

*“Knowing that
I’ve made a
difference
makes me feel
good about
myself”*

- Volunteer Jacki 2022

**citizens
advice**

Rushmoor

Annual Review 2021-22



Volunteer Maragaret manning the stall at
Princes Gardens with Aldershot PCN



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For the last two years I've started my foreword by referring to what extraordinary years they have been. There will be no change in my opening remarks this year – for different reasons it has been 'yet another extraordinary year'.

While, arguably, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have not created the headlines of the previous two years, the impact on our operation continues to be felt. It's great news that many staff and volunteers have now returned to office-based working but we are still working in Covid-safe environments, meaning that the number of people able to be in our offices at any one time continues to be restricted. It's also, sadly, true to say that for varying reasons we have lost a number of our previous volunteers, some of whom are not willing to continue to support people remotely via telephone or digital platforms, or are not comfortable with returning to the office.

This reduction in the number of volunteers is an increasingly serious issue, affecting not only Citizens Advice Rushmoor, but all Citizens Advice teams across the country. It has been brought into even sharper focus by the other significant challenge this year – the cost-of-living crisis. It's no exaggeration to say that we are facing one of the most difficult periods in our history – with spiraling demand at a time when our resources – people and financial - are becoming ever more stretched.

Against this backdrop I am, as always, able to say that the dedication and commitment of our staff and volunteers is truly humbling – they do a fantastic job and I cannot speak highly enough of the way they pull out all the stops to help many thousands of people across Rushmoor. In the following pages you'll read more about the great things they do and, at the risk of repeating myself, I'm really proud to be part of the team.

The Trustee Board have also continued to work very effectively during the year – ensuring that the charity is properly governed, overseeing its financial resources, supporting the operations team and planning for the future. This last aspect – planning for the future – is currently, and I think will continue to be, quite a challenge. The Board will work hard to maintain and improve the sustainability of our service so that we can continue to support people needing our help. This will require us to diversify and increase our income (as mentioned above, we are a charity and reliant on grant funding and donations), recruit more volunteers and focus strongly on the efficiency and effectiveness of our service.

We have recently recruited three new trustees, to increase the experience around the Board table, and I am confident that the expanded Board will rise to the challenges it faces.

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Trustees

Andrew Levey

Andrew Levey, Chair
Jason Halliday, Vice Chair
Kay Goodchild, Treasurer
Annette Althen
(from October 2022)
Gaynor Austin
Gerald Baker
Joseph Bennett
Gary Ghale
Chelsea Knight
Samantha Levey
(from October 2022)
Tricia Phillips
(from October 2022)
Calum Stewart

Rev Malcolm Cummins
(to June 2022)

Unprecedented may be an overused word; but there are few other ways to describe the last couple of years. Thanks to the resilience, innovation and adaptability of our team, we have continued to offer vital services to the local community, firstly transforming our service model during the pandemic, so that we could continue to help our clients; and now directly responding to the cost-of-living crisis.

Looking back to 2019, we would have found it difficult to imagine our service as it operates today; but the principles remain the same. As we recognised in our (delayed) 80th birthday celebration, Citizens Advice emerged directly as a result of the crises caused by WWII. We are continuing a proud history of responding to the needs of local people struggling in the face of challenges outside of our control.

Whether it is help with energy bills; claiming benefits for the first time; preventing threatened eviction; or simply needing food for their family – we have been here throughout.

That is not to say it has been easy – we have all had to draw upon qualities we didn't know we had; as well as support our own and each other's wellbeing to keep delivering. But the motivation and drive which underpins our team, both paid and voluntary, has shone as never before.

A rapidly reducing volunteer base is compelling us to review our volunteer led operating model: this is a national challenge as well as a local one. At the same time, we need to be innovative to meet levels of demand for our help that we have never seen before and find ways of reaching those in most need. Working with partners and community organisations has never been more important; as well as continuing to innovate with technology to make services more accessible.

