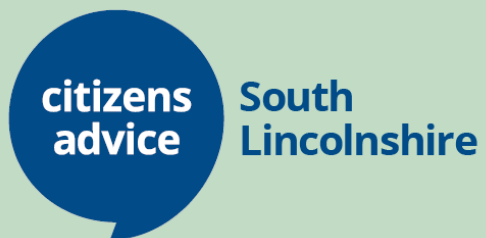




# ANNUAL REVIEW

2022/2023



With grateful thanks to Warners Midlands PLC for kindly printing this review

# LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

Welcome to the Annual Review of Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire (CASL) 2023, which looks back at all that has been achieved in the last year. I don't think that any of us could have envisaged just how challenging 22/23 could have been. Demand for telephone advice continues to offer an immense challenge as we struggle to meet the demand of people desperate for answers about how to cope during this cost-of-living crisis, which has seen food inflation rise to just under 20%.

Nationally, Citizens Advice have shown through their marvellous Cost of Living monthly briefings, that last year saw record numbers of people seeking our support in every category of the work that we address. Nationally, and at CASL, we are having to find ways forward for more and more clients who are facing "negative budgets", a situation where their income is lower than the cost of their essential outgoings. This is a very difficult situation for all involved; staff and volunteers feel helpless when all potential strands of support to increase income and reduce debt, have been exhausted.

Much has been achieved with the opening again of our offices for face-to-face support, which is so vital for so many of our clients, especially those who may be digitally excluded, or just crave the reassurance of a supportive, personal interaction. We urgently need more volunteers to enable face to face to be offered on more days, and are very actively seeking volunteers through articles, social media and recruitment events.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to extend my heart-felt thanks to Simon Richards, the Senior Management Team, the Management Team and the whole CASL family of staff and volunteers who have faced so many challenges. They have been able to achieve tremendous outcomes for the 12,000 clients who they have helped and supported, with compassion and sheer hard work.

Monica Stark

**Chair of Trustees, Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire**



Left: Monica Stark, Right: Simon Richards

Photo courtesy of Stamford Mercury

Looking ahead, we are likely to face as many challenges as we have done over the last few years. I am confident that CASL is in a very strong position to rise to those challenges, with an excellent team of staff and volunteers on hand to help more people with ever more complex needs.

We have worked hard as an organisation to think about how we can meet ever increasing demand and work with others to meet the needs of people in South Lincolnshire – and beyond. We have set ourselves some key objectives, which we believe will ensure that we are best positioned to do that. These are:

**Help more people** – we want to ensure we have the capacity and skills within our team of staff and volunteers to support ever more people. We will do this by investing resources into our services and reaching out into more communities.

**Be more influential** – we want to ensure people know about our services and that we can influence policies and practices at a local and national level. We will do this by embedding our Research and Campaigns work across the organisation and highlighting our services, work, and successes at every opportunity.

**Support our people** – we want to make CASL a great place to work and volunteer by: ensuring staff and volunteers have access to the necessary resources, equipment and support to undertake their role; ensuring we have excellent ways to communicate with each other across the organisation.

**Be more sustainable** – we want a diverse range of income sources that will allow us to deliver high quality services to our South Lincolnshire community. We are seeking to gain inflationary increases on our core grants; securing funding to deliver new projects on a multi-year basis and fundraising to help us help more people. We are grateful to all our funders for their support. We couldn't do what we do without it.

Finally, I would like to thank Monica and the Board of Trustees for their robust leadership and support during my time at CASL, which has helped us to thrive and develop as a strong and influential organisation.

Simon Richards

**Chief Officer, Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire**

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE LOCALLY



**11,621**

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

**58%**

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



**Over £1.5million**

The amount of additional income that we have helped clients gain

**14%**

of our clients were aged over 65

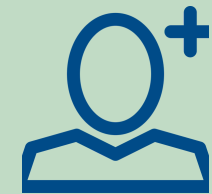


**Over £4million**

The amount of debt that we have helped clients deal with

**14%**

of our clients were from ethnic minority backgrounds



**£5.50**

is saved in public costs for every £1 that we receive

# OUR PEOPLE

## Our Team

**We are supported by people with a variety of skills and experiences at CASL. Everyone is different and brings something unique to our service. However, we all share the same goal, which is to make a difference to the lives of South Lincolnshire residents by helping them find a way forward with the problems that they face....**

Organisationally CASL is made up of

- Volunteers
- Staff
- Trustees

85 volunteers offered their time to help our clients over the last year . They are supported by 44 staff. We can also call on the support of 9 trustees who use their many years of experience and expertise to guide us strategically.

