
 - Two-thirds had this happen more than once
 - 47% had to go without for more than a day
- 1 in 5 did not have a bank account
- 83% used prepayment meters which have been shown to cost on average £300 per year more than direct debit/standing orders
- 63% didn't use direct debits for any bills
- 36% said that they incurred costs in order to get to their local food bank
- 48% had to take some other form of transport than walking or cycling to get to the food bank
- There was a clear demand for more localised food banks
- 61% felt that they would benefit from having access to budgeting/debt advice
- In the first 2 months of our food bank advice project, there has been a rise in post-referral advice engagement by clients from 5% to over 80%