

Contact us

Local Office 01255 377080 - 10am to 4pm, Monday to Thursday

Mental Health Hub 01255 225027 - 10am to 3:30pm, Tuesday to Friday

Adviceline (National) 0800 144 8848 - 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Consumer Helpline 0808 223 1133 - 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Universal Credit Help to Claim 0800 144 8444 - 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday

Scams Action 0808 250 5050 - 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (online scams only)

All lines are closed on Public Holidays.

Calls to 08 numbers are free from mobiles and landlines.

Calls to 01 numbers are charged at your standard network rate.

Find us online

www.cabtendring.org

 /cabtendring

 @AdviceCitizens

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Citizens Advice Tendring is an operating name of

Citizens Advice Bureau Tendring Limited

Charity Registration Number 1091777

Company Registration Number 4345160

Citizens Advice Tendring is authorised and regulated

by the Financial Conduct Authority. FCA Authorisation Number 617560

Registered Office: 18 Carnarvon Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO15 6QF

Citizens Advice is an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. Charity Registration Number 279057

ANNUAL REVIEW

2021 - 22



Chief Officer's Report

Another strange year for us all with COVID-19 still prevalent and the hope of things getting back to normal not looking realistic. The last year has seen organisations change and adapt to new ways of working after the shockwaves from the pandemic. CATendring is no different. Although we had a successful year regarding numbers of clients being helped, we were aware of the fact that many Tendring residents are vulnerable and need a face to face service. With this in mind we had to redesign our services, as going back to the pre pandemic model was not an option. Many volunteers had left and we needed not only to recruit new volunteers but in higher numbers than before.

The new hybrid working pattern has taken some adjustment for staff and volunteers, not to mention the extra costs involved in providing equipment for all homeworkers.

Some contracts were due to come to an end and possible renewal, including Help To Claim (HTC) / Universal Credit. Although we had the highest quality scores in Essex we decided that the call centre model was not for us, so relinquished this in favour of servicing our own local phone line. However, as soon as we could do so we reopened our face to face outreaches in Clacton and Jaywick. At CATendring we believe in continually making improvements and efficiencies where we can so we can reach and help more people in Tendring and be cost-effective in our service.

Partnerships

We continue to work with our local partners in cross referring clients to each other to ensure people receive as much help as possible. We want to thank TDC, DWP, CVST, Foodbank, SUMMIT, Peabody Housing, NEST, Barnardo's, Signpost and many more. We are confident that our joint working will grow and continue next year.

Funders

Our funders have been very understanding of the challenges we have faced this year and have continued to fund various initiatives for extra help for Tendring residents. We distributed extra funds from Essex County Council for the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), the Household Support Fund and Energy Redress vouchers. All these funds helped enormously in reducing poverty amongst Tendring residents with extra needs during the pandemic. These funds were able to support people by us providing a families support worker and extra adviser capacity.

Our Services

This was the last year of delivery of HTC-Universal Credit and we were proud to reach a high quality score in both customer service and advice.

Our Money Advice Service contract for debt advice continues and is back to delivery of face to face appointments which is essential for the most vulnerable in Tendring and appears the most appropriate for this area of advice.

Our Warm Homes contract provides a part time Energy Adviser who helps people in fuel poverty, advises on grants, keeping bills low and energy efficiencies.

We currently have a domestic violence support worker who has been very busy seeing clients as we come out of the pandemic. This is an area of advice that sadly appears to be growing. However we are pleased that people are coming forward, as we have seen fantastic outcomes in helping people make significant life changes.

Audit

We are audited every year by CA National on nine leadership categories: Governance, Finance, Operational Management, Research and Campaigns, EDI, Partnership Working, People Management, Risk Management and Strategic Planning. We saw an increase in our

Thank you to our Funders

We would like to thank our funders, who make it possible for us to provide our service to the community.



Feedback from our Clients

"The CAB have helped me to stop the eviction, so I can sell my house and move near my kids for their support".

You have very good communication skills, making me feel at ease. You did not treat me as a number, you took time out and treated me with respect".

I just had no confidence was in an all-time low and always had problems completing forms, but you put my mind at ease".

"Without your help I doubt that I would be in the situation where I am now where I have been given the right amount of monies from the DWP".

If you are suffering debt or not opening letters or having issues that you can't cope with, then please seek the CAB's help. They don't judge".