Our team fill many roles across CASL including management, advice, admin, Research and Campaigns, marketing, fundraising, finance, training, HR and more.



## My Volunteering Journey

"I began volunteering for CASL because I was looking at getting into paid employment and wanted to gain some skills and knowledge to help with this. I also have a passion for helping others, which volunteering for CASL would help me to achieve. Since becoming a volunteer for CASL, I have achieved what I set out to do - I have gained invaluable skills and knowledge, an increase in confidence personally and professionally and have now started paid work. Although I am now in paid work in another charity, I have continued my volunteer roles at CASL because it gives me a great sense of achievement and satisfaction being able to help others, I am still learning new things through my roles and being a part of the lovely CASL family is a wonderful bonus. I never expected volunteering to have changed my life for the better quite as much as it has, it has been an incredible stepping stone for me, gave me a sense of belonging and is something I am keen to continue to be a part of. I would encourage anyone thinking of doing some volunteer work to apply to CASL because it really could change your life for the better like it did for me."

### Fern



# CASL & THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

The cost-of-living crisis has presented us with one of the biggest challenges in a generation. It has affected everyone in South Lincolnshire, particularly vulnerable people and those already in hardship.

Demand on our Adviceline remains consistently high and our team of volunteers and staff do their best to help people find a way forward with the problems that they face.

These problems are becoming more complex. Each client that we see is presenting with between three or four separate, but interrelated issues that have the crisis at their heart. The adjacent graph shows how issues relating to the cost-of-living crisis have impacted our clients over the year. This extends across all of our projects and services. Our specialist projects are listed below:

**Money Advice:** Our team helped 642 clients deal with 3,059 issues and over £1.5 million of debt. They also help clients prepare financial statements, deal with creditors and maximise their income.

**Help Through Hardship:** 3,774 clients were helped with over 16,000 issues. This support enabled clients in severe hardship to acquire emergency food provisions through food bank vouchers.

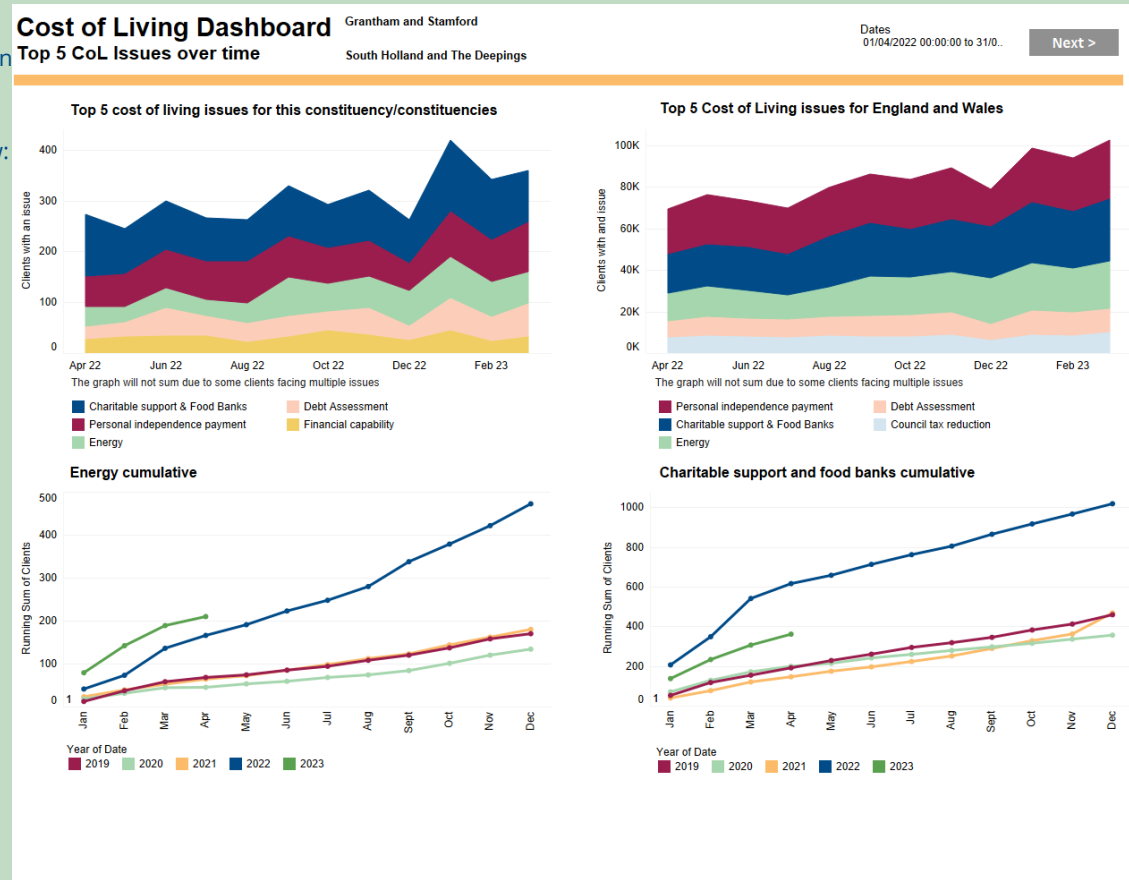
**European Union Settlement Scheme Support:** We've helped over 3,000 people apply for the European Union Settlement Scheme. Our support has been vital in helping them secure their rights to live, work and study in the UK.

