Citizens Advice Denbighshire

Annual Report 2020-21

10th September 2021

cyngor ar bopeth citizens advice Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire

Information Assurance:

Citizens Advice Denbighshire is committed to the management of information risk and a summary of key points and controls is available upon request from the CEO.

All photographs, unless accredited otherwise, by Trustee Yveline Hands.

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Unless otherwise stated, all statistics cover the period April 1st 2020 to March 31st 2021.

Contents

Chair's Report **4**
Chief Executive Officer's Report **5**
Our Impact in 2020-21 **6**
Coronavirus **8**
School Uniform Recycle **10**
Eat Well, Cook Slow **12**
Prepayment Meter and Foodbank Vouchers **13**
Litigants in Person (LiPs) Project **14**
Fuel Poverty **15**
Homelessness Prevention Project **16**
Floods **17**
Key to Advice and Denbighshire Projects **18**
Your Place or Ours **20**
Debt **22**
Gambling Support Service **24**
National Projects **25**
Advicelink **26**
Volunteers, Employment and Training **28**
Research & Campaigns **32**
Networking Groups and Partner Organisations **33**
Board of Trustees **34**
Comments from our Clients **36**

Chair's Report

I am pleased to make my first report as Chair of the Trustee Board and, in doing so, I wish to acknowledge the previous contribution of the outgoing Chair, Alastair Morgan, who remains on the Trustee Board. In 2020-21 Citizens Advice Denbighshire continued to build on the enormous changes forced on us by the continuing pandemic response.

We could not have sustained the seamless transition from a largely office based service to a completely remote service without our wonderful staff, volunteers and Trustees who always go the extra mile for our organisation.

We are grateful also to our numerous funders as their continued financial support enabled us to meet the varied and increasing needs of the community over the past year. Our financial position remains strong which allows us to plan effectively and be able to implement our business plan. It also gives us security in terms of service provision and staffing levels which is important for the people who need our services.

We have had excellent audit results across the board which reflect on the organisation as a whole. On the Trustee side, we are pleased to have been able to recruit one new Trustee to the Board, Chris Lees, and we continue to invest in our Trustees' training and development.

Gaynor Brooks, Chair of Trustee Board

Chief Executive's Report

In the nearly 30 years I've been part of Citizens Advice Denbighshire, the last 18 months have given us the most challenges and opportunities. Our main challenge has been to continue to deliver our high quality advice service, without compromise through mainly remote access channels. We've succeeded and our staff and volunteers must be congratulated for their dedicated and determined efforts which have enabled us to help so many people at a time when they need us most.

The opportunities have come from the support our fundholders and stakeholders have given to us during the pandemic, we have been able to draw down new funding sources to help us expand and deliver our services and to create new resources. We have also taken the opportunity to review our service delivery plan and we have co produced with staff, volunteers, Trustees and clients, a new plan, which focuses on the client journey from initial contact to the best possible outcome for the client. Clients will be able to access our services, through multiple channels enhanced with a simple referral route for our key partners.

I'd like to thank everyone - Trustees, staff and volunteers - for their exceptional efforts and support throughout the last year. I look forward with confidence to the future, knowing we are a resilient and adaptable team, ready and able to take on unexpected and difficult challenges.

Lesley Powell, CEO

Our Impact

£1.07m
of backdated benefits were received by clients

290
households raised out of fuel poverty

2,101
clients directly affected by Covid-19

We helped 5973 clients with 8464 enquiries

£10.96m **of benefit and tax credit gains for our clients**

in 2020-21

29%

of debt value handled was priority debt

This can lead to loss of essential items, home or freedom if not addressed.

1,235

debt clients supported

720

employment-related enquiries.

53% increase on 2019-20

£10.1m **of debt handled on behalf of clients in 2020-21**

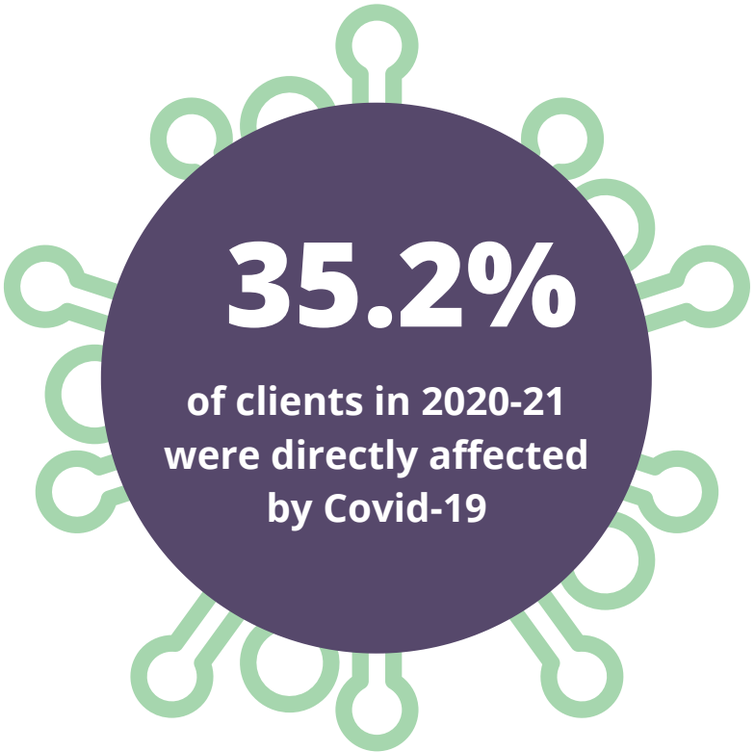
for every £1 invested in Citizens Advice Denbighshire, we returned