We know the coming year will be full of new challenges; the strengths and skills we continue to develop will be used to the full.



Alex Hughes

Chief Officer

Our 80th birthday was on 1st September 2020, marking the continuing presence of Citizens Advice in Aldershot since 1940. Our delayed celebration in September 2022 really strengthened awareness of the role of our service in responding to crisis throughout those years.

It was a great opportunity to celebrate the exceptional contribution of our volunteers, one of whom has been with us for over 37 years – an outstanding contribution by any standards. Volunteering has gone through many changes and has never been more tested than in the last two years. We were especially glad of the opportunity to mark and thank both those who have recently left us, and those who continue to deliver through these extraordinary times.

The many younger people now coming forward to gain experience as volunteers bring some excellent new skills. This trend to shorter term volunteering reflects national demographic change, driving a new approach to how we recruit, value and retain our volunteer workforce; whilst maintaining the best of our existing successes.

We continue to celebrate the skills, motivation and commitment of our volunteers, who bring a truly unique culture and value to our service.

**For
everyone,
for 80
years**



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Case Study

Our focus on clients with significant mental health issues continues to allow us to achieve great outcomes.

This case study not only demonstrates the real difference we make, but also the importance of working in partnership to reach those who are most in need of our help.



Jan was referred from the Community Grub Hub following a period of sustained physical, emotional, and mental abuse. She was 13 weeks pregnant when referred, and working; but was also homeless, and with a diagnosis of severe anxiety, depression, and PTSD. We worked collaboratively with her Mental Health Team, GP, Local Authority housing department and domestic abuse services, as well as escalating her issues to her MP, to resolve Jan's issues and enable her to move forward.

Jan was helped to claim the additional benefits she was entitled to; as well as meet legal aid eligibility rules to pursue her domestic abuse case. We assisted Jan to make a homeless application, highlighting her specific needs and vulnerabilities, and challenging the decision to offer her a short-term tenancy. Following a formal appeal process, Jan and her new baby were finally offered a secure tenancy. They are now feeling safe and secure in their new home, and able to focus on a positive future.

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*"Everyone is very kind, positive and helpful
my ideas and thoughts are valued..."*

- Team member

Value of Volunteering

Volunteers remain at the core of our service delivery model and the support we provide enables many to return to paid employment.

Volunteering improves mental health & well-being, and decreases the need for other supporting services.

What this means to the community as a whole is valued at:

£727,922

Volunteer Contribution

We rely on volunteers at every level of our organisation and to every role, from receptionist, to assessor and adviser. Our entire trustee board is made up of volunteers and all this combined equals **377** voluntary hours per week, every week of the year, worth an annual figure of:

£339,063

Reaching People Together

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As one of 3 partners in this important Hampshire wide project, we used the innovative “Advice First Aid” training to extend our reach to more vulnerable communities.

The Rushmoor element of the project specifically targeted marginalised and excluded groups, shaping materials and methods to maximise relevance and accessibility. Initially focusing on the Nepali community, we later extended the work across Hampshire, to include other excluded groups such as the deaf community. The 45 “Advice First Aiders” trained through the project can now use the skills gained to:

- Help find accredited information from the Citizens Advice website
- Share that information with their service users
- Identify and make referrals to their local Citizens Advice

The case study on page 5 really demonstrates the benefits of AFA, as the Community Grub Hub team used the model make the referral, which in turn achieved a brilliant outcome for the client.

We were delighted to be the recipients of the national Citizens Advice Partnership Award this year, together with Citizens Advice Winchester and Citizens Advice Hampshire the other project partners. We are continuing to use the AFA model to support our work in the community.

