

# Impact Report

April 2024-March 2025



**citizens  
advice**

**Winchester  
District**

Solving problems,  
transforming lives.

# CITIZENS ADVICE WINCHESTER DISTRICT

Citizens Advice Winchester District is an independent charity that improves the lives of local people by providing a free, impartial, local advice service that is open to all.

Our local service helps people to overcome their problems, uphold their rights, and fight for social justice. We're committed to reaching everyone who needs us, especially those at greatest risk of deprivation, harm or discrimination.

## OUR VISION

We believe in a fair society with good quality of life for all.

## OUR MISSION

We improve the lives of local people through our free advice, support and campaigning. We help people to overcome their problems, uphold their rights and create a fairer society.



# CEO REPORT



**As the cost of living crisis persists into its fourth year, the impact on our service users is still very evident and demand for our service has remained high in Winchester District.**

We continue to see a growing number of people who need emergency access to food and/or fuel, households struggling with debt, and people needing help to access financial support.

On average, the people we help now have double the number of issues that they needed help with five years ago, which means people's problems are more complex and harder to solve.

But despite these increased demands, our staff and volunteers have risen to the challenge. A key part of our success is treating people holistically - working with each person to understand the range of issues they're facing and agree with them how we'll help them to resolve these, often interrelated issues.

We've also built stronger relationships with local partners, from food banks to housing associations, ensuring a more joined-up approach to tackling people's issues and getting help to people before they reach crisis point.

A key example of this is our Mental Health and Advice project, which provides flexible, in-depth advice to people in mental health crisis.

A recent independent review showed that this service provides a significant return on investment for the NHS, helping to avoid future costs (such as readmissions), in addition to the positive outcomes it has on the people supported. There has been great interest in replicating this model elsewhere, with the project already rolled out in three other Citizens Advice offices.

Of course, none of this would be possible without our amazing staff and volunteers who work tirelessly every day to provide the best support to our service users. Their dedication, professionalism, and compassion are truly inspirational. We're also eternally grateful to our funders, donors, and partners for their support. We wouldn't be here without you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J Campbell". The signature is stylized with a large, looped 'J' and a cursive 'Campbell'.

# OUR IMPACT

**Our advice changes people's lives for the better.** This year, 5,810 people came to us for help, averaging 111 people each week.

## We've helped

Our service users to **overcome** almost **20,000 different issues** this year



To generate more than **£2million** in unclaimed **income** for people



Over **700 people** to **manage debts of** almost **£230,000**



More than **900 individuals** out of **food or fuel poverty**



*"Thank you so much for your help. The situation was getting me down. Your ability to listen and ask the right questions enabled me to 'see' the situation rolled out instead of in a muddle. I felt supported in a powerful world."*

# ADVICE NEEDS

We help people with almost any issue, but we often see common trends in the challenges local people are facing, and the type of advice they need.

## **MONEY: Helping people access the right welfare support**

Helping people access welfare support is our most common advice theme, representing over 35% of all our advice. Many of those we supported this year needed help with issues relating to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) - a benefit for individuals with a disability or long-term health condition.

### **We helped Alex\* get his PIP reinstated**

Alex has a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (following a period serving in the armed services), alongside other health conditions. He had been receiving a disability benefit (Personal Independence Payment) to help him manage financially with the issues related to these conditions. However, the payments had stopped without an assessment of his condition. This had resulted in a financial loss of £100 per week and was causing Alex significant stress. We helped Alex check that he was still eligible for the benefit and supported him to appeal his case. Alex won his appeal, and his disability payment has been reinstated, reducing his stress and enabling him to get the financial support he needs.



**\*Names have been changed**

## **HOUSING: Helping people understand their housing rights and avoid homelessness**

We've dealt with over 2,500 housing-related issues this year. Common themes include advising tenants who've received a Section 21 eviction notice (a no-fault eviction) and supporting people who have ongoing problems with their rental properties, e.g. damp, mould, asbestos. We also continue to see a large number of people (over 120 this year) who are at risk of being (or actually) homeless, helping them to understand their rights and identify their next steps.



