

2021/2022

Annual Review

**citizens
advice**

**South
Lincolnshire**

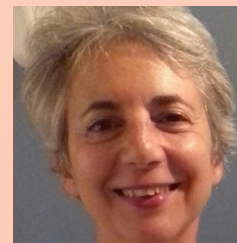


"I'm really grateful for the help I received."

21/22 Reflections



2021 was another very challenging year following the after effects of the pandemic and the impact of the cut to the Universal Credit uplift. The biggest rise in the cost of living since records began, with “eat or heat” the daily reality for so many people, has seen unprecedented demand for our services. This is a national crisis with Citizens Advice experiencing the highest volumes of calls and visits to their website in memory.



We have lost many volunteers locally and nationally. Charities generally are finding it very hard to recruit and retain new volunteers, so we are developing new roles that will, hopefully, appeal to those who have not considered volunteering before. Despite these challenges, Simon and the CASL staff have achieved incredible results due to their hard work, commitment, dedication and flexibility.

We made time this year to consult widely with all stakeholders in order to shape our services going forward and have produced a three-year business plan that will enable us to provide our services in new and creative ways, trying to ensuring that the most vulnerable in society can access our services in the way that suits them best.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, a huge thank you to all staff, volunteers and funders.

Monica Stark, Chair, Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire

The year has been challenging for CASL. People have sought our help for increasingly complex issues and we have had to help them with a limited and reduced capacity of staff and volunteers. Our Adviceline service saw tripling levels of demand between January and March, 2022 where over 1,500 people a month needed our help. We now face another unprecedented crisis in rising living costs, particularly with energy and food, that will push the most vulnerable into increasing hardship.

Our volunteers and staff continue to do amazingly well to help our clients. They always go above and beyond to help their local communities and make a difference to people’s lives. The coming year will have its difficulties, but as an organisation, we are prepared to meet them head on.

We’ve been focusing on volunteer recruitment in order to increase our capacity and have recruited new staff for a number of roles and projects. At the beginning of 2022, we moved into our new premises in Grantham and have been able to resume offering services at our Holbeach and Bourne outreaches. We will evolve to meet the challenges that we will undoubtedly face and continue to be there for our clients.

Simon Richards, Chief Officer, Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire



The Difference We Make...

11,951

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



44%

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

£3.8 Million

The amount of debt we helped clients deal with



9%

of our clients were aged over-65

£4 Million

The amount of additional income that we have helped our clients gain



17%

of our clients were from ethnic minority backgrounds

£8.09

is saved in public costs for every £1 we receive



Our Volunteers...

Volunteer Recruitment

During the year we have recruited 30 new volunteers. Our training programme runs frequently and offers bespoke training for individuals.

We offer volunteering opportunities all year round and inductions and training are given both via Zoom and in person. This process allows our volunteers to be supported as they develop and take an active part within their roles.



Welcoming Back

We are involving volunteers who had been unable to offer their time due to lockdown and the Covid-19 pandemic. We have welcomed back eight people so far and look forward to working with them again.

What's Next?

Looking ahead, we are developing new volunteer roles in order to grow our service and meet its evolving needs.

We are excited to continue our involvement at community events such as college job fairs and giving talks in schools.

A key aim is to continue to expand the number of people we recruit and train to give advice.

Our volunteering has saved public agencies £487,412 during the year.

Our Future Planning

During the year we involved a number of our external stakeholders to help us develop our business plan for the coming years.

We sent out a survey in the summer to understand what our stakeholders wanted from their relationship with us, what was going well and what could be improved. The results fed into the stakeholder event which we held in October 2021, with a guest appearance by Dame Claire Moriarty, CEO of Citizens Advice.

This stakeholder event enabled us to further work in tandem with our partners, giving them information about our services and the opportunity to network and to tell us how they would like us to work together in the future.

The results of these discussions informed our new strategic plan. Taking into account feedback received, a number of objectives have been put in place relating to our:

- Services
- Volunteers
- Partnerships
- Funding
- Technology
- Communications



Premises

Our new Grantham office opened this year, moving to Finkin Street after almost a decade in the Guildhall Arts Centre. This enables us to have a dedicated space to support clients, in the heart of the town.

We welcomed the Mayor of Grantham, and other guests, to officially open the new premises in April. The event was a resounding success.

We also moved premises in Stamford to Ryhall Road, which will act as a base and be complemented by our other Stamford outreach services.

Client Feedback and Stories



"As always, a great help in the face of adversity."

Erik* came to CASL needing help with his settled status in order to apply for temporary accommodation. We found that Erik had not actually yet applied for EUSS and had no valid ID documents. The client also had problems with benefits and court hearings.



"I'm so grateful for the Citizens Advice service. They've really taken a weight off of mine and my family's shoulders."

We helped Erik complete a paper EUSS application and provided him with benefit advice. We also assisted Erik in applying for Household Support Fund (HSF) and Housing Benefit and put him in touch with the homelessness support team to further assist him with temporary accommodation.



"I can't thank them enough for the help I was given. Expressed fellow feeling, kind and couldn't have been more helpful. I'm very grateful to them. I wouldn't have coped without the help I received, they are worth their weight in gold."

Claire* is from the Stamford area and could only work part-time due to childcare responsibilities. Claire also received Universal Credit to supplement her income, but also had arrears on her water bill and was struggling to pay other bills due to price rises. The HSF grant helped her relieve the financial pressure.



*names have been changed

Volunteer Testimonials

"I'm Fern and I am a Research and Campaigns Volunteer for Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire.



