

## Consumers Look For Help As Winter Closes In

*The number of people struggling with their home heating costs has escalated dramatically, Citizens Advice has claimed.*

October 13, 2008 (FPRC) -- According to the organisation, there has been a notable increase in the number of people looking for advice regarding ways to keep energy costs under control as they slip into debt to their supplier. So too, as the number of cheap secured loans for house purchases has dwindled, instances of people slipping into arrears has also increased.

For those who are struggling with demands such as mortgages and utility bills as they eat into monthly expenditure, taking out a debt consolidation loan may prove an effective way to get finances back on track.

Meanwhile, Citizens Advice has called upon mortgage providers to show a little leniency during times of considerable financial turbulence and afford struggling homeowners the support necessary to keep them in their homes. Indeed, the group pointed out that lenders may need to begin extending assistance to more people after figures showed that the number of enquiries made about secured loans arrears assistance rose 35 per cent in the last 12 months.

And more short-term figures show that this problem has become particularly acute in the last few months. The group noted that in the second quarter of this financial year (July to September), the number of secured loans arrears enquiries shot up 51 per cent across Citizens Advice Bureaux across England and Wales when compared to the preceding three months.

Commenting on the figures, chief executive of the group David Harker said: "While we are pleased to see the number of consumer credit problems going down, the increase in the number of enquiries about basic essentials is worrying and these figures show how the current economic situation is hitting vulnerable and low income households the hardest. To prevent this situation worsening, it is vital that mortgage lenders and fuel companies do everything in their power to help people in arrears to come to a workable solution over repayment arrangements, rather than piling on extra charges. All creditors should treat borrowers in arrears fairly and sympathetically."

He went on to say that anyone who is worried about the state of their finances should seek out professional and impartial advice immediately. It noted that while loans providers should always be flexible in their negotiations, it was important that people also sought guidance from free, fair and confidential services such as Citizens Advice or another similar organisations.

For those who have found it difficult to keep their feet on the ground in the recent financial shake up, taking out a debt consolidation may prove an effective way to stop financial obligations from spiralling out of control. Meanwhile, Co-Operative Financial Services pointed out last month that many consumers are smartening up to the benefits of the web in the fight against rising costs.

According to the organisation, more than two-thirds of Britons (68 per cent) have used online services in order to help get their finances order, with many citing the onset of the credit crunch as a principal reason for doing so.

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**Contact Information**

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