£2.46 **in fiscal benefits**

£19.28 **in public value**

£15.74 **to our clients**

Coronavirus



Over the last year we've altered our ways of working to adjust to ever-changing circumstances.

Lockdown restrictions prevented us from operating a face to face service and volunteers and staff transitioned quickly to remote working while at the same time meeting a sizeable increase in client demand which we were able to meet through other channels.

We've worked closely with established partners and emerging partners to help people in need due to the pandemic and as a result have helped over 2,100 clients directly affected by Covid-19.

Now, as we begin to return to our offices, we can reflect on lessons learnt from facing these challenges.

Attend Anywhere

A new way of working to adapt to changing circumstances

With restrictions meaning in-person meetings with clients were no longer possible, we've operated a mostly remote service this last year.

To continue face-to-face interaction with clients, we've introduced Attend Anywhere. Every weekday, anybody has been able to attend a drop-in online video meeting with one of our advisers. Over 250 clients have used Attend Anywhere in the last year.

Lessons learnt during the pandemic

The public restrictions in place during the pandemic meant we had to change the way we worked, how we supported clients, and how we interacted with each other as volunteers and staff.

It provided a challenge to service delivery, but also offered an opportunity to experiment and improve our ways of working. Here are just a few opportunities highlighted by the new ways of working and how we'll implement lessons learnt going forward.

We can help more clients by adopting a 'phone first' approach rather than prioritising walk-ins.

→ We'll use an appointment system for face-to-face interviews rather than return to an as-and-when, walk-in culture.

In response to the pandemic, small local groups emerged to help provide direct support to clients in need.

→ We will pay close attention to and proactively engage with emerging local support groups rather than focusing mostly on established partners.

Our early investment in IT and telephony has paid off, with our staff and volunteers able to work comfortably at home, and our clients able to access our services with ease remotely.

→ We will maintain an element of hybrid working, allowing volunteers and staff the option to work more flexibly.

School Uniform Recycle

This is the 7th year of our School Uniform Recycle Scheme. The scheme started in 2015 as a solution for one client's crisis - a single mum with 3 children whose domestic circumstances had changed quickly and dramatically, leaving her unable to buy school uniforms for her children for their return to school. We sought spare uniforms from the schools (mostly from the lost property boxes), our volunteers washed and ironed the uniforms and hey presto! Three children kitted out in good quality uniforms, with PE kits too and one very relieved mum!

The following year we worked with one local school in Denbigh to recycle their lost property and asked parents to drop off good quality, clean uniforms with us, and we hosted events during the summer holidays to recycle the uniforms. From this grew a scheme which has continued with the involvement of all the schools in Denbighshire.

We've drawn in multiple partners - Denbighshire County Council, the ASK Centre Rhyl, South Denbighshire Community Partnership, Denbigh Carnival Group, Prestatyn & Meliden Community Action Group, the Corwen and Pengwern Community Centre, and Lock Stock Self Storage.

All of our partners have provided support to the scheme: with transport, helping to wash and press uniforms, hosting events, and storage of stock. Rhyl, Denbigh and Ruthin Rotary Groups have provided funds to purchase new uniforms and shoes. Community Foundation Wales funded vouchers for families who are on low incomes but not entitled to school uniform grants.

Every family who contacts the scheme is offered an individual income maximisation session. We check the household income, looking to increase income through unclaimed benefits, grants and credits, reducing expenditure through debt management, and reducing household bills.

Throughout the lifetime of the scheme we have helped over 800 families gain additional income of over £500,000 and help clients manage their debts to the value of £300,000.

Lockdown and the pandemic restrictions have not stopped us running the scheme; we've just done it differently.

We've operated an "online shop" accessible through Facebook and referrals where we provided uniforms on demand from our stored stock and delivered them to people's homes or dropped them off with an intermediary.