"I was embarrassed admitting my problem to the CAB but without all their hard work I would be homeless now".

scores in all areas, improvements were noted and we were complimented on the standard of our Business and Development Plan. Our scores have improved year on year over the last 5 years. These audits are so important to us to ensure our standards are upheld and that we are operating in a professional, legal and effective way, as well as meeting governance requirements.

Trustees

Thank you to the trustees for their guidance and support over the year. Our chair for the last four years, Tonia Parsons sadly retired in March 22 to travel more so we would like to thank her for her leadership, kindness and humour over the years. Fortunately, we have found a wonderful replacement in Councillor Gina Placey who took over the role.

Staff and Volunteers

Thank you to all our staff and volunteers without whom we would not be the success we are. Everyone has shown how professional they are during very difficult times and have to deal with some harrowing cases. They also have to go through very stringent training and maintain high quality standards. A benefit that the pandemic has brought, through remote working norms is the ability to recruit from a wider area, which has facilitated us to broaden our team in its skills and diversity.

We are also very proud of our new website which we wanted to reflect our unique local identity. Although we are affiliated to National Citizens Advice we also stand alone as an individual office with our heart firmly rooted in Tendring. Being an independent charity in our own right it does mean that our funding is having to be secured on a yearly basis. Any suggestions of funding going forward would be greatly appreciated to ensure our long-term survival.

**MelanieHammond
Chief Officer**

Citizens Advice Tendring — our main office in Carnarvon Road, Clacton-on-Sea



Our staff and volunteers are here to help those in need of support and advice



Community events are a great way to raise awareness of the services we provide



About Citizens Advice

We are a team of dedicated, professional volunteers and staff, passionate about empowering our community through advice, information, confidence building, education, advocacy and campaigning.

Our core service focuses on meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in Tendring, including those with mental health challenges, rather than providing general advice to those people who can access information and services themselves.

- We provide free, confidential and impartial 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

- We encourage, empower and educate
- We're here for everyone



Our Aims and Principles

AIMS

Our mission statement is to provide quality advice that people need for the problems they face. To identify and champion the issues that affect people's lives.

PRINCIPLES

Independence

Citizens Advice Tendring offers a completely independent service. We are therefore able to offer impartial advice to all clients and to take up any issue with the appropriate authority on behalf of individuals or groups.

Impartiality

The service provided by Citizens Advice Tendring is impartial. It is open to everybody, irre-

spective of ability, age, gender, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and social or economic status. Advice and help will be given on any subject without any preconceived attitude on the part of the Citizens Advice service.

Confidentiality

Citizens Advice Tendring has provided free, confidential and independent advice to our local community since 1939. Nothing learned by the service from clients, will be passed on to anyone outside the service without their express permission.

Free

Citizens Advice services are provided free to clients at the point of delivery.

Case Studies

Client Case 1

Client is single and lives in a one bed park home. It had no insulation and he heated his accommodation with propane gas. His park home was extremely cold and expensive to heat and heat loss through the walls was significant. Our client had worked for many years as a printer until developing Multiple Sclerosis 10 years ago. He currently receives Contributions Based Employment & Support Allowance, Universal Credit, Council Tax Support plus Personal Independence Payment for mobility and daily living. Tendring District Council extended his bathroom and bedroom under a Disabled Facilities Grant so that he can live in his home safely.

Our Warm Homes project was able to refer the client to an accredited insulation supplier. His park home is now fully insulated - dry lining insulation for solid walls. Special certex (which is 50 mm thick) was used. His home was then re-plastered. Our client was delighted - the difference he said was amazing, reporting that he had his gas boiler on for only 1 hour since Christmas and reported temperatures of 25 degrees inside his park home in January. The cost of the work, if he'd had to pay for it, was around £10,000.

Client Case 2

Our client is single, an owner occupier living in an uninsulated wooden bungalow in Jaywick. She has a prepayment meter and not enough money to put into it. She had loft insulation and 2 storage heaters fitted 2 and a half years ago on a grant. She had an accident at work 15 months ago at the Care Home she worked at. Our client cannot walk 50 meters, stand for very long, sit at a desk or move from one chair to another seated. She has continence issues requiring frequent changes of clothing and bedding - so higher energy costs.

