Charities: Giving support where it counts

Briefings

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Valerie Boggs, CEO of TaxAid and Tax Help for Older People on the help these charities can provide to the community.

The cost of living crisis is a constant in the headlines currently but, for some, poverty is not a new reality – it is already a way of life. In some communities, juggling multiple employments, working extra hours and taking cash in hand jobs has been the only way to survive for many years.

Around a third of working-age adults who are in families where there is only part-time work are living in poverty, as are almost a quarter of people working in the administrative and support service sector (see the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report 'UK Poverty 2022' at bit.ly/3eiSaSt).

TaxAid and Tax Help for Older People reach into these communities to provide the help they need to report the myriad of different and changing sources of income. We also offer help when getting things wrong in the past has resulted in tax debt.

Of the total 14.5 million people living in poverty, around 2.1 million or around 14% are pensioners. Many organisations work to support pensioners, one of which is the Volunteer Visiting Scheme of the BBC pension scheme. Two volunteers from Tax Help for Older People recently attended the Volunteer Visiting Scheme conference to raise awareness of the assistance available on our helpline and the in-person support provided by our volunteers.

One of the most common tax issues faced by this age group can follow upon the loss of a spouse, as the subsequent changes to income can create PAYE code problems. The delegates were delighted to learn about the difference our help could make. Cheryl Miles, the BBC Volunteer Visiting Coordinator, said that the delegates will be

sharing this information with the BBC pensioners they visit in their local communities.

Earlier in the year, staff from TaxAid worked with Toynbee Hall (a charity that works to address the causes and impacts of poverty in the East End of London) to provide lunchtime tax advice sessions at two sites of Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd. The workers were able to get help with tax queries while they were on their break. For most, English wasn't their first language and they were unfamiliar with the UK tax system so TaxAid's support was very welcome.

The workers who attended these sessions really benefited from being face to face, particularly those who were able to log into their personal tax account. It is clear that a common problem for non-UK nationals is understanding the tax terminology in their personal tax account, creating unintentional problems. The feedback from Laura Regan, the Social Value Manager at Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd, was great. 'I just wanted to say a huge thank you for coming to these sites over the past couple of weeks – it has been greatly appreciated. We regularly have people speaking to us about financial issues, so it was great to have you here!'

TaxAid and Tax Help for Older People are committed to providing help to those in poverty who cannot otherwise get the support they need. We continue to reach out into local communities to ensure that help can be accessed by all who need it. With your support, we can reach more people.

See taxaid.org.uk *and* taxvol.org.uk *for further details.*