We have supported Denbighshire County Council to promote the take up of Welsh Government school uniform grants and free school meals.

The scheme continues, it's shown that it can be adapted, and with the support of the community it will develop and carry on into future years.

Eat Well, Cook Slow

Last year, we partnered with Denbighshire County Council for our Eat Well, Cook Slow project. This year we have again partnered with Denbighshire County Council alongside local foodbanks to provide the same service. Clients have been referred to us by both foodbanks and Denbighshire County Council's Housing Department. The local authority has referred 60 tenants to us so that they can benefit from the project.

> *Citizens Advice have been very helpful and friendly. I appreciate the good advice. I didn't know help like this was available.*

> *Very worthy project and if there are any other projects like this again I would love to be involved. Thank you very much.*

As well as receiving a slow cooker, recipes, and food, they have also been offered energy advice and an assessment of any other advice and support needs. Referrals have been made to our specialist teams when the need for further assistance has been identified.

As of July 2021, over 70 people have been contacted as part of this project.

Eat Well, Cook Slow shows the benefits of working with partners to target engagement with people. We'll be following up with everyone who has received a slow cooker to find out their views on the project and the support they've received. The comments from some clients who have already given feedback demonstrate that the project is well received and that they've found it useful to be involved in the scheme.

> *"It has been an immense help. I can now make 5 meals in one go. I then put 4 in the freezer!"*

In partnership with Cyngor sir ddinbych denbighshire County Council and the trussell trust Stop UK Hunger

Prepayment Meter (PPM) Vouchers

We applied for and received two tranches of funding from the Energy Saving Trust's Energy Redress Crisis Fund which have provided emergency prepayment vouchers to households affected by Covid-19 and at risk of self-disconnection.

Our first project ran in the Autumn of 2020, when we distributed 600 vouchers to vulnerable households across Denbighshire, worth £49 each. Due to the success of the Autumn project, we were able to apply for additional funding which led to a further project between January and July 2021, distributing an additional 1,450 to vulnerable households across North Wales and Powys. This has provided a total of £100,450 worth of fuel payments for the most vulnerable clients.

Foodbank and Fuelbank

We have been working with the Vale of Clwyd Foodbank for 3 years, delivering a restricted cash transfer scheme for residents on prepayment meters to enable people in energy poverty to top up their electricity and/or gas.

Initially this scheme was piloted in Denbigh but due to its success it has been extended to Ruthin and the surrounding area. The scheme complements the work of the Foodbank in trying to mitigate food and fuel poverty.

THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOUNDATION

Litigants in Person (LiPs) Project

in partnership with Citizens Advice Ynys Môn

We were approached last summer by the Access to Justice Foundation to consider bidding for the Ministry of Justice's Legal Support for Litigants in Person Scheme.

This scheme supports people to represent themselves and encourages intervention at the earliest possible stage so that people are fully aware of their legal rights and the options available to them. It aims to provide greater access to free legal advice and information across North and Mid Wales in three areas of law: employment, family, and community care issues, in particular surrounding lasting power of attorney and guardianship. We've brought onboard local solicitors who are providing their services to our caseworkers and clients pro bono.

As part of the scheme, we have law students from Bangor University who are working towards completing generalist advice training. This is important as the students are helping the caseworkers on the project who provide clients with holistic advice, not just dealing with the presenting issue. The students are helping to meet demand and are contributing to the research and evaluation requirements from the scheme.

The work the students provide in the Law Clinic will help them with the Solicitors Qualifying Examination - the assessment for all aspiring solicitors in England and Wales - required from September 2021.

"Speaking to your agent earlier today was an absolute delight! She was very, very professional and provided me with the necessary information and points of contact to help me deal with the issues... I cannot thank her and Citizens Advice enough for your help... I was very impressed with the level of service and would not hesitate to recommend these services in the future!"

A client on the help received from one of our students for an employment issue.

Tackling Fuel Poverty

in partnership with Rhyl Town Council

The now well-established partnership working between Citizens Advice Denbighshire and Rhyl Town Council has reaped year-on-year success in terms of real, cash-saving advantages to some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Statistically, living in a cold home is a bigger threat to life than alcohol abuse in Wales, with an estimated cost to the NHS for treating cold-related admissions in excess of £100m per year. Fuel debt is a growing and serious issue impacting on an individual's mental and physical health and wellbeing.

We've created a directory of localised help and support available county-wide during the pandemic and clients are receiving telephone 'vulnerability checks' to ensure their physical and mental wellbeing is maintained. Where applicable, clients are alerted to localised help and support during this particularly difficult time.

