

Arati, Madhu & Saini, International Women's Day event
March, 2024

Annual Review 2023-24



Rushmoor

**Turning the corner.
Together.**



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Citizens Advice Rushmoor has had a simple but compelling mission over the last 84 years – to use the power of good advice to help people solve their problems, and drive the change needed to tackle the underlying causes. Last year was, however, one of the more challenging we've faced as a charity.

Not ourselves immune from the cost-of-living crisis, already so acutely impacting our clients, we faced a significant financial shortfall that led to the painful decision to restructure the service. Despite the loss of valued people and experience through redundancy, and an increasingly difficult operating environment, we have continued to deliver for those who need us most. This is a testament to the dedication and commitment of our team of staff and volunteers.

Identifying further opportunities to work more closely with partners, and with colleagues across the Citizens Advice network, we are continually improving our services to clients. These efforts, coupled with our work to increase and diversify our income and enhance our sustainability, mean we are emerging stronger.

This report illustrates the staggering impact and value of the services our team deliver, with over 10,000 clients supported during 2023-24 – changing, and saving, lives.

Together, we are turning the corner.

Andrew Levey
Chair of Trustee Board

Calum Stewart
Chief Officer

Celebrating the outstanding contribution of Alex Hughes

After almost 40 years working within the Citizens Advice network – and over 34 years at the helm of Citizens Advice Rushmoor – this year we marked the outstanding contribution of former Chief Officer, Alex Hughes, who retired at the end of January 2024. Her leadership, direction, and approachability have been welcomed by all those staff and volunteers she has worked with over the years, and her contribution to our community has been appreciated by the charity's many stakeholders.

I have always felt immensely privileged to have had such a truly satisfying and enjoyable job for so long. I have never ceased to be motivated by the huge difference we can make as a charity; and the joy of working with such a brilliant team means that I've always looked forward to coming to work. And I do appreciate how unusual that is! I cannot thank staff, volunteers, and trustees all enough for their support, encouragement, ideas, innovation, teamwork, sheer hard work and kindness - Alex

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Value

For every £1 invested in Citizens Advice Rushmoor we generated at least:



£

£1.67

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; £1,835,029 in total.

£24.22

in public value
Wider economic and social benefits
Improvements in participation and productivity for clients and volunteers; equalling £26,583,170.

£7.10

in benefits to individuals
Value to our clients
Income gained through benefits gained, debts written off and consumer problems resolved; amounting to £7,791,672.

To find out more about how we've modelled our financial value, see our full technical annex: [Modelling our value to society in 2023/24](#)

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Impact



756 clients gain a new award or an increase to their benefit worth a total of **£5,187,645** an average of **£6,865** per client



535 clients with debt issues 73% of which were resolved including **£1,089,718** written off, an average of **£13,217** per client



303 clients successfully claim one-off awards, or other outcomes, worth **£459,293**, an average of **£1,516** per client



£572,519 reduction in health service demand, by increasing well-being and people in-work saved the DWP **£648,006** in benefits



706 clients with **1722** housing issues Including **127** relating to possession, **83** clients actually homeless (up 124%) & **128** threatened by it



£388,196 was saved by housing providers by preventing homelessness and **93** people helped solve Council Tax arrears

Case Study - Mental Health Project

Molly was referred to us by the Community Mental Health Recovery Service (CMHRS). Her severe mental ill-health meant she was unable to work. She required a huge amount of help over the 4 years that we have supported her, including over 100 contacts.

Having previously been turned down, we initially helped Molly to make a successful claim for Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Her award was increased when she was diagnosed with breast cancer and we supported her with a review. Molly had also been a victim of domestic violence for many years at the hands of her husband, being left with sizeable debts when with our support she felt strong enough to end the marriage. Having secured a Debt Relief Order for debts across 14 different creditors, we've helped to significantly reduce her financial worries.

Molly has been given a fresh start. She is now safe, happier, and financially independent for the first time in decades. She's looking forward to begin planning for her future.

500 *clients with significant mental health issues were supported by the Mental Health Project last year, with over*
£1,100,000 *in financial outcomes.*



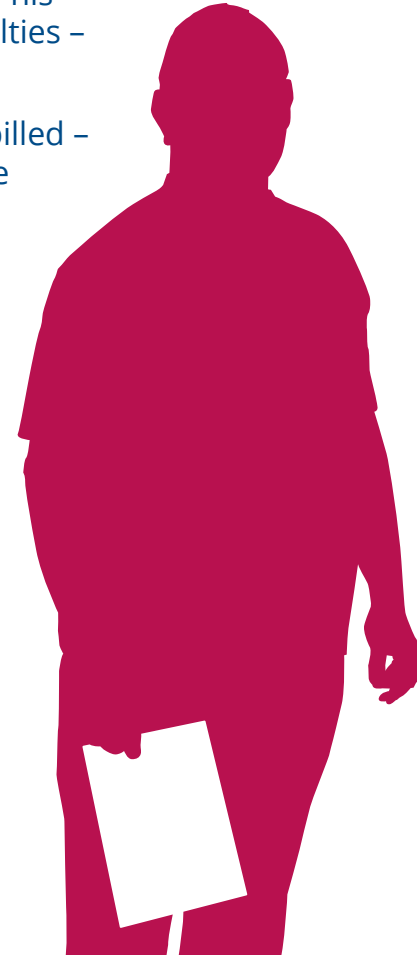
Case Study - Energy Advice Project

John contacted us after receiving a threatening debt collection letter from his energy company. He lives alone and – as a pensioner with learning difficulties – struggles dealing with letters or making calls by himself.