Many thanks to the Citizens Advice conference team for their recognition of this important project and their kind words: *“Your award win is a testament to the great work you’ve done ... our organisation is lucky to have you.”*



Alex

Tina

Matt

Maximiliano

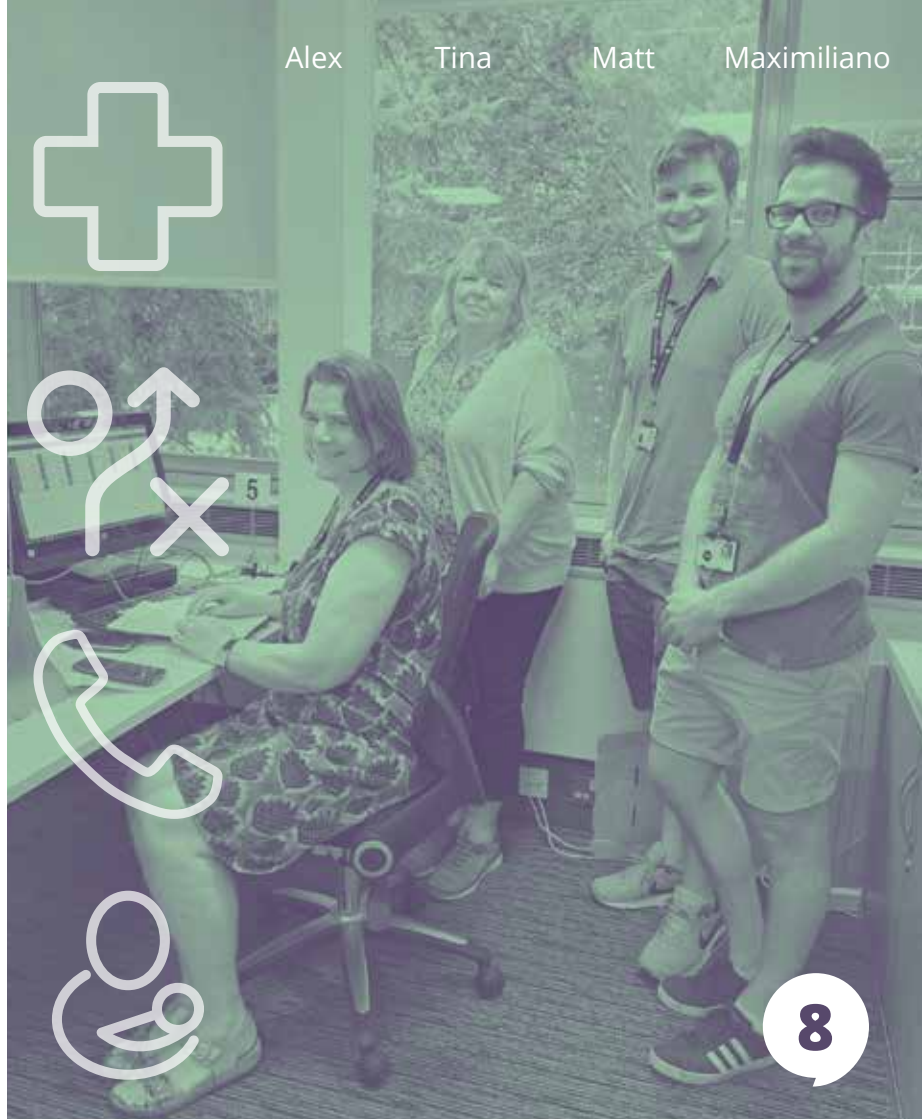
In 2021-22 our special referral service for the **Mental Health Integrated Community Service** - assisted 77 clients with complex cases and needs with 541 issues and resulting in £106,038 of financial gains

Similarly the Broadhurst Trust funded **Community & Partnerships** project helped 71 clients with 311 issues, and received £80,949 income increase

Our telephone advice service for **The Brain Tumour Charity** helped with 1917 issues and achieved **£936,826** in annual income increase for 297 clients

We answered 1942 calls through our national **Adviceline** service and 602 calls to our local **Nepali Language Help Line**

In addition there were 30 highly complex and critical cases of domestic abuse helped by our **Nepali Language IDVA** funded by the Armed Services Covenant Fund



Throughout 2021-22 our development was fuelled by participation in the national **Innovation Project** which enabled us to focus very carefully, and in a forensic way, on the needs of our most vulnerable communities, through research undertaken, engagement with partners, and most importantly listening to our clients and how they want us to help them, and where.