363

utility enquiries from Rhyl clients in 2020-21

£1.14m

in previously unclaimed benefits found and successfully claimed for Rhyl clients

314

vouchers, worth £49 each, issued for topping up prepayment meters

Homelessness Prevention Project

This project, in collaboration with Denbighshire County Council, has been running for two years and is recognised by both partners to be highly successful. Citizens Advice Cymru recognised this innovative initiative and used one of our reports last year as an integral part of their presentation at a Third Sector Partnership Council meeting with Welsh Minister, Julie James MS.

This year has been particularly demanding given the impact of Covid-19. Significant numbers of clients remain in temporary accommodation in local hotels and caravan parks.

To this end homeless clients and those at risk of homelessness remain heavily supported by Citizens Advice Denbighshire through the appointment of a designated adviser. Following referrals from the local authority, clients in this at-risk category are quickly contacted to undertake a needs assessment.

This includes income maximisation, applications to discretionary payment funds, grant applications, obtaining client support through veterans organisations, free school meals and uniform grants, energy advice, council tax reduction applications, mandatory reconsiderations and appeals, debt advice and food bank support.

£377k

of benefit gains for Homelessness Prevention Clients

£705k

of debt handled for Homelessness Prevention clients

£228k

of debt handled was priority debt

We continue to reduce barriers to clients seeking and receiving advice and information that they may not have been able to access independently. This project helps people to maintain their tenancies and reduces the risk of homelessness.

Floods

In January 2021, Storm Christoph caused devastating havoc in North Wales. Denbighshire households were affected, particularly in the St Asaph, Ruthin, and Corwen areas.

We worked with Denbighshire County Council to assist residents whose homes were flooded during the storm by applying for Welsh Government financial support.

We contacted referred clients straight away to complete a brief questionnaire about their personal details and the flooded property. If they had contents insurance, they would receive £500. If they hadn't, they could be paid £1,000.

After completing a flood questionnaire over the phone, we asked every client if they needed further advice. We offered all clients a benefits check and this opportunity was taken by most.

As a result, we provided further assistance to a number of claimants mostly in the following areas: employment (claimants on the furlough scheme), energy (switching supplier, prepayment vouchers, inefficient boilers), debts, and benefits.

59

referrals made to Citizens Advice Denbighshire

100% of grant applications successful

£38.5k

awarded through grant applications

£29.4k

of additional benefits awarded

£2.23m
gained income for clients

255
clients lifted from income poverty

Key to Advice

The Key to Advice project provides advice and support for Denbighshire County Council tenants on an individual basis to help alleviate money and debt issues and provide greater financial capability, including energy advice.

We work directly with the Denbighshire County Council Housing Team, tenants are referred to us or they can refer themselves to our team. Once we engage with the tenant, we provide a full and comprehensive advice support package looking at their household income. We explore ways to increase the tenant's income by applying for unclaimed grants, credits, or benefits.

We work together to reduce expenditure, such as negotiating debt repayments, and at the same time look to see how their household can best manage the money they have coming in.

Alongside this, we review the household's energy expenditure and see if there are efficiencies to be made by, for example, changing energy behaviours.

This partnership has had a substantial impact for some households, improving the household financial resilience and enabling those tenancies to be sustainable.

This work will have increased relevance as forbearance measures end and households need to manage significant income shocks.

We're pleased to announce that our Key to Advice service has been extended to **2023.**

In partnership with

Tai Sir Ddinbych
Denbighshire Housing
Buddsoddi yn ein Cymunedau • Investing in our Communities

Young People First in Denbighshire (YP1D)

This project is aimed at vulnerable young people and their families living in Denbighshire.

We have partnered with the Denbigh Youth Project, West Rhyl Young People's Project, and Conwy and Denbighshire Mental Health Advocacy Services.

Denbighshire County Council Families First Team refers clients to the project and we work together with families and young people, tailoring support to ensure the needs of the whole family are met, not just the individuals' needs.

Clients have received benefit and debt support, as well as employment, education, and housing advice.

Denbighshire Befriending

Our involvement in the Ageing Well in Denbighshire Group led to our being asked by Denbighshire County Council to take part in a pilot project with NEWCIS to provide a befriending service and holistic advice and support to carer families in Denbighshire.

The project commenced in January 2021 and will work with 90 families to prove the value of the partnership's activities with the intention of developing a wider and more long-term service.

Canolfan Ni

Yn gofalu am y gymuned

SDCP

Caring for the community

Your Place or Ours

Reducing isolation in our rural communities

We have worked in partnership on the 'Your Place or Ours/Lle Chi Neu Ni' project in South Denbighshire since February 2018 following a successful bid to the (then) Big Lottery by our partners, South Denbighshire Community Partnership (SDCP). The project is focused on reducing isolation, improving access to services, and tackling poverty in Corwen and the surrounding Edeyrnion area.