**Ukrainian Resettlement Scheme:** Since January, we have been providing advice and support for guests and host families. We have supported over 100 clients across our diverse range of different enquiry areas.

**Energy Advice Project:** From October up until March, we were able to support 85 clients in fuel poverty with 338 issues around energy advice. This included offering them energy savings tips, dealing with energy debt, information about charitable support and more.

**FLEX:** FLEX project in collaboration with Citizens Advice South Lincs is a comprehensive initiative aimed at reaching at-risk migrant workers on seasonal workers' visas employed in the agricultural sector on UK farms. Through interviews and surveys, the project seeks to understand and address the challenges faced by these workers, particularly in relation to their work experiences and the visa obtaining process.

**MindSpace Partnership:** 80 clients were helped by our partnership with MindSpace. This was an advice outreach based in MindSpace in Stamford and enabled people who visited to receive holistic support to improve their mental health and address some of the possible underlying causes that were detrimental to this, through our advice.



# CLIENT STORIES



Our adviser helped \*Vanessa, a vulnerable client who had her application for Personal Independence Payment declined. This caused Vanessa a considerable amount of stress. We helped Vanessa challenge the decision as part of a mandatory reconsideration. We also invited her back to help complete forms for other benefits. The help with completing these forms means that Vanessa has been able to access support, which she might not have been able to otherwise and increased her income, enabling her to continue to navigate the ongoing cost of living crisis and improving her overall mental health.



Hatti\* came to us for help procuring some white goods and help with a deposit for a new rental home after having to quickly leave her previous home due to domestic violence. We helped Hatti fill in an application form for Spalding Town Husbands for the household appliances. Although Spalding Town Husbands do not usually give help with deposits, we advised that it may be worth applying citing the urgency of her situation as extenuating circumstances. We also issued a food voucher to deal with immediate hardship. Our intervention helped Hatti navigate a stressful time in her life and ensured that between moving into the new rental that her and her small children would be able to access food.



Casey\* came to us after receiving numerous VAT demands from HMRC. He was registered as self employed and had numerous debts. Casey was below the VAT threshold, so our adviser spoke to the VAT department and was successful in getting £1.8million of liability written off due to the registration being invalid. We offered a further debt appointment so Casey could be supported with the other debts.

\*names have been changed

# WORKING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

## Why We Work With Stakeholders

Stakeholder relationships are vital for us as a local charity. They enable us to build influential working relationships that help us better support our communities and open up opportunities for us.

## Who Are Our Stakeholders?

There are really no limits to who our stakeholders can be. They can range from:

- County and District Councillors
- Funders
- Community Partners
- Charity Organisations
- Local Media

and more!