Fuel Vouchers were supplied to tide the client over. She was advised to ask the DWP for a Work Capability Assessment. She was successful in getting the Limited Capability for Work Related Activity element (worth £354.28 pcm £4251.36 pa) added to her Universal Credit. This award was backdated 3 months = £1,062.84. Our client was also advised to apply for Personal Independence Payment. She did so and awaits a response. She was advised to apply for a grant for solid wall insulation, in order to reduce heat loss. Detailed advice on compensation for her injury at work was provided verbally and in writing

Wellbeing

Employment and mental health resources

- www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/
- www.leapers.co/articles/2020-10-12/why-mental-health-at-work-matters-when-youre-self-employed-or-freelancing
- www.covidwellbeingsupport.com/
- www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/how-to-be-mentally-healthy-at-work/work-and-mental-health/
- www.acas.org.uk/

Coronavirus and mental health resources

- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/en/explore-mental-health/covid-19-resources>
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/>

Bereavement resources

- Bereaved by Suicide Service - call 01473 322683 (Ipswich)
0808 168 9111 (National Support Line)
- www.sudden.org/help-for-adults/
- [www.sthelenas.org.uk/referral-area\(bereavement-services\)](http://www.sthelenas.org.uk/referral-area(bereavement-services))
- <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/suicide-bereavement-support/>

General mental health resources

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/free-therapy-or-counselling/
- www.therapyforyou.co.uk/
- www.mind.org.uk/
- Rethink - call 0121 522 7007 (General Enquiries)
- www.actionforhappiness.org/

Crisis resources

- Samaritans - call 116 123
- Crisis Team - call 111, and select the 'Mental Health' option

Everybody is affected by mental health issues either directly or indirectly, therefore we all have an interest in our own and others' wellbeing and resilience.

There is evidence that some parts of the community may be more likely to experience mental wellbeing issues particularly if they have overlapping problems, for example homelessness, substance misuse and/or households with low income. We are aware that in some areas of Tendring there are high levels of deprivation, which will impact the number of people struggling with mental health issues.

Statistics show that up to half of adult mental illness may be preventable when there is access to a good support network and intervention plan (if needed). At Citizens Advice Tendring we are committed to support people in the best way we can, putting wellbeing at the heart of what we do. We will continue to work in partnership with other services to ensure that we continue to focus on support and intervention when needed, to help people back into the community.

We have identified some key contacts and resources to support people through mental wellbeing concerns. These organisations provide the specialist knowledge and support to break down barriers to assist in an individual's recovery.



Research and Campaigns

It is of vital importance to us that we don't just act to solve the problem but work to prevent it from happening in the first place. As we seek to rebuild and recover from COVID-19, we've had, and will continue to have, many challenges to contend with from rising energy bills to the increasing cost of living. Many across the UK are struggling and this is what we're here to help with.

Citizens Advice helped 2.4 million people last year. There were also over 60 million visits to our online advice pages. No one else sees so many people with so many different kinds of problems, and that gives us a unique insight into the challenges people are facing today. For Tendring alone, on average, people come to us with 4 issues per visit which demonstrates the complexity of what they're struggling with, and how far reaching our support is. With the right evidence, we can create change and show local and national organisations how they can make things better for people.

Our recent campaign successes include:

- **Universal Credit:** Since the pandemic, the government has adopted several of our recommendations, including extending the Universal Credit uplift and the suspension of the Minimum Income Floor for self-employed workers.

Citizens Advice has plans to focus on the following issues in the next year:

- The adequacy of welfare support.
- Ensuring consumer protections are fit for the transition to Net Zero as part of our role as the statutory consumer watchdog for energy.
- Pushing for an Address and Collect service to enable people in unsafe, precarious or



non-traditional living situations to be able to receive their post.