### **We helped an elderly couple understand their tenancy rights**

An elderly couple came to us for help with concerns about their tenancy. They told us they'd been renting a property privately for the last 50 years, but had never had a formal written contract. There was a history of the landlord refusing to make repairs, and so the couple had been doing these themselves at their own cost. They were in dispute with their landlord over these repairs and were concerned about a rent increase. We helped the couple to understand their rights in relation to repairs to the property and the responsibilities of their landlord. We also helped them to understand their rights (as protected tenants) in relation to rent increases.

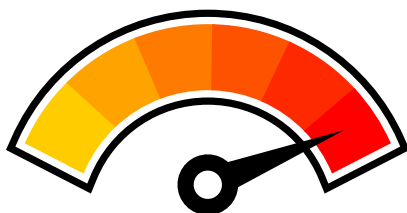


## ENERGY AND UTILITIES: Helping people resolve issues with their utility provider and heat their homes

In 2001, energy bills started to rise sharply. Since that time, we've seen a growing number of people coming to us with issues related to their utility or communications providers (gas, electric, water, telephone, broadband, etc). A large proportion of those who contact us need help because they can't afford to pay their energy bills, or have an issue with their billing or meter readings.

756

Utility related issues  
in 2021/22



2597

Utility related issues  
in 2024/25

### We helped Jon\* resolve unjustified heating charges from his utility provider

Jon is in his 60s, lives alone, and is on a low income. Jon came to us for help when he received a bill of £803 from his energy supplier for 'heating' charges, even though Jon doesn't use his heating system (choosing instead to wear extra layers in cold weather).

Despite contacting the company to highlight the problem, Jon received more incorrect bills, phone calls demanding payment, and letters threatening debt collectors.

We've supported Jon over the past year to help him resolve the issue with his utility provider, helping him provide the right evidence, write formal letters of complaint, and ensure that the matter is fully resolved and all incorrect charges dropped.



\*Names have been changed

## **FINANCIAL CAPABILITY AND DEBT: Supporting people with budgeting, money management and debts**

Almost 30% of our service users this year needed help with debt or support with their finances, including budgeting and money management. In total, we helped people to manage debts of £230K.

### **We helped Rosie\* manage her debt and avoid eviction from her home**

Rosie was in debt and at risk of losing her home due to rent and council tax arrears. She was also experiencing issues with substance misuse. We supported Rosie with specialist debt advice, and helped her apply for a disability benefit to help cover the cost of her medication. We also referred Rosie to a GP for support with her substance misuse who referred her to a residential detox programme. Rosie recently told us she is now managing well and has been in recovery for over six months.

\*Names have been changed

## **RELATIONSHIPS: Helping people understand their rights about family matters**

Divorce and separation represent almost half of our advice related to family matters, particularly helping people understand financial liabilities and housing rights. Access or care of children and rights/responsibilities following the death of a relative are also common.



### **Separation & divorce**

44% of relationship advice



### **Children**

26% of relationship advice



### **Death & Bereavement**

23% of relationship advice



# EMERGENCY SUPPORT

With more households struggling to make ends meet, we continue to see people who need access to emergency food or fuel, help with debt, or are at risk of homelessness. In addition to helping an individual access the emergency support they need, we will also offer to address their wider issues and find ways to minimise the likelihood of a similar crisis arising in the future.

## Food poverty

We are a food bank referral agency and have close links with the local food banks in Winchester and the wider district. In the twelve months to April 2025 we made 360 food bank referrals.



**360**

**Food bank referrals made**  
(up from 281 last year)

## Fuel Poverty

Despite energy prices levelling off over the last couple of years, prices are still significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels, and we regularly see people who can't afford to heat their homes.



**591**

**Energy vouchers issued**  
(up from 439 last year)



## A holistic approach to advice

Many of those who come to us for help with food or fuel poverty, or risk of homelessness, often present to us with the immediate crisis. However, we know that these people are likely to have other interconnected issues that they need to address to achieve a long-term solution to their problems. Therefore, when someone comes to us in crisis, as well as dealing with the immediate need, we do everything we can to help them explore all the problems they're facing and give advice on each of these different areas so we can prevent another crisis from arising in the future.



## Helping people overcome increasingly complex and multiple issues

Before the pandemic, the average number of issues our service users needed help with was just over two. However, today, the average has increased to five issues per person.