Left: Attendees at our Bourne Stakeholder event including Cllr Sue Wooley and Cllr Anna Kelly, Mayor of Bourne at the time.

## Our Stakeholder Events

We have held several stakeholder events recently, which have been attended by our volunteers, staff, trustees and a wide variety of stakeholders. These provided us with fantastic networking opportunities.

### Grantham

In April 2022, we held the official opening of our Finkin Street location. This was attended by the Mayor of Grantham and other local organisations and charities. It was our first in person stakeholder event since lockdown and was very well received.

### Spalding

In October 2022, we held an open day at our Spalding Office. This enabled us to meet our working partners in South Holland and enabled us to consolidate partnerships and collaboration opportunities.

### Bourne

The official opening of our Bourne outreach was held in November 2022. This enabled us to demonstrate our impact to local councillors, stakeholders and funders. We were also able to form new information sharing relationships with the food bank and welcome and thank outreach funders, Bourne Town Council, Bourne United Charities and The Len Pick Trust.

# RESEARCH & CAMPAIGNS

## National Campaigns: The Cost-of-Living

The Research and Campaigns Team are as busy as ever. We are involved in the three main national Citizens Advice campaigns (Big Energy Savings Winter, National Consumer Week and Scams Awareness Fortnight). We have regularly kept our two local MPs informed about the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and are committed to contributing a local perspective on national issues.



## Local Campaigns: Scams Awareness

Locally, our awareness raising and campaigning work is evolving. Scams Awareness work is a keystone of our activity and we produce regular 'bulletins' highlighting current scams that are circulating in society. We have produced 18 bulletins about a wide variety of scams, including romance scams, holiday fraud and more. An archive of these are available to view on our website.



## Local Campaigns: Access to Justice

Our Access to Justice project is growing and are pleased to say that we have formed a partnership with a local university, where we can signpost clients for 30 minutes free legal advice if needed. We are looking for opportunities to form more partnerships where we can and ensure that residents can access as much support as possible over a range of legal areas.



## Engaging People With Our Work

We use a wide variety of channels so the work about issues that South Lincolnshire communities face reaches as wide an audience as possible.

Video content has also been crucial in supporting our ongoing projects. We have released several videos about:

- Dealing with loneliness
- Housing
- Cost-Of-Living scams

## Spotlight

Our Spotlight newsletter goes out to stakeholders every three months. It contains a combination of articles, case studies, statistics and more. The audience for Spotlight is growing and we expect to add more people to our distribution list in the near future.



# OUR FUNDRAISING

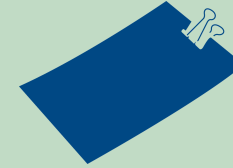
Fundraising is a fast growing area for CASL. The competition for funds is as intense as it ever has been and the current funding climate means that every penny counts towards the running of our services. We have a variety of ways that we generate funds.



## Online Fundraising

Over the past year, our fundraising efforts have started to produce results. We have raised over £600 through our Amazon Smile and easyfundraising platforms.

If you are interested in supporting our cause, please consider signing up to support Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire. Details of how to sign up can be found on our website and on our social media.



## Trusts and Foundations

We are also grateful for support from a range of trusts, foundations and other funders. Without their support, we wouldn't be able to deliver high-quality services.

- Barrowby Parish Council
- Bourne Town Council
- Bourne United Charities
- Citizens Advice
- Deeping St James United Charities
- Holbeach United Charities
- Lincolnshire County Council
- NHS Lincolnshire
- Shine Lincolnshire
- Spalding Town Husbands Charity
- South Holland District Council
- South Kesteven District Council
- The Energy Redress Trust
- The Trussell Trust
- The Len Pick Trust

We thank them for the contributions that they have made to Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire over the past year.

# MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

Our media and communications work plays a vital role in enabling us to reach as many people as possible and highlight the fantastic work that we do. We engage with the local media for a variety of reasons ranging from:

- Commenting on policy changes, developments, or social situations that affect our communities
- Volunteer Recruitment
- Regular slots in local publications
- New projects or services we can offer

## Print-Based Media

We contribute to publications in Grantham, Stamford and Spalding each month. We have produced press releases around topical local content including rent increases, the cost-of-living crisis and how to deal with debts. We have submitted 40 different articles to local publications across South Lincolnshire.