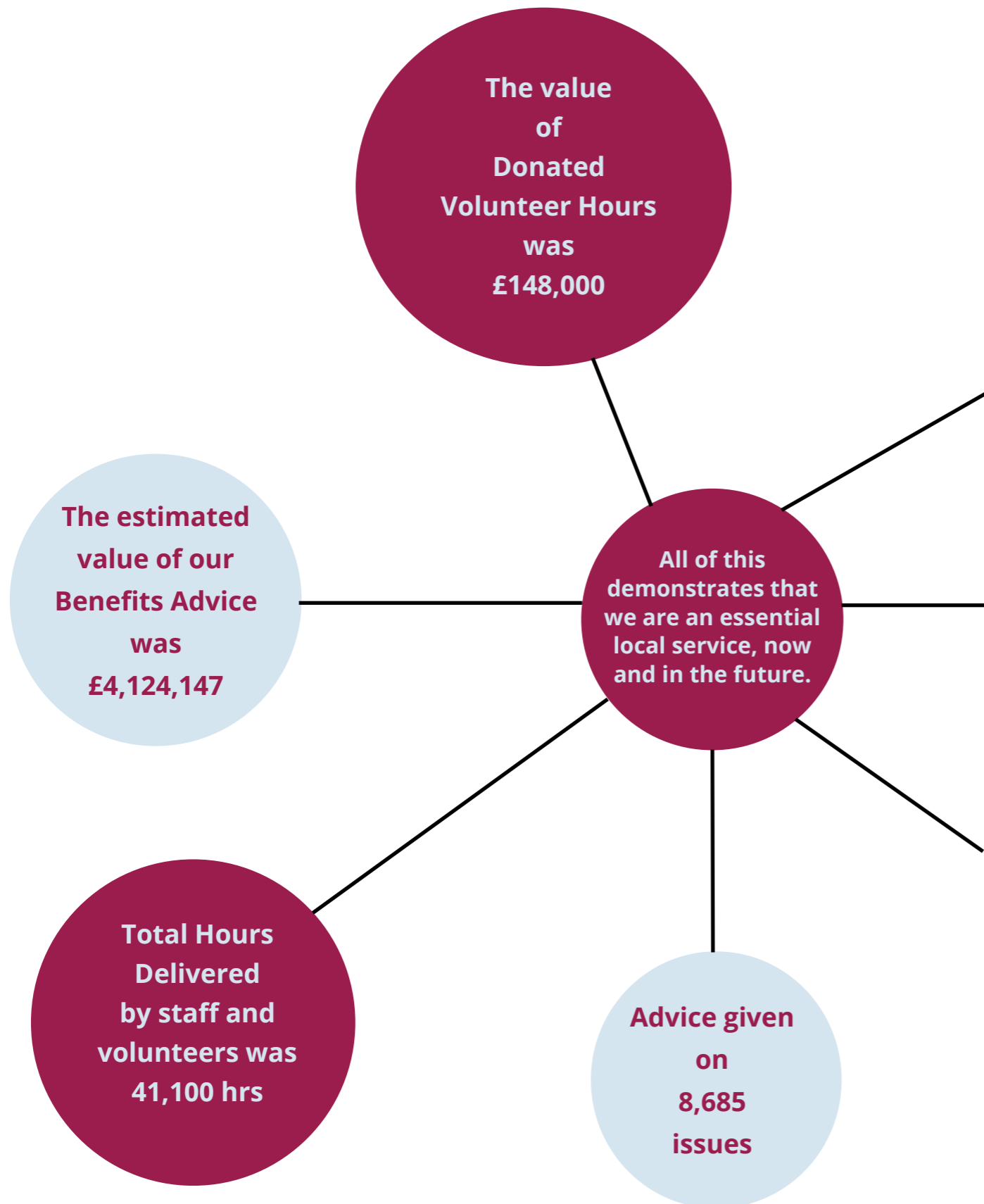
- Advocating for those experiencing harm caused by No Recourse to Public Funds, which denies migrants access to a basic safety net in hard times.

With benefits, housing and debt enduring as the top 3 issues faced by local residents, we run annual campaigns locally and in partnership with organisations. These include **Debt Awareness Week** and the **Big Energy Saving Week**. Both aim to support those who need help the most and centre on finance, debt and money management.

We have ambitious plans though and know we can do more. With mental health challenges increasing for many and the rising cost of living, we aim to ensure people know what help is available to them and to keep campaigning to get more support in place for those who need it the most. We hope to see your support as we embark on this journey.

You can find information about our current campaigns here: [Campaigns — Tendring \(cabtendring.org\)](https://www.cabtendring.org)