A notable example of this can be seen with our work with the **Community Grub Hub** and Household Support Fund. Linking up the resources of the HSF, delivering **Energy Hardship Grants** through social media but also highly targeted marketing to groups such as the Grub Hub; which has so far in 2022 awarded 40 thousand pounds to Rushmoor residents

To continue and expand this work Citizens Advice Rushmoor took part in the **Aviva Community Fund** crowd funding project and raised over 7 thousand pounds to help fund an outreach role to further assist vulnerable groups in our society.

As a result of our **Heating AND Eating** campaign we were delighted to welcome Tina, pictured overleaf, to this vital job during the cost of crisis living.



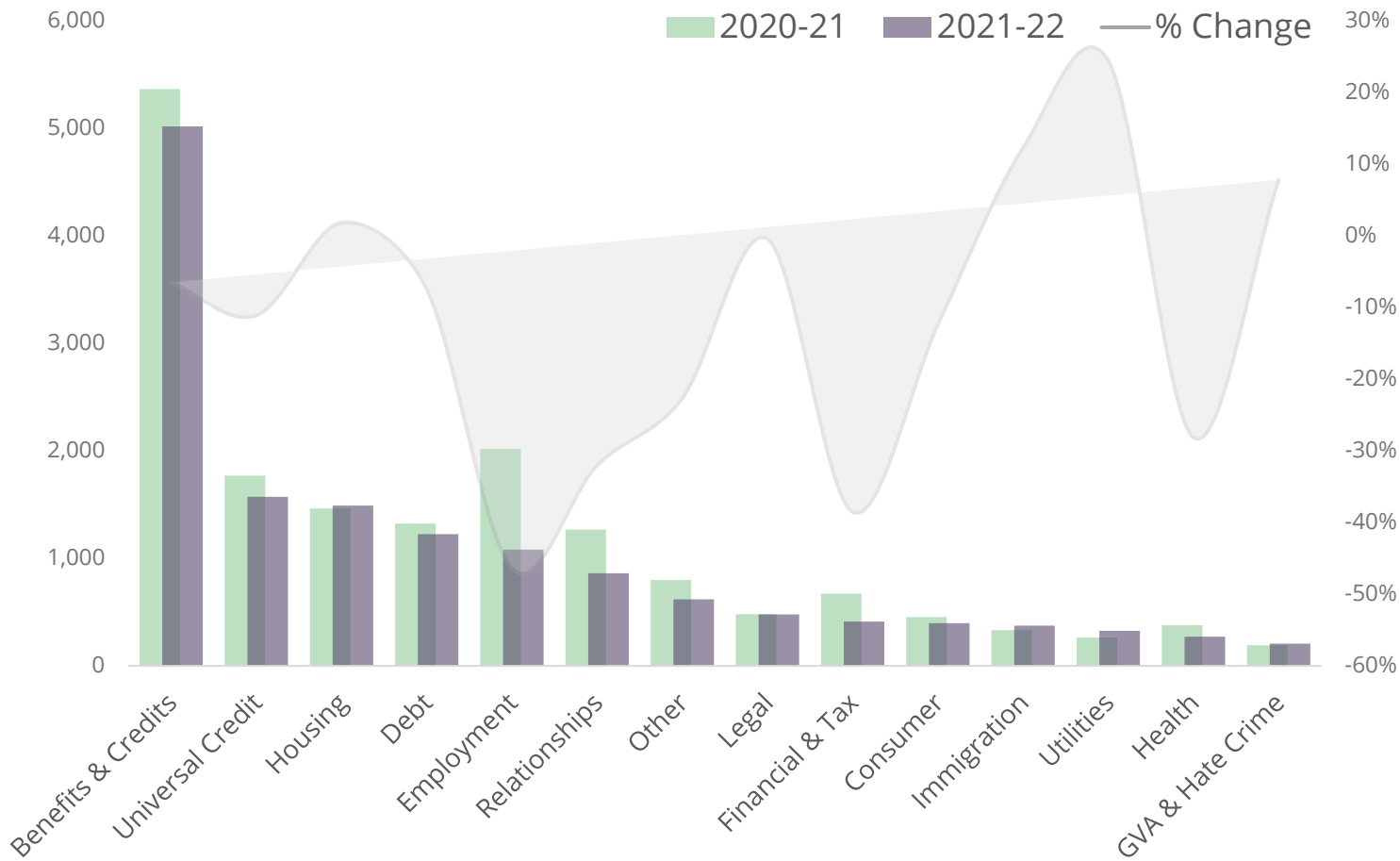
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Advice trends