Average number of issues our service users are facing

2

2018/2019

5

2024/2025



# WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT US



*"I am extremely grateful for the advice I received, I feel much less anxious."*

***"All staff have been very friendly, approachable and willing to help at all times. I feel like there are people in "my corner ".  
Thank you all!"***

***"The service was outstanding from the start to end. The support from my adviser at the Winchester branch was outstanding, she ensured I was informed about all options, and she catered to my mental health needs with compassion and care. "***

***"Amazing service and it is fantastic that it is free of charge."***

*"I'm glad I managed to walk through the door, because it was hard, but everyone here put me so at ease."*

# SPECIALIST ADVICE SERVICES

We have several funded specialist projects that allow us to support people in our local community who have complex needs and require more in-depth, longer-term support.

## Mental Health and Advice

This project, funded by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Foundation, enables us to have a part-time caseworker based at Melbury Lodge (an NHS adult acute mental health hospital in Winchester). Our caseworker supports patients with a range of advice, including income and employment support, benefit claims, debt, housing insecurity, and relationship issues. Intervention is delivered alongside specialist mental health treatment programmes provided by the NHS medical team at Melbury Lodge.



**"You were invaluable as part of the team that enabled my recovery."**

Patient feedback

**"Patients are happier having someone that can help in matters regarding to life problems outside the hospital. Nurses can focus on the health of the patients."**

Staff feedback

## Welfare Rights casework

Our Welfare Rights caseworker gives specialist support to people with complex benefits claims. This includes supporting people whose application for benefits has been rejected or reduced and are now facing an appeal or court tribunal to challenge this decision.



### **We supported Sarah\*, who has a long-term health condition, win her appeal for a disability benefit**

Sarah first applied for a disability benefit three years ago, but her application was rejected, and she has struggled with the financial burden of her health condition. We reviewed Sarah's eligibility and concluded that she should be entitled to this support. We helped Sarah gather the right evidence to appeal this decision, and she has now been awarded the disability payment plus a back payment from her first application.

## Home and Well Project

Home and Well is a Hampshire-wide project that aims to address the detrimental impact that cold homes, reduced water usage, and the anxiety of energy bills can have on vulnerable people. Our caseworker helps these individuals access the best utility tariffs, resolve issues related to billing or supply, and assists them in applying for welfare support.



### **We helped Barbara\* to access additional support and make savings on her bills.**

Barbara, an elderly woman who is privately renting locally, approached us for help. She was struggling to pay her rent and utility bills. We helped her access the financial support she was entitled to (housing benefit and council tax support), amounting to £260 per week. We also helped her move to a social tariff, reducing her water bills by 45%. These changes will help ensure Barbara has a comfortable and warm home into the future.

## Macmillan Advice Service

Our Macmillan caseworker gives advice to people who are living with cancer. Understanding your rights when you've been given a cancer diagnosis can be incredibly challenging. Our caseworker helps people access the right support and guides them through their options.



**“The very first thing we are going to do is engage cleaners. We try hard to keep the house reasonably clean but have definitely fallen behind since my chemo started.”** A Macmillan advice service user who we helped to access Attendance Allowance.

## Money Advice Project (Winchester City Council)

Our Money Advice Project (funded by Winchester City Council) enables us to support WCC housing tenants who are behind in their rent payments. Our Money Advice caseworker works with these tenants to help them manage their debts, improve their budgeting and money management skills, and look at ways to maximize their income and reduce their outgoings.



**“It took away a lot of stress and strain. That’s all thanks to Citizens Advice, they do a brilliant job and there’s not a bad word I could say about the place.”** A recent beneficiary of our Money Advice Project.

## Advice for men at HM Prison Winchester (unfunded)

Going into prison (and leaving) can create a whole range of issues for an individual around their housing, bank accounts, debts, and family. We offer an email-based advice service to prisoners in Winchester and also attend prison events to explain who we are and what we do.



# PARTNERSHIPS & OUTREACH

We're passionate about ensuring that anyone who needs our help can access it quickly and easily. For some people that might mean accessing our advice via a local support group, club or charity, rather than coming to us directly.