Key Outcomes of Citizens Advice Tendring 2021/22



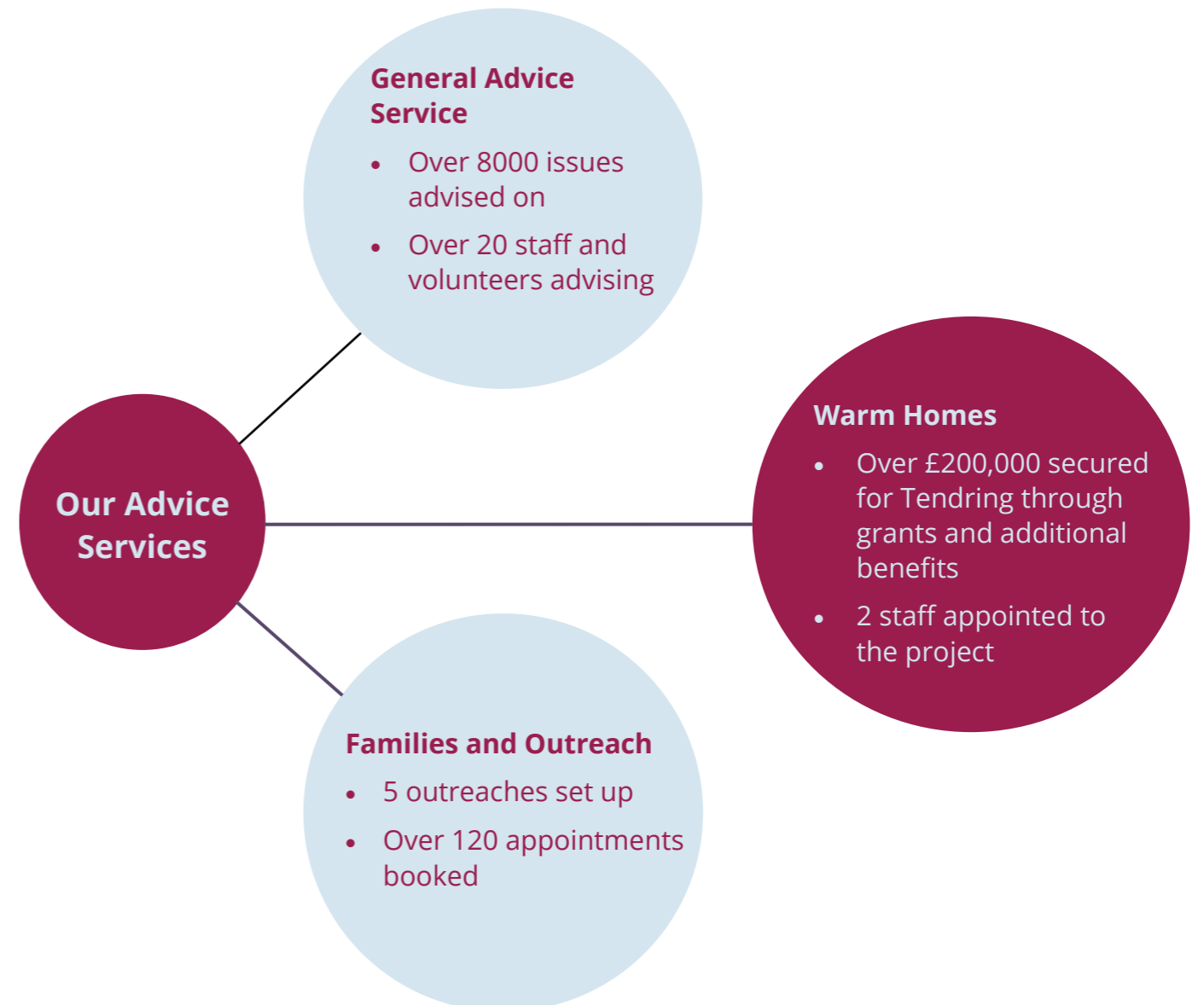
Linda and Lucy's Story (names changed)

Linda and her toddler came to us with their British host Lucy after fleeing Ukraine and had no food or bedding or money for fuel. Our team were able to secure bedding and mattresses for them as well as £240 in food and £120 in fuel, they also helped them claim Universal Credit to secure a monthly income of over £400 a month.

improve energy efficiency in their homes.

The Household Support Fund was also introduced in July 2022 to mitigate the cost of living crisis by helping families, disabled individuals, pensioners and other vulnerable people. It provided financial support to get them out of crisis. This included supermarket and fuel vouchers, wider essentials such as white goods and beds and additional items such as bedding and financial support for public transport costs.

The purpose of the project is to help people maximise their income, and apply for grants to



Our Advice Services

Our services are available to individuals all over Tendring, which covers a population of 146,000 people (ONS 2019). We offer assistance with a multitude of problems, including benefits entitlement, forms and appeals, housing, eviction and homelessness, domestic abuse, fuel crises and debt. In light of the cost of living and energy crisis, our staff have also ramped up their response to fuel poverty and hardship. The advice team continue to work with clients to ensure that everyone has access to the advice they need to solve their existing problems and avoid future issues.

General Advice Service

In 2021-22, reforms to our service meant that we were able to help a third more people each month than 2020-21. Our largest advice query was welfare benefits, which we advised on 3,800 times and which formed 44% of our advice to individuals in Tendring. This included advice on state pensions, pension credit, tax credits and Universal Credit.