Last year, Citizens Advice Rushmoor helped 11,236 people with 32,100 issues, through 27,820 activities in 10,826 cases across all our services.

From money and pension savings guidance to scams and domestic abuse, we continued through the pandemic and recovery period to deliver essential services.

This chart shows the distribution of advice issues across the different categories of the work we do, excluding the 17,777 financial issue codes recorded by the Pension Wise service.



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Our value to society in 2021/22

In 2021/22 for every £1 invested in Citizens Advice Rushmoor by our local authority we generated at least:



£

£2.26

in fiscal benefits
Savings to government
Reduction in health service demand, local authority homeless services, and out of work benefits for our clients and volunteers.

£24.67

in public value
Wider economic and social benefits
Improvements in participation and productivity for clients and volunteers.

£6.20

in benefits to individuals
Value to our clients
Income gained through benefits gained, debts written off and consumer problems resolved.

To find out more about how we've modelled our financial value, see our full technical annex: [Modelling our value to society in 2021/22](#).

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The impact of our work



732 clients gain a new award or an increase to their benefit worth a total of **£5,008,927** an average of **£6,642** per client



450 clients with debt issues 76% of which were resolved including **£984,377** written off, an average of **£13,045** per client



189 clients successfully claim one-off awards, or other outcomes, worth **£404,211**, an average of **£2,137** per client



£649,544 reduction in health service demand, by increasing well-being and people in-work saved the DWP **£1,418,791** in benefits



454 clients with **948** housing issues Including **56** possession orders, **18** actually homeless & **26** threatened by it



A combined value of **£27,898,228** in health, gains, well-being, participation and productivity for the 11,236 clients we helped in 2021-22

Our supporters:

Rushmoor Borough Council

Pension Wise

Frimley CCG

Broadhurst Trust

The Brain Tumour Charity

Reaching People Together

Citizens Advice Hampshire

Armed Forces Covenant Fund & Police and Crime Commissioner

Who enabled us to deliver:

Our core, volunteer led service available to all Rushmoor residents – telephone, face to face, chat and email

Pension guidance sessions across Hampshire, Surrey, Berkshire and West Sussex

Specialist casework services for clients with severe and enduring mental health conditions, in-patient & CMHRS

Outreach services and support for clients with mild to moderate mental health conditions

Benefits surgery delivered by telephone to beneficiaries of the charity

Support for the most vulnerable in our community, in partnership - delivering Advice First Aid