Having reviewed John's letters, it was clear that he was being incorrectly billed – charged for the energy debts of the previous tenant. Our adviser was able to speak to the energy company directly and put a hold on any further action. John was also signed up to the Priority Services Register, owing to his vulnerabilities, helping ensure all utility companies provide extra support to him in future. After negotiating with the supplier, we were able to secure a write-off of the debt, and successfully applied for an energy voucher of £147 to cover his outstanding balance.

He was also unaware of his entitlement to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support, so we helped John make claims for both. Although previously struggling with the cost of living and using the Community Grub Hub every week for food essentials, our support helped increase John's monthly income by almost £1,000.

*Never have so many of our clients had to choose between heating and eating. Last year, we supported clients to access over **£34,000** in financial help from the Government's Household Support Fund.*



1490 calls were answered through our **Adviceline** service.

In addition to 369 calls to our local **Nepali Language Helpline**, we also supported hundreds of Nepalese clients through our weekly face-to-face drop-in service.

Our Money and Benefits Clinic for **The Brain Tumour Charity** helped with 2540 issues and achieved **£1,243,735** in annual income increase for 391 clients.

Through our specialist **Nepali Domestic and Sexual Abuse Service**, 28 highly complex and critical cases were supported in addition to extensive programme of outreach work – funded jointly by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and the OPCC for Hampshire & the IOW.

Partnerships with the **Community Grub Hub** and **Farnborough Foodbank** were established, with hundreds of people experiencing food poverty being supported into our services over the last year.



Advice trends

Last year, Citizens Advice Rushmoor helped 10,706 different people with 43,046 unique issues, through 30,820 activities in 10,397 cases, plus 2,431 signposting or simple queries across all our services in 2023-24.

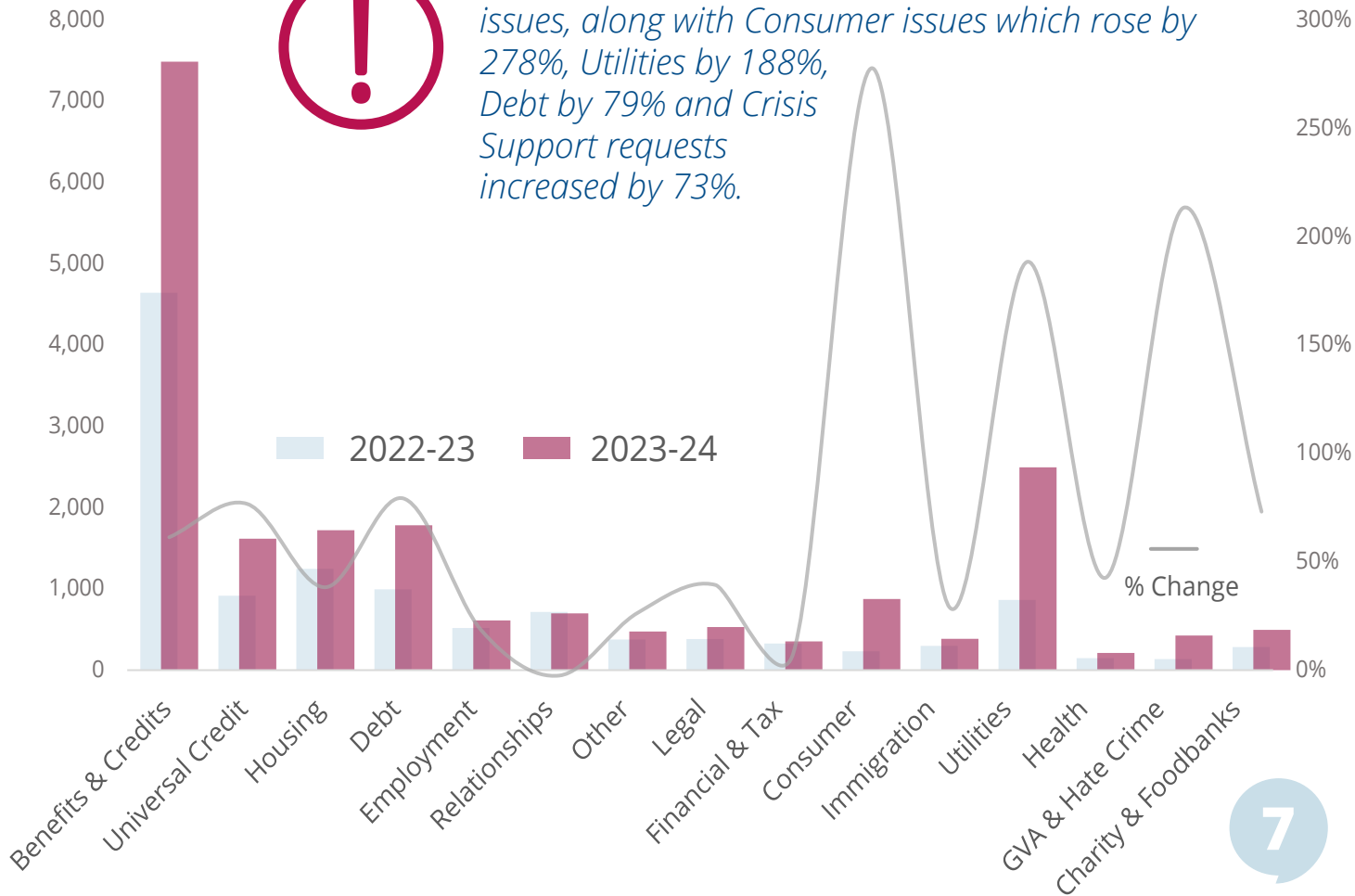
This chart shows the distribution of advice issues across the different categories of the work we do, excluding Pension Wise Financial Capability issue codes.



