

Helping Others During a Cost-of-Living Crisis

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By Helen Robson

✖ Life is tough for a growing percentage of the population just now.

We all see, or hear, the headlines about rising energy and food prices. Those who run Foodbanks speak of the huge demand resulting in a shortage of supplies, so what can we do to help them as well as those who cannot afford to heat their homes? Who would have thought that in a prosperous country during the twenty first century there would be people who had to choose between heating and eating?

Throughout the country there are collection points where non-perishable items of food can be donated. If we all bought just one or two extra items of tins or packets when we when we go to our local supermarket, or grocery shop, then gave them to a Foodbank we could make quite a difference by ensuring that they can continue to help to feed those in need.

It is heartening to see how many communities are opening “warm spaces” where people can spend time in comfort and with company. Volunteers will always be welcome to make hot drinks, or in some cases, provide hot food as well. Of course, if our homes are warm, we can invite friends or neighbours who are struggling to morning coffee, afternoon tea or a bowl of soup at lunch time. As well as unobtrusively helping, this could be a good way of starting new or deeper friendships.

Sadly, the number of homeless people is rising because of the cost of living. We could always guide them to a warm space or offer them a hot drink and sandwich or cup of soup. A rucksack filled with warm socks, gloves and sweaters will always be received with gratitude on a cold day. There are numerous charities which help to get the homeless off the streets, also giving guidance as to how to turn their lives around so that they can find work and permanent homes. If we make it our business to know where those charities are and to introduce those, who would love a fresh start, to take the first step back to a good life, it would probably be the best gift we could give them.

In rural areas where public transport is in short supply and fuel costs make it more expensive to drive to work, to hospital appointments or other essential travel, car sharing is a popular idea. When children attend schools well beyond walking distance from home, the school bus can prove to be very expensive, especially if there are two or three children in one family. This is where parents begin to talk to each other and decide to take turns in doing the "school run", so cutting down on fuel costs.

Longer term, unused allotments, or maybe an area of a public park, could become community gardens. There is nothing like the taste of home-grown fruit and vegetables, which also cut the cost of food bills whilst at the same time encouraging healthy eating and promoting a happy community spirit. Anyone with gardening skills will prove to be a great asset in getting a new project started whilst at the same time helping novices to realise the benefits of growing their own.

Perhaps one of the best ways we can help others to cope with the cost-of-living crisis is to promote the Lifestyle Movement. If new members learn to live simply they may find that their money goes further when they cut out unnecessary expenses. Those new to the idea of a change of lifestyle will find so much advice in the pages of Living Green, the last

issue being packed with helpful tips such as the articles “Thoughts on Saving Gas” by Nona Wright and “What Would Happen if All Unused Public Spaces in the UK Became Community Farms?” by Jess Davies, Charlotte Hardman and Sofia Kourmpetli. Perhaps even more tempting, are the delicious cost-cutting recipes included in every issue.