Alongside the project, we worked with SDCP and other agencies to develop a proposal to take similar activity east into Llangollen. This partnership was awarded additional funding by the National Lottery Community Fund, commencing delivery in the Llangollen area in July 2020. The funding also extends the Corwen and Edeyrnion project to enable delivery across the Denbighshire Dee Valley area until July 2024.

Claire's Story

Claire lives with her partner and 1 dependant child in a privately rented property. Claire receives Universal Credit and her partner receives contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance, they both have various health conditions and both receive Personal Independence Payment.

Claire had a long running complaint with her supplier as there had been numerous errors on the account and having been unable to resolve the issue she came to Citizens Advice Denbighshire for assistance.

Claire's account had twice been switched between a business account and a domestic account even though the property had never been a business property. The account had eventually been corrected and rebilled as a domestic account, however in this time Claire had amassed debt of £4889 and had been unable to agree an affordable payment plan with her supplier. We completed an application to Scottish Power Hardship Fund to help with some of the debt, the application was successful and an affordable payment plan for the remaining debt was agreed.

Outcomes

1. Hardship Fund wrote off £1000 from the debt.
2. Scottish Power agreed to a further £100 being removed from the debt as a goodwill payment.
3. A payment plan of £33 per month was agreed for the remaining debt spreading the repayments over 9 years & 10 months.

"Having the complaint resolved and a payment plan agreed feels like a big weight lifted from my shoulders"

105

clients helped through 'It's Not Too Late' up to 31st July 2021

'It's Not Too Late' Project

We are very grateful to The Henry Smith Foundation for providing funding to enable our delivery of the 'It's Not Too Late' debt advice project.

The project, which commenced on 1st April 2021 and will run for 33 months until December 2023, is providing crisis debt advice across the county and has the objectives to maximise income, increase financial capability, and reduce poverty.

'It's Not Too Late' restores Citizens Advice Denbighshire's out-of-hours debt advice capability, providing appointments until 7pm every Wednesday and Thursday and until 4pm on Saturdays.

This project will contribute significantly to our meeting the needs of clients, particularly as Covid-19 forbearance measures are lifted, with the evening and weekend elements assisting us to support a varied client profile.

With funding from The Henry Smith Charity

Breathing Space

Breathing Space is a new national scheme that gives our clients temporary protection from most types of debt collection while they take action to get on top of their debts.

Clients can apply through a debt adviser for 60 days' 'Breathing Space' - a temporary relief from their debt. Clients must continue to engage with their debt advisers and mustn't take out any new borrowing over £500 in this time. They'll also have to continue to make certain types of payments, including ongoing housing costs, utility bills, and taxes.

For the 60 day period, interest and fees are paused on debts included in 'Breathing Space' while the client meets these conditions.

So far, we've helped 10 clients with temporary protection from their debts.

Debt Clinics

Before the first lockdown in March 2020, Citizens Advice Denbighshire's Money Advice Team attended several multi-agency partnership events annually to engage with local communities.

While no face-to-face events could be organised in 2020-21, we were able to use our online platform, Attend Anywhere (see page 8), to work with Denbighshire County Council and offer debt clinics through video conferencing.

The online debt clinics took place on 26th October 2020 and 25th January 2021, with clients in council tax arrears with Denbighshire County Council offered pre-booked slots to discuss their arrears and receive advice on other debts, budgeting, and income maximisation.

Gambling Support Service (GSS)

41
training sessions to
387
delegates

99
awareness events held

219
clients screened

Over the course of the project, Citizens Advice Denbighshire has been working hard to promote a public health approach to the identification and treatment of gambling harms.

By improving screening and increasing awareness of gambling harm and prevention services among frontline service providers and vulnerable individuals, we've developed a stronger evidence base to understand the harms of gambling.

We have learnt and achieved much over the life cycle of the project. There have been successes and challenges. The pandemic brought on its own challenges in moving to remote delivery.

We are immensely proud of how our volunteers and staff adapted and helped develop the service, witnessing first-hand the impact it has had for our clients. But we know that there is more work to be done to help people get the support they need.

In cooperation with

GambleAware®

Alongside our work in cooperation with local partners, Citizens Advice Denbighshire has been pleased to help however we can with other national projects, including:

census 2021

We posted frequently on social media offering to support people with the completion of their census forms. Invited by the Good Things Foundation to help during the first 'digital-first' census, we provided assistance to people completing their forms digitally and otherwise where it was appropriate.

Five of our staff worked part-time on the project for 7 weeks, including evening and weekend provision, offering a helpline in both Welsh and English to clients in need of assistance.

In partnership with

Good Things Foundation

Office for National Statistics

EU Settlement Scheme

We've been involved in promoting the EU Citizens Rights Service, funded by the Welsh Government.