Whilst working on benefit appeals and forms, a holistic approach is taken to see whether clients are also eligible for other support, such as disability benefits, or dealing with debts or emergencies. Each client has an individual needs assessment and is provided with a benefit check. The adviser then tailors the advice

John's Story (name changed)

John came to us when his Pension Credit claim was refused. Our advisers helped him appeal and John's award was reinstated. He was also given a backdated award of over £1500 by the DWP to cover the time he had missed out on it.

and assistance needed to the client's capability. In 2021-22 the quality of our advice was consistently scored highly by our independent assessors for client outcome and case administration, with them saying 'we have confidence that you give good advice consistently'

Families Advice and Outreach

Moving out of lockdown, it has been important to Citizens Advice Tendring to move back into the community and to have a real local presence. We now have our Families Adviser and 3 volunteers working all over the community with families and individuals who may not have an internet connection or a telephone. In 2021-22, 59% of the people who came to us for support had a long term health condition or disability and many of them have been supported with tailored advice in a face to face location near their homes, in their own community.

Warm Homes and Household Support Fund

After securing funding for the Warm Homes project in the summer of 2020, our service has

Ali's Story (name changed)

Ali came to the outreach in crisis because he couldn't manage his energy bills and had no food. With the help of our outreach staff and their support with fuel and food vouchers, he said he no longer feels suicidal.

been extended to provide support until at least 2023.

We have two Energy and Engagement Specialists appointed to our Warm Homes Project.

Rob's Story (name changed)

Rob had a park home that was expensive to heat and he had been diagnosed with MS. Our team secured full dry lining insulation for solid walls and special Celetex (50mm thick) was used to insulate his home. His home was then re-plastered. Our client was delighted and reported temperatures of 25 degrees inside his park home in January. The cost of the work, if he'd had to pay for it, was around £10,000.

Citizens Advice Tendring: 01255 377080

Adviceline (out of hours): 0800 144 8848

HELP AND ADVICE AVAILABLE WITH

- Benefits
- Consumer Debt
- Discrimination
- Education
- Employment
- Financial
- Health
- Housing
- Relationships
- Taxation
- Gender Based Violence
- Travel
- Benefit Form Filling
- Utilities
- Fuel Poverty

Value of Debt Advice to individuals s:
 Debts Written Off
 £724,175
 Debt Managed
 £820,238

Help and advice given to
 3,776 clients

Number of Paid Staff: 22
 Number of Volunteers: 32

Opportunities at Citizens Advice Tendring

At CAT we love to nurture and grow talent. What's our evidence? Well 3 of the 5 current members of our senior management team started off as volunteers with us.

If you have skills, we want them. If you don't have skills, we won't believe you, but we will help you to gain more. If you lack confidence, we will help you to build it.

In the year to March 2022, we trained 15 new advisers. Not all of them stayed the full course and we understand that. Volunteers have lives and commitments and sometimes something must give. 11 of the trainees went on to the advice rota and 3 of those went on to be paid advisers, 2 with us and 1 with another local Citizens Advice. We are pleased and proud that our training programme helps not only our clients, but also supports our volunteers into work opportunities or with career changes. We want our volunteers to develop and keep on developing and we support volunteers to try new things and move into different roles if that's what they want.

Our adviser training programme builds real work skills such as:

- Using information technology and digital tools in a workplace setting
- Working in a diverse team
- Working empathetically with our clients with all the rewards and challenges that can bring
- Managing difficult situations
- Learning about the law and researching information



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What experience do volunteers need?
A. None – just a non-judgemental approach, time and commitment, and we will provide the

training and support.

Q. How long does the training take?

A. Initial Adviser training takes about 10 weeks – a couple of days a week including on-line training, zoom sessions and learning from experienced advisers. It doesn't stop there. We train all our advisers to become accredited debt advisers and provide continuing professional development training to keep them up to date.

Q. What's the time commitment once trained?

A. We like Advisers to do a couple of days a week.

Q. Is there any flexibility in how and when people volunteer and the time commitment?

A. We believe that diversity is strength, and we want a strong diverse volunteer team - so talk to us. It's possible to train and volunteer from home and we will do our best to support people to volunteer for us.

Q. Are there any other volunteer roles?

A. Absolutely! All our trustees are volunteers, we have admin volunteers and campaign volunteers. Once we know what someone is interested in, we will see if we can find the right role.