## Social Media

Our social media presence is growing. We reached 15,267 people with our content. We have reached 80,943 people on Twitter. We have also recently launched our LinkedIn profile, which we will use to further highlight our vacancies and volunteering opportunities.

We also used Facebook and Twitter to promote our European Union Settlement Scheme project. We have reached over 30,000 people and shared bi-lingual content into social media groups so that we can maximise our reach.

The team have also distributed print-based promotional material to schools, nurseries and colleges across the county to ensure that we engage people who may not use social media and those who need additional support in order to secure their rights to study, work and live in the UK.



# WHAT'S NEXT?

Our plans for the coming year aim to address some of the challenges our clients face and help strengthen us an organisation.

Our priorities are:

## Our People

Volunteer recruitment will remain at the heart of everything we do. We need more volunteers to help increase the help we provide. We will recruit and train more volunteers in the coming year.

## Research and Campaigns

The Research and Campaigns team will soon be publishing their study examining the efficacy of Universal Credit for South Lincolnshire residents. There will be more video content supporting our ongoing projects and we will continue to campaign to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

## Our Services

We want to open our services more so that people can access them more easily. We want to increase the number of people we help through Adviceline and we want to ensure the quality of our service remains high.

## Our Fundraising

We will diversify our funding streams and fundraising events. Our objectives include:

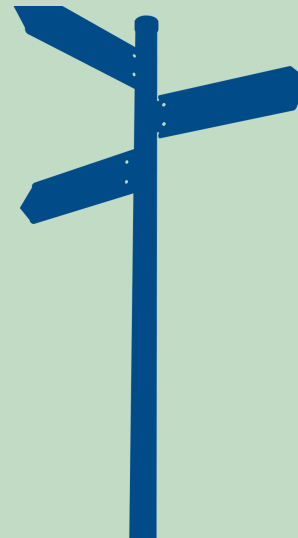
- Holding our first fundraising event- a dinner and dance- in September
- Establishing a CASL fundraising committee for specific fundraising activities and projects
- Growing our use of online fundraising platforms

This will help us deliver more services to help people.

## Media and Communications

Our media and communications work will evolve. We will post regular columns in local newspapers and make use of local radio when we can.

We will establish more social media channels so we can reach more people. This will help ensure people know about the help we can provide and how to access our services.



# HOW TO ACCESS OUR SERVICES

## Face-To-Face



### Spalding

Tuesday: Drop ins from 10:00 to 12:00 & Pre-Booked Appointments PM  
Wednesday: Drop ins from 10:00 to 12:00 & Pre-Booked Appointments PM  
Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, PE11 2XE

### Stamford

Monday and Thursday: 9:30 to 15:30 (Appointment Only: Please ring Adviceline (0808 278 7996) to arrange an appointment at this location)  
United Reformed Church Hall, 29 Broad Street, Stamford, PE9 2PJ  
Friday: 10:00 to 12:00 (Drop-In) (15-minute initial assessment-referrals for a full appointment will be made if needed).  
Stamford Day Centre, 33 Ryhall Road, Stamford, PE9 1UF

### Grantham

Monday: Drop-in 10:00-12:00 & Pre-Booked Appointments 13:00 to 15:00  
Thursday: Pre-Booked Appointments 10:00 to 15:00  
14 Finkin Street, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 6QZ

### Bourne

Tuesday: 09:30 to 11:30 for drop ins. Pre-Booked Appointments PM  
Thursday: 09:30 to 11:30 for drop ins. Pre-Booked Appointments PM  
Wake House, 41 North Street, Bourne, Lincs, PE10 9AE

### Holbeach

Tuesday: 09:30-11:30 for drop ins. Pre-Booked Appointments PM  
Coubro Chambers, 11 West End, Holbeach, PE12 7LW

## Telephone Services

### Adviceline

Call 0808 278 7996 to speak to an adviser (Monday to Friday 10:00 to 16:00)

### Help Through Hardship Food Voucher Helpline

Call 0808 208 2138 to speak to an adviser (Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00)

### Consumer Helpline

Call 0808 233 113 to speak to an adviser (Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00)