This service supported EU, EEA and Swiss citizens with settled and pre-settled status applications, also offering access to wider advice services, including access to specialist support.

The deadline for citizens to apply for settled status was 31st June 2021, though we continue to support clients making late applications so they don't lose their right to live, work, and access benefits while living in the UK.

£2.5m
income gained through Advicelink

5,810
benefits issues raised through Advicelink

4,165
debts issues raised through Advicelink

£437k
debts written off through Advicelink

Advicelink - Single Access Fund

Advicelink Cymru is a Welsh Government funded Citizens Advice service designed to help people who are most in need of advice services, particularly those who would not usually seek advice. The service is currently funded until the end of March 2022.

The Advicelink service aims to reach out to clients proactively, often through partners, to get advice service interventions to those most in need of them before they're in crisis.

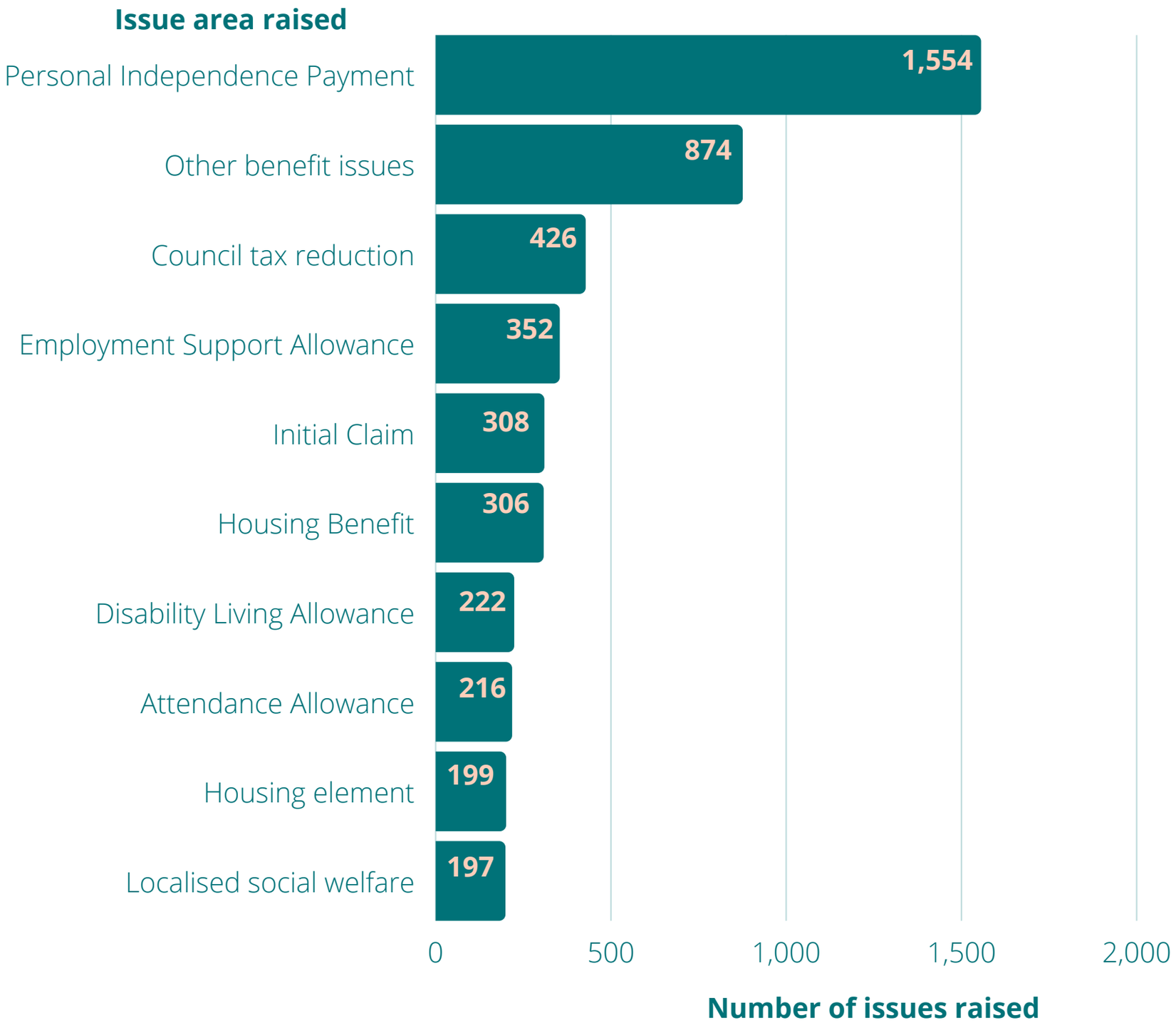
Citizens Advice Denbighshire delivers quality-assured advice with wraparound support for clients from partners - practical, emotional, clinical, or social.