Q. What do volunteers get out of it?

A. Here's what some of our volunteers say:

- It keeps my mind active
- Its such a great community to be part of
- I'm getting practical experience that supports my law degree
- It enabled me to find my areas of interest
- It keeps my skills up to date while I'm between jobs
- A sense of satisfaction that I'm making a difference to people's lives

Go to the **Volunteer For Us** page on our website to find out more:

<https://cabtendring.org/volunteer-for-us>.

Debt

In 2021-22 as the cost of living has risen, we have seen an increase in fuel debts and financial issues. StepChange have stated that the average electricity debt per client increased by £150 between 2020 and 2021. The average gas arrears debt increased by £78. Government measures were put in place to help reduce energy costs, including the Energy Bills Support Scheme and the Household Support Fund, but we are nonetheless seeing an increase in people approaching our service with debt concerns. StepChange further states that in 2021, 28% of clients at the time of advice were in arrears on their electricity bill, and 23% on their gas bill. They express that reflects a continuation of the trend seen throughout the Covid pandemic period.

MAPSDAP

Through this project, we provide money advice to the residents of Tendring. We can assist our clients in a number of ways, such as helping them to negotiate priority and non-priority debts, advise on personal insolvency options, and provide income maximisation and budgeting advice. Our aim is also, where needed, to give people the tools to prevent future money issues.

In 2021-22 we have continued to deliver specialist debt advice through funding from the Money Advice Service. A large number of clients are referred for debt advice via our core generalist service. We also work closely with partner organisations such as Peabody and the Essex Wellbeing Service, who support vulnera-



ble people in the Tendring area and refer them to us when they need help with their finances. We have resumed offering face to face appointments for those who need tailored in person support. This has meant that we provide accessible support. We have continued to provide email and telephone support, so that we can address the financial issues of our community, every weekday.

KEY FACTS

The estimated value of our Debt Advice was £299,270.

We have assisted our clients in 2021/22 to write off a total number of debts that amounts to £691,204 and a total of £81,392 in debt was re-scheduled, to allow clients to better manage it.

In 2020/21, debt client numbers increased by 9% and we assisted over 320 clients with their debt. 25% compared to 2019/20.

Andy's story (name changed)

Andy contacted us as he had been disputing a Council Tax debt, was in rent arrears and also had a number of credit card debts. He had accumulated debts while being a long term carer for his mother who had recently passed away. We helped him negotiate more manageable repayment plans for his debts and alongside our energy team, we helped him apply for disability benefits and means tested benefits so that he received all the income to which he was eligible in his situation. He thanked us for our support and expressed that he had finally got the creditors off his back.

Scams

Every summer, we run our 2 week Scams Awareness campaign. The campaign aims to create a network of confident, alert consumers who know what to do when they spot a scam.

Citizens Advice runs the Scams Awareness campaign in close collaboration with the Consumer Protection Partnership. This brings together key partners in the consumer landscape to identify, prioritise and coordinate collective action to tackle detriment. Partners include Trading Standards service and the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

But it's important to be #ScamAware all year round.

The coronavirus pandemic saw a rise in scams, with fraudsters trying to take advantage of the uncertainty and financial fallout in 2020/21. As a result of Covid, social and working practices changed with 2021/22 seeing a prolonged increase in the use of the internet. This increased our vulnerability and exposure to highly developed online scams, with criminals exploiting unwary internet users through impersonation scams, romance fraud and investment scams.

Consumer champion Which? found that £700,000 is lost to bank transfer scams every day. A recent Citizens Advice report found that almost three-quarters of people surveyed had been targeted by a scam in the previous two years. The National Audit Office (NAO) has estimated that individuals in the UK lose £10 billion a year due to fraud, not to mention the emotional impact.

Identifying scams

Scams come in many forms and are increasingly complex and sophisticated. It can be difficult to spot when someone is trying to scam you.

Warning signs include:

- It seems too good to be true, such as "Get Rich Quick" investment schemes
- There's unexpected contact, such as someone you don't know getting in touch or a parcel delivery you're not expecting
- You've been asked for personal information like passwords or your bank details
- You're being urged to respond quickly so you don't get time to think about it or talk to family and friends
- You've been asked to pay urgently or in an unusual way, for example by gift vouchers or a transfer service, or you keep being asked for extra money to complete the deal
- You suspect you're not dealing with a real company, like if there's no postal address
- You are being asked to pay for a product or service before receiving written confirmation of what's been agreed

Biggest Scams of 2021

1. 'There's a problem with your Amazon account'
2. 'Your National Insurance number has been compromised'
3. 'You've missed a delivery'
4. 'Apply for your Covid passport now'
5. Online ads and social media scams

(Source: Which?)