Our Pension Wise service helped 6,992 clients with 22,881 issues.



Last year saw a 213% increase in Hate Crime related issues, along with Consumer issues which rose by 278%, Utilities by 188%, Debt by 79% and Crisis Support requests increased by 73%.



Sharing our unique insight

As part of our Research & Campaigns work, we have regularly contributed to Rushmoor Borough Council's Council Tax Support (CTS) Working Group, and long supported the scheme's extension - using our insight to illustrate just how difficult it is for those struggling to make ends meet and afford their daily essentials.

In response to the rising cost of living, last year the Group once again reviewed how they fund the CTS scheme and respond to the severe challenges faced by local people. Taking into account our evidence, the Council proposed and later approved a change to the scheme from 2024/25 so that the amount of support for those on the lowest incomes will increase from 88% to 100%. The Council assessed the move as being "cost neutral", after considering the time and costs of collecting relatively small amounts of council tax from some of the most vulnerable people.

*Therefore, it's estimated that almost **4,800** households in receipt of Council Tax Support will be over **£760,000** better off this coming year because of improvements to the scheme.*



“Without Citizen Advice Rushmoor, I would have had no help. This service is so important to have at these difficult times.”

“I often find that our patients are overwhelmed, so being able to make a referral and take one thing off their shoulders is great.”

TalkPlus

“I am extremely thankful for the help I received from Citizens Advice Rushmoor. You are all wonderful, caring people.”

“The support from the Caseworker helping me has really helped to save my life. Thank you so much.”

“I just wanted to reach out and say a massive thank you from the refuge team in Portsmouth!

You really have made a difference to women and children fleeing violence and abuse.”

Stop Domestic Abuse

“Amazing advice – thank you!”

“Now I feel more confident to get on with my life.”

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Feedback 2023-24

“I can’t thank the adviser enough. He explained things to me in a better way when I didn’t understand the complex information. He gave me hope so I didn’t give up.”

50 Volunteers support all aspects of our work, from advisers and caseworkers to receptionists and administrators, providing over **270 hours per week**; a combined value of:

£363,887

Per Annum

citizensadvice.rushmoor.org.uk/volunteering

90%
of our team would recommend working with us

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1) Respond:

Respond to people's needs with information and advice fit for purpose.

Improve our clients' experience by making our advice as accessible, relevant and effective as it can be, so that they have positive outcomes.



2) Reach:

Increase our reach to people experiencing inequality or disadvantage.

Focus our support on the most marginalised members of our community, ensuring they can access our services in ways that suit them.



3) Advocate:

Become an even stronger voice on issues that matter most.

Prevent more people needing support or reaching crisis point by advocating for policy change, increasing our research and campaigns focus and engaging with our community.



Enablers:

People management and development

Be a great, safe and inclusive place to work and volunteer



Financial governance and sustainability

Drive forward income generation and collaboration with others



Digital optimisation

Embrace advances in technology to meet ours and clients' needs



Strategic Priorities 2024 - 25

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Supporters

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As a local charity, we rely on donations, volunteers, fundraising, and corporate sponsorship to continue delivering our essential advice services – helping thousands of people from across Farnborough and Aldershot to find a way forward every year. Perhaps you, a friend, a colleague, or a member of your family has used our services, or visited for help with sorting out a problem? Our staff and volunteers work tirelessly, but there's only so much we can do.

Your support is vital if we are to have the resources do more to support struggling households now and during these unprecedented times. You can help by donating, helping fundraise, becoming a 'Friend', or volunteering.



RUSHMOOR
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Hampshire
County Council



Frimley Health
NHS Foundation Trust



*Thank you to
all our volunteers
who continue to
be the bedrock of
this service*



Citizens Advice helps people find a way forward.

We provide free, confidential and independent advice to help people overcome their problems. We are a voice for our clients and consumers on the issues that matter to them.

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



carushmoor.org.uk



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