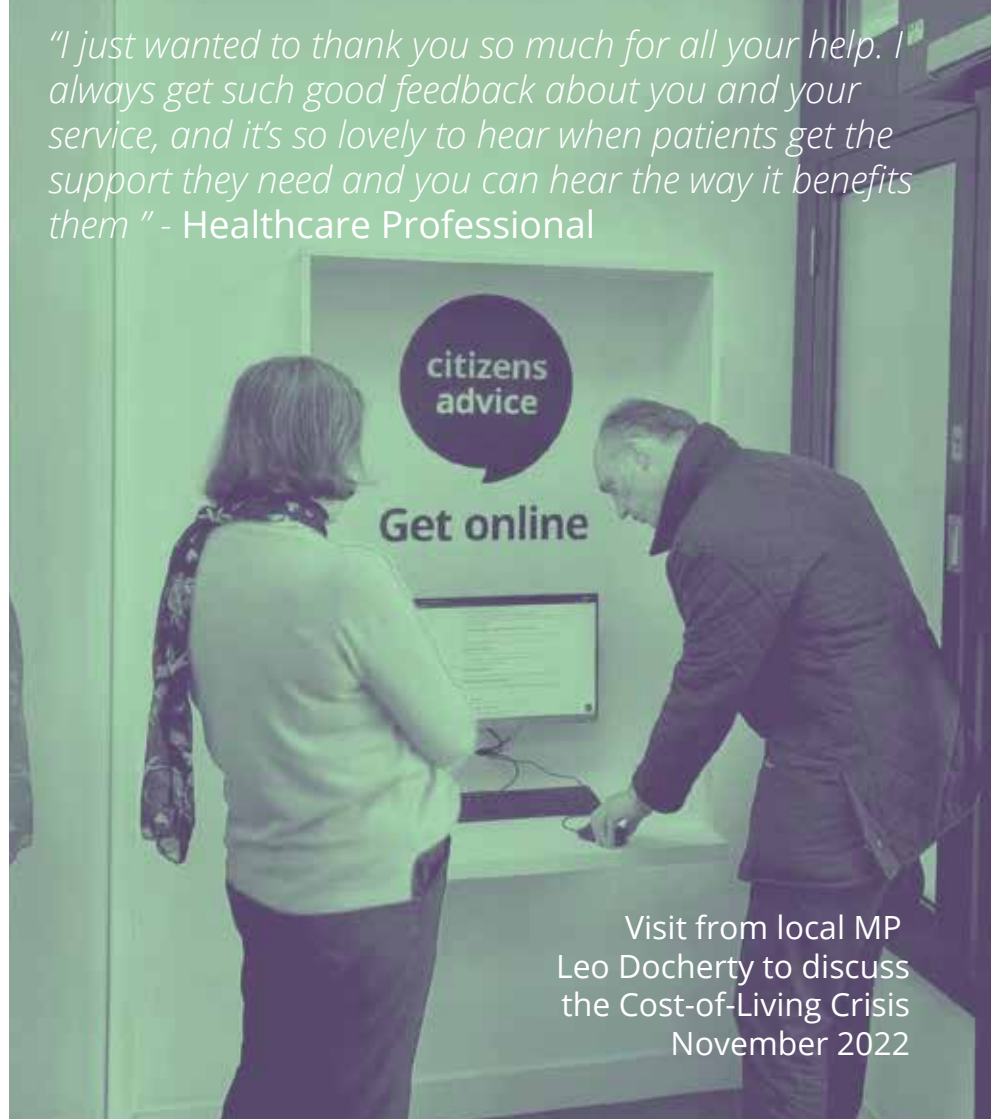
Face to face advice and information as part of wider “health watchdog” service

Own language Domestic abuse service for Nepali residents

RUSHMOOR
BOROUGH COUNCIL



"I just wanted to thank you so much for all your help. I always get such good feedback about you and your service, and it's so lovely to hear when patients get the support they need and you can hear the way it benefits them " - Healthcare Professional



Visit from local MP
Leo Docherty to discuss
the Cost-of-Living Crisis
November 2022

Free, confidential advice. Whoever you are.

We help people find a way forward with their problems and campaign on big issues when their voices need to be heard.

We value diversity, champion equality and challenge discrimination and harassment. We're here for everyone.



citizensadvicerrushmoor.org.uk

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