Be Scam Aware

We're all worried about money. Don't let scammers take yours.

A New Website for Citizens Advice Tending

Our fabulous new website launched in February. Previously we had the standard national template website which meant we could only add twenty words about our service.

The new website (<https://cabtending.org/>) is interactive and engaging and enables us to showcase our services and opportunities much more effectively.

People using the website can:

- Look up our services and contact information
- Look at our latest campaigning work and news
- Learn more about our mental health hub programme
- Tell us what they think about our services

The website gives a real sense of who we are, our values, and our commitment to our clients, staff, and volunteers. In the volunteer video, current and former volunteers talk about their experience of volunteering for Citizens Advice Tending and what they get out of it. A few former volunteers talk about how their volunteer-

ing opportunity led them into paid roles with us, something we are keen to promote.

There are already early indications that the website is supporting us to grow our volunteer base with targeted Facebook campaigns driving traffic to the volunteering page. This will help us in our drive to help more clients.

WEBSITE KEY STATISTICS

(From launch date on 07/02/22 to end of year 31/03/22)

- Total number of site visits : **1200**
- Estimate of the total number of actual visitors that reached the site: **844**
- Total number of views (page requests) across all site pages: **3100**



Citizens Advice Tending

GET ADVICE

VOLUNTEER

WORK FOR US

Here for you.

Whatever your issue.

Whoever you are.

We're an independent local charity and part of the Citizens Advice network across England and Wales.

We provide free, confidential and impartial advice and campaign on big issues affecting people's lives.

Our goal is to help everyone find a way forward, whatever problem they face.

Visit our new look interactive website at: <https://cabtending.org/>

(Image above shows the 'Home Page' that greets all site visitors)

Tendring Mental Health Hub

The Citizens Advice Tendring Mental Health Hub project was created to help people with mental health challenges who were finding it difficult to access our advice services; specifically 'drop in', due to crowded waiting rooms and waiting times. It soon became clear that people needed more than just advice; they also needed support with their mental health. We found many people had become isolated and had lost confidence especially when it came to social interaction, so we wanted to change that.

With this in mind the Mental Health Hub recovery programme was introduced to help people integrate back into society in a nurturing supportive environment, over a 12-month period. They volunteer in the charity shop and learn shop skills, join activities and meet likeminded people who understand what it is like to feel isolated and alone. The results have been amazing. It has turned people's lives around and helped them to find a new purpose, reclaim their self-esteem and make friends. Many go on to other local volunteering placements and some enter paid work.

In January a new MHH Manager and a new Recovery Worker were recruited and we invested in additional staff training as well as implemented improvements to the recovery and retail training programmes. Our hub workers



Our shop manager checking stock quality in the Citizens Advice Tendring Charity Shop

have become an even more effective and well balanced team working strongly together.

Charity Shop

The charity shop's main aim is to help people with mental health challenges to develop retail skills and gain general work experience as well as support them in their recovery. We also strive to boost much needed income for our charity. Donations are always gratefully received.

Participants

During the 2021/2022 period our participants gave a total of 1,521 hours of engagement on the programme. Throughout this time they were supported in learning all the skills required to work within our shop. Two participants took this further by completing NVQ Customer Service qualifications, via our funded partnership with Signpost.

Activities

The Hub runs several activities each week to help promote good physical wellbeing alongside their mental wellbeing, including:

- **Cycling Project** -We have trained 2 volunteers to be leaders for this project to assist with road safety. (Supported by Cycling UK)
- **Walk and Talk** -This weekly walk encourages bonding with peers and encourages people to start a dialogue.
- **Gardening Project** -We have an allotment where we are encouraging people to grow their own vegetables.

The activities were born out of our involvement with Sport England and the poor health outcomes for Tendring. We decided that people need to say what they enjoy doing, then we help to start up a group. Ultimately, we encourage our volunteers to be leaders of their own groups without us, therefore encouraging self-sufficiency and independence.

Partnerships

This year we have continued to offer space within the Hub to partners for use as an outreach.

This includes Mind, First Chapter, African Families in the UK, Signpost, and NEE Digital Access Support trainers.

By working together, we hope to spread the word about the support available throughout Tendring. In turn this helps us to promote the