

2020/2021

Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire Annual Review

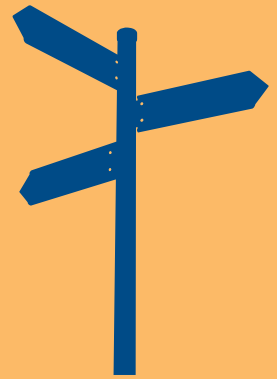


"Citizens Advice is an absolute lifesaver, literally, for so many people."

**citizens
advice**

**South
Lincolnshire**

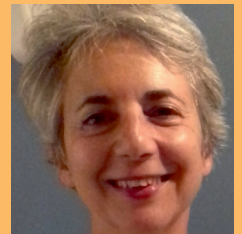
Looking Back & Looking Forward



The Board and I wish to express our sincere gratitude to Simon, the staff team and volunteers for all that they managed to achieve during this challenging time. 2020 was an unprecedented year in terms of the demands placed upon our staff and volunteers by the Covid pandemic. Sadly, the problems that our communities face will continue this year, with unemployment set to rise further when people come out of furlough. We know that we will be needed more than ever before and have a vision for the future:

- We have been able to increase the number of clients reached through the use of telephones and aim to make this our preferred means of access. However, face-to-face support will remain crucial, as this is the core way that many vulnerable people in our communities access our service.
- New projects are being developed such as our GP pilot programme, where we hope to be able to demonstrate the link between receiving advice and improvements in health.
- We aim to develop sustainable funding models going forward.

Monica Stark, Chair, Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire



I joined the organisation in May and was immensely impressed by the way that people had coped with the stress placed upon them, whilst maintaining a much-needed service. Our achievements over the last year have been phenomenal, in the light of these challenges. We have extended our reach and services, with some really innovative projects:

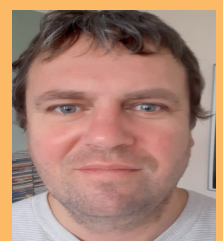
- Delivering the Help Through Hardship Trussell Trust national helpline service in partnership with Citizens Advice, helping people access foodbank vouchers
- Distributing £20k of fuel vouchers to people in need across Lincolnshire
- Extending the Migrant Worker Helpline with the support of lottery funding
- Setting up and delivering the EU Settled Status Support Scheme, helping the most vulnerable people across the county to secure their status
- Recruiting in a number of areas to increase overall capacity across the organisation

We did all this, whilst moving to remote working, maintaining quality and helping as many people as we would in a normal year. We have continued to recruit and train new volunteers and our Research and Campaigns team have been as busy as ever.

Most importantly, we have helped our clients deal with issues nobody could have predicted. We will be there for the coming months as lockdown comes to an end. As a local charity, we continue to work with local authorities and other organisations to meet the needs of our communities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers and staff who contribute so much to the ability of Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire to support people in difficult times.

Simon Richards, Chief Officer, Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire



Local Difference and Society Value

13,147

The number of clients we helped with issues such as debt, benefits and employment



31%

of our clients were disabled or had a long-term health condition

£2 Million

The amount of debt we helped clients deal with



8%

of our clients were aged over-65

£8.38

is saved in public costs for every £1 we receive



16%

of our clients were from ethnic minority backgrounds



97% of clients would recommend our service.

Projects



Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire

operates a number of projects and services that benefit our clients:

European Union Settlement Scheme Support (EUSS): Our EUSS advisers help clients apply for settled or pre-settled status before the 30th June deadline. The team run dedicated social media channels and have helped 220 individuals so far.



Specialist Advice: We offer advice relating to debt and budgeting. We help with things such as negotiating with creditors, setting up repayment plans and overall budgeting. We also offer in-depth and dedicated benefits advice. We received funding from the Multiple Sclerosis Society to extend our help to people with this long-term condition.



Migrant Workers' Helpline: We offer advice in Polish across Lincolnshire to clients who need it. The service has been running since 2015 and has helped 2582 people.