In the year 2020-21, Citizens Advice Denbighshire helped 2,722 clients with 12,592 different issues including benefit support, debt and financial advice, discrimination cases, immigration & asylum support, and more.

With funding from

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

This chart shows the number of issues raised through Advicelink over the year 2020-21 by the 10 most common issue areas.



Volunteers, Employment & Training

Our volunteers have gone above and beyond over the last year, adapting to the restrictions and challenges to provide advice and support to clients. Volunteers and staff quickly rallied last year to ensure as many people as possible could be helped as services saw unprecedented demand.

> *I suppose I volunteer with Citizens Advice because it gives me satisfaction to use some of the spare time I am fortunate to enjoy to do something of practical benefit in society, to help people find ways forward with the difficulties and problems, big and small, which - for whatever reason - they feel they cannot solve alone. In short,* ***it feels good to feel useful!***

Whether working from their kitchens and living rooms to write up casenotes, or using their mobile phones and webcams to follow up with clients, our volunteers and staff have ensured that all of our clients receive the help they need.

> *At first, I thought the main change would be a sense of loss in the lack of direct contact with other advisers... In fact it was soon apparent that managers were readily available on their phones, by email and usually instantly on Hangouts. And while it is not quite the same, the friendly support and good humour of colleagues also flowed just as naturally by these same means.*

£380k

the public value of volunteering in Citizens Advice Denbighshire

I'm a first language Welsh speaker and retired deputy head teacher, married with two children and two grandchildren, all living locally.

Following retirement, volunteering gives me a sense of purpose and, during the lockdown, a window to the outside world! I became a volunteer over 20 years ago as I wanted to:

- Be part of a team again
- Learn new skills
- Give something back to my local community

I have an extensive Task list sent by Bureau Managers to contact clients to update their files, enter financial gains for statistical purposes and refer for further advice if necessary.

At home, I have access to Casebook and my Citizens Advice emails, which I look at most days. I then telephone or email clients as the need arises.

John Davies, Volunteer

Working @ Citizens Advice

Working@CitizensAdvice is our European Social Fund / Active Inclusion Fund (via WCVA) supported employment project that commenced in February 2020.

The project is led by us and is an expansion of previous similar projects we have run in Denbighshire; this project operates across North West Wales. We employ all participants on 16 week placements, some working directly for us supporting advice services in Denbighshire, the others placed and doing similar work with Citizens Advice partners in Conwy, Gwynedd, and Ynys Môn. Due to Covid-19 restrictions all participants have worked remotely.

Participants are trained and supported within their community, developing a range of work skills to secure sustained employment. We develop their work skills, and financial resilience, and otherwise support participants to transition into sustained employment.

The project has been very successful: 26 participants having so far been engaged. Of the 22 participants who have left the project so far, 13 have progressed to more permanent employment!

In June 2021, we gained additional Active Inclusion Funding from WCVA to extend the project for Denbighshire (employ more Denbighshire participants). We already have 5 participants on this extension project.

With funding from

WcVA Active Inclusion Fund
CgGC Cronfa Cynhwysiant Gweithredol

Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu Gwledig
Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
Europe Investing in Rural Areas

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Kickstart

In February, we commenced to work with RCS as employer partners on the Kickstart Scheme. The Kickstart Scheme is a DWP funded initiative to create jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment. The DWP pay for part-time posts which we have made up to full-time.

We are pleased to have been able to employ four participants to date (including twin brothers! One of whom has now moved on to a career in hospitality).

KICKSTART SCHEME

Training

Firstly, we must mention that Roy retired in March and we wish him a very long and happy retirement.

Training for staff and volunteers throughout 2020-21 has been extremely productive.
Staff and volunteers benefit from a developing programme of in house training including:

- **Benefits overview**
- **Discretionary Assistance Fund forms**
- **Personal Independence Payment forms**
- **Attendance Allowance and passported benefits**
- **Maximising income for older people**

A number of courses delivered by external providers have been completed by staff and volunteers during the year, including:

- **Employment, Levels 1-4** (Citizens Advice Flintshire)
- **Managing people in the voluntary sector**
- **Students and Universal Credit** (Child Poverty Action group)
- **Suicide and debt**
- **Workplace Wellbeing Champion training**
- **Bilingualism in the workplace** (WCVA)
- **Mental health advice for the advice sector**
- **Benefits and Tax Credits law update**
- **Drug and alcohol awareness** (CAIS)

In total, over 28 courses were delivered to staff and volunteers in 2020-21.

Research & Campaigns

Citizens Advice Denbighshire has a dual purpose to not only provide free and impartial advice to its clients but also to undertake policy research and address the root causes of clients' issues, particularly to highlight unfairness.