## In 2024/25 our outreach team have:

**Delivered** a total of **111** community outreach sessions

**Reached over 1,100 people** at these events

**Advised 365 people**, including 58 people who received more in-depth follow-up advice



## Talks and presentations

We've delivered 19 overview talks to different groups in the local area about our service and the type of issues we can help people with. In addition, we've delivered 30 Topic Talks to groups on subjects such as scams, wills, power of attorney, attendance allowance, and energy advice.

## Community advice sessions

We've also attended over 50 community events or based ourselves at key community locations, where people can come and talk to us in person. This has included having advisers on hand at the local food banks, outreach sessions at community coffee mornings, libraries, and local schools.

## Advice First Aid

Our Advice First Aid initiative delivers free training to frontline workers in local partner groups and organisations to become Advice First Aiders giving them the skills they need to triage for advice, deliver initial support and refer into our service when needed.



**This year, we delivered 13 Advice First Aid training sessions to 86 staff and volunteers from local organisations and groups**

## Coffee break meetings for partners

Over the past few years, we've made links with almost 200 local groups, organisations and community initiatives, from care homes and schools, to local charities and housing associations. As a way of sharing news and building connections between these different groups, we host a monthly online coffee meeting.



**We've hosted 11 online coffee break meetings, which have brought representatives from our partner organisations together to share news and ideas.**



# RESEARCH AND CAMPAIGNS

As a small charity that is part of a wider network of other Citizens Advice services across the country, we are uniquely positioned to see where policies and practices are failing people.

## Collecting evidence of unfair systems

When our advisers identify a policy or process that is failing people, we raise an Evidence Form on our reporting system. Many of these Evidence Forms are used by Citizens Advice nationally to support large campaigns on key issues.



**This year, our advisers generated over 300 Evidence Forms to highlight where a process or policy is failing people.**

## Evidence Form Example

**A person is £60 a month worse off after migrating from Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to Universal Credit (UC).**

Although the Department for Work and Pensions states that no one should be worse off after being migrated to Universal Credit, this person found that she was £60 a week worse off after switching to Universal Credit. The extra £60 monthly payment forced her into food and fuel poverty.



# OUR VITAL VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers are a vital part of our organisation, helping us to deliver advice, run our reception, and supporting us behind the scenes with our communications, admin, and research.

**66**  
Advice  
volunteers



**14** Reception/  
admin  
volunteers



Worth an  
estimated  
£200K each  
year to our  
organisation



**12,693**  
Volunteer  
hours



**9**  
Volunteer  
Trustees

In a recent survey 97% of our staff and volunteers would recommend working or volunteering with us.

# OUR FUNDERS

We're a local, independent charity that's reliant on securing our own funding to deliver our local, free advice service. We are eternally grateful to Winchester City Council who have been a long-term funder of our organisation as well as many of the local Parish Councils who support us with a donation each year.

**Thank you to everyone who has supported us with funding this year including:**

Winchester City Council  
Citizens Advice Hampshire  
Mayor of Winchester Community Fund  
Meon Valley Food Bank  
National CA Energy Advice Partnership  
Wickham Community Centre Warm Hub  
Hampshire County Council  
Martin Wheeler (client hardship)  
Winchester Welfare Charities  
Arcadia Legal  
Badger Farm PC  
Bighton PC  
Bishop's Sutton PC  
Boarhunt PC  
Bramdean PC  
BW Parish Council  
Cheriton PC  
Colden Common PC  
Corhampton PC  
Crawley PC  
Curdridge PC  
Denmead PC  
Droxford PC  
Durley PC  
Hambledon PC  
Headbourne PC  
Hursley PC  
Itchen Stoke PC donation  
Itchen Valley PC

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Littleton & Harestock PC  
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New Alresford PC  
Northington PC  
Old Alresford PC  
Oliver's Battery PC  
Otterbourne PC  
Owslebury PC donation  
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Southwick & Ridley PC  
Soberton PC  
South Wonston PC  
Sparsholt PC  
Swanmore PC  
Titchborne PC  
Twyford Parish Council  
Upham Parish Council  
West Meon PC donation  
Whiteley PC  
Wickham PC  
Wonston PC

Plus our generous individual donors

*Thank you*

**For every £1 invested in us, we deliver an estimated £23 in public value.**

When people have fewer problems they have higher levels of wellbeing,  
participation in society and productivity.

## Citizens Advice Winchester District

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With thanks to @aldousy\_photography