Fuel Vouchers: We worked together with the Energy Savings Trust to provide fuel vouchers for clients in fuel poverty because of Covid-19.



Help Through Hardship: The Trussel Trust and Citizens Advice work together in partnership to deliver this helpline. We can offer clients advice and a food voucher so they can collect a parcel directly from the food bank.



Help to Claim: Helps clients in the initial stages of claiming Universal Credit (UC). We help set up UC claim accounts, verify identities and ensure clients are sending the right evidence to Job Centre Plus.



Client Feedback and Stories



"I am extremely grateful for your help and I will continue to recommend this service to anybody who requires assistance."

A client came to us needing identification.

We helped the client apply for a new passport. They have since entered part-time employment and applied for support.



"Excellent. Gave me confidence. What I saw as a big problem, made me feel she understood and knew exactly what actions to take. Felt as though it's something dealt with a lot and not just me."

A client came to us with fuel debt arrears and was in need of key household appliances.

We helped the client apply for the Warm Home Discount scheme and to their company's energy scheme to write the debt off and get new appliances.



"I contacted the service as I was suffering from hardship issues, a voucher was issued immediately for the food bank. I was very impressed to receive a call back to offer further assistance, great service, very helpful, empathetic and prompt."

A client had no accommodation due to a difficult personal situation. They also faced additional barriers because they spoke limited English.

We helped the client apply to the council for emergency housing. They have since been housed in a bungalow.



Volunteer Recruitment and Training



64 volunteers give their time across our advice and administrative services and our Research and Campaigns operations across Spalding, Stamford and Grantham.

The value of our volunteers is £487,412.

1

We knew we didn't want to stop recruitment and training during the pandemic. In fact, it was more important than ever to provide training for our team as advice and guidance was changing daily.



2

We have developed a new training programme enabling volunteers to complete their adviser training much more quickly whilst still allowing for training and shadowing.

New ways of working has also meant top-up training for all volunteers.

3

By the middle of April we had transformed our classroom-based training programme to a remote learning training plan, delivered via Zoom.

We continue to recruit volunteers. 21 new volunteers were recruited and trained between May 2020 and March 2021.



"The lady who helped me was very knowledgeable, very helpful and friendly and put my mind at rest."

Research and Campaigns



The Research and Campaigns team has been keen to highlight areas which have been particularly affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. This year has seen us develop a fast-growing online presence to reach our communities.



Locally, we have researched where there might be a suppressed demand for certain areas of enquiry in light of the pandemic. We have also examined housing, energy and consumer issues. Spotlight (our Research and Campaigns magazine) has gone from strength to strength, providing even more regular snapshots of our work.

We have also worked to encourage eligible people of pension age to claim Pension Credit. Additionally, we have linked with our local district and parish councillors and released updates in the press and online concerning scams and fuel poverty.

Our newest campaign project, Access to Legal Help, is focused on establishing where free legal services are available in the area, making links with those services and providing the information that will help both our advisers and our clients be aware of how they can access that help.

Nationally Research and Campaigns have contributed to research about debt collection practices, to the House of Lords Covid-19 Committee and to work focused on keeping the Universal Credit £20 uplift.

Links with other organisations

We have also linked with the Money Advice and Pension Service to champion their Talk Money campaign; and in our extended work, with funding from Utilita Energy and National Energy Action, helped those in fuel poverty at a local level.



Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire helps people find a way forward...

We are a local charity that provides 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 have locations at Grantham, Stamford and Spalding, where we will be able to give face-to-face advice when it is safe to do so. We have six outreach locations including Holbeach, Bourne and Market Deeping.

People can get advice via telephone (0808 278 7996) or email and webchat at www.citizensadvicesouthlincs.org.uk

We would like to thank our funders...

Lincolnshire County Council
South Holland District Council
South Kesteven District Council
The National Lottery Community Foundation
The Rank Foundation
Deeping St James United Charities
Holbeach United Charities
The Home Office
The Henry Smith Charity
The Energy Redress Trust

citizensadvicesouthlincs.org.uk



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