In our policy research, we combine insights from our clients with analysis of wider social and economic trends, and set out new ideas to improve policy and delivery for all.

Publicity

Throughout the year we raised awareness and campaigned on a number of issues, and our good relationships with local media give us as broad a reach as possible to share information and advice, to recruit, and to inform.

We've been lucky enough this year, thanks to Connection Magazines, to secure a regular column in their monthly publication to this end.

In addition to our partnership with the Clwyd Connection magazine, we've also been published in local newspapers and newsletters such as the Denbighshire Free Press, the Rhyl & Abergele Journal, and the Denbighshire Tenants' Newsletter.

Over 7 in 10 people in Wales targeted by scammers so far in 2021

Can you help Citizens Advice Denbighshire?

Best Practice Lead

Citizens Advice Denbighshire fulfils the role of the Help to Claim Best Practice Lead for North and Mid Wales. The role is to encourage engagement with stakeholders, Local Citizens Advice offices, and the Help to Claim - Universal Credit service.

The Best Practice Lead conducts a monthly forum for Help to Claim advisers, managers and leads to attend and share information, best practice, and concerns. There is also a monthly newsletter sent out to both local offices and stakeholders with the same intention of spreading information about Universal Credit and the Help to Claim service.

The Best Practice Lead also engages with stakeholders directly, including the DWP, through stakeholder events and meetings to make organisations aware of Universal Credit and its issues and also our advice services more generally.

Networking Groups and Partner Organisations

To achieve the best outcomes for our clients and our community, we work in partnership with many groups and organisations.

Here are just a few of the groups and organisations we've been involved and worked with in the last year.

Denbighshire Employment Group

Denbighshire Armed Covenant Board

Denbighshire Wellbeing Network

Ageing Well in Denbighshire

Denbighshire Tackling Poverty Operational Group

Syrian Refugee Group

Talking Points

Social Value Cymru

2025 Movement for Change

Wales Social Prescribing Research Network

Board of Trustees

As always we are extremely grateful to the Board for their commitment to the organisation and the work they do so willingly as volunteers to provide strategic guidance, financial control, and governance.

Our Trustees are particularly proactive and always looking to improve. Volunteer Trustees come from a variety of backgrounds bringing different skills and experience to the role which some support alongside full time jobs.

They have recently initiated a 360 Review process to identify any process, knowledge or training gaps in the Board and prioritise areas of focus for development and have started with an improved Recruitment, Induction and Training Development Plan for Trustees alongside a dedicated Trustee Handbook specifically for Citizens Advice Denbighshire's Board of Trustees.

> **I am delighted with the assessment results which reflect the hard work, knowledge and dedication of our staff and volunteers.**

Gay Brooks, Chair of the Board of Trustees

Also developed this year was a new Communications Strategy. This document sets out:

- how we communicate internally and externally under policies that we seek a two way exchange;
- that we communicate in a friendly and compassionate style, under a culture of honesty and openness; and
- That we set out to make things clear and understandable for colleagues, clients and stakeholders ensuring that all audiences - both internal and external - receive the information and support they need in a timely manner and in the language, (Welsh, English or otherwise as required) and format they understand.

Work in 2020-21 included the development of a Code of Conduct which sets out a foundation of behaviours for the standards of conduct expected of all staff and volunteers. The code sets out:

- the standards we set ourselves;
- the expectations we have of ourselves and each other; and
- how we should work together and treat colleagues, clients and stakeholders under principles of professionalism, fairness, and responsibility.

a strong performance against the standard, supported by copious evidence

Citizens Advice
Performance and Quality Audit Report, 2021

The staff are friendly and approachable. Their attitudes towards helping me were amazing and I know that if ever a problem arises I can count on them to help and support me any way they can.

Citizens Advice Denbighshire has painstakingly resolved my problems and kept me informed every step of the way. I cannot thank you enough for what you have done for me.

My experience with Citizens Advice Denbighshire was really nothing less than a brilliance of emotional support for me.

I have nothing but huge praise for you all. It's like having a warm blanket wrapped around one's shoulders on a freezing night, thank you a million times.

The help I got was excellent, very professional, and sorted my problem.

Comments from our clients

As I suffer from depression and anxiety, it is very reassuring to be able to contact people who are understanding and patient.

Citizens Advice is a lifeline for the people.

I was impressed with how they helped me. Very calming, considerate, really helpful and was successful in the work done for me.

Without the help of this service I wouldn't know what to do.

I can't thank you enough for the help received and will highly recommend Citizens Advice Denbighshire, I'll certainly be using you again if need be.

The help I received was amazing. I cannot praise highly enough and will definitely not hesitate to contact you again.
Thank you so much.

I couldn't be more thankful for the help and support I've received.