I wanted to become a volunteer because I have a passion for helping others, volunteering for CASL gives me the opportunity to fulfill a role that I can do from home which is part time and flexible.

Since becoming a volunteer I have seen improvement in my confidence and expanding on my skill set. It is wonderful to be part of a small, friendly team of people who all work together to try and make other people's lives better but it is also wonderful to see how much volunteering has improved my life for the better."



"I started working as a volunteer adviser at Citizens Advice 15 years ago after retiring from full-time work. I find the work an interesting and challenging way of using my time productively. It is very satisfying to be able to help people to consider their options and resolve a variety of problems.

Being involved with the work of the Research and Campaigns team gives me an opportunity to highlight issues and contribute to improving things. "



"Volunteering at CASL has been an amazing opportunity, and has allowed me to progress into employment. I started volunteering in September 2020, following a period of unemployment due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. As soon as I started volunteering I was supported to develop my skills and knowledge, which was invaluable in securing my employment.

I work on our core service in a management role. I do not know where I would be without the opportunity to volunteer, at such a welcoming and supportive organisation like CASL. I would definitely recommend volunteering at CASL whether that be as a new challenge, an opportunity to develop your skills, or help others in our community."

Our Frontline Service

Adviceline

Clients can access our service in different ways. Our Adviceline telephone service is the way that many clients seek help and support. The Covid-19 pandemic and the unfolding cost-of-living crisis has contributed to demand averaging over 1300 calls since the beginning of 2022 compared to 628 at the end of 2021.

Our volunteers are working harder than ever to help clients and we recruited support on Adviceline through the Kickstart Scheme to help us try and meet demand.

Our Kickstart workers were taken on as employees at the end of their scheme and continue to provide invaluable support.



Face-To-Face

We have restarted face-to-face services for clients who require this type of support, across several areas of South Lincolnshire

We operate services in Grantham, Stamford, Spalding, Holbeach, Bourne and Deeping St James.

The advice we deliver remains of high quality. We are continually audited by national Citizens Advice as part of their quality processes. We have scored green across all measures, meaning the support we offer is of very high quality.

Our Projects



Money Advice: Our Money Advice team help people with debt and increasing their income. They have helped clients with over £3.5million of debt within the year.



EUSS: We are helping clients apply for the European Union Settlement Scheme. Clients needing support can contact 0800 448 0734. Over 3,000 people have engaged with the service within the year.



GP Pilot Project: Our GP project enabled us to base an adviser in two GP surgeries to offer face-to-face advice to Grantham residents. We supported over 100 clients and are looking to extend the project in the future.



Migrant Workers Helpline: This multilingual helpline provides advice to clients who face barriers to support. Clients can ring 0344 8476 128 and speak to an adviser. We have helped over 167 clients during the year.



Household Support Fund: We were a delivery provider for the Household Support Fund. We were able to help 539 clients access the fund and gain an estimated total of £167,629 in additional financial support



Help Through Hardship: We work together with the Trussell Trust to deliver this service. The helpline enables clients in emergency situations to access food bank vouchers. We have supported 2,760 clients within the year.



Help To Claim: We helped support 754 clients claiming Universal Credit for the first time. This enabled the clients gain a total combined income of nearly £2million



Funding & Fundraising

Our Funders

Funding for projects, provisions and services remains very important for CASL. We are grateful for the core funding received from **Lincolnshire County Council, South Holland District Council and South Kesteven District Council.**

We have also received funding from several foundations and grants for a number of our dedicated projects. We would like to thank the funders who have helped us within the year:

The Lincolnshire Community Foundation

Holbeach United Charities

The East Coast Community Foundation

The Leigh Trust

The Edith Murphy Foundation

The Rank Foundation

The Waynfleet Foundation

Fundraising

We now use online fundraising platforms. We have an easyfundraising and Amazon Smile page which have raised over £200.

We have also created a new donation webpage on People's Fundraising where we can receive charitable donations.

If you would, or know someone who would, like to support us on easyfundraising and Amazon Smile, please see our website (www.citizensadvice-southlincs.org.uk) for further information.



Research and Campaigns



We have led and participated in several campaigns and have once more been able to take part in face-to-face events.

We continue to engage regularly with various stakeholders and our local communities by publishing our Spotlight newsletter. Recent issues have addressed a range of topics such as domestic violence and energy prices.

Social media is a key tool in our scams awareness work. Four bulletins are released a month and the team is supported by the staff Impact Officer. We have reached over 16,000 people on Facebook and 121,778 on Twitter. A 13% increase on last year.

We continue to embed Equity, Diversity and Inclusion considerations across our projects and work to tackle injustice.



Local Campaigns

Our Access to Justice project continues. We are looking to form partnerships with local organisations to fill the gap in accessible legal services for clients. Our ambition is eventually to be able to establish a service where we can offer clients support with some of their legal issues.

We have campaigned on the Universal Credit uplift and the cost of living crisis. This includes writing to MPs, engaging with councillors and highlighting the impact on South Lincolnshire.

National Campaigns

We have taken part in Citizens Advice's three main national campaigns:

- Big Energy Savings Winter
- National Consumer Week
- Scams Awareness Fortnight

Additionally, we have participated in campaigns run by partner organisations such as Friends Against Scams, Stop Loan Sharks and the Get Safe Online #safeshopping campaign.



Going Forward...

As we go forward, there will be lots of exciting developments. Keep a look out for:

- **More video content**
- **The return of news bulletins**
- **Local projects**

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 have returned to delivering face-to-face advice. We have three outreach locations including Holbeach, Bourne and Deeping St James.

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

citizensadvicesouthlincs.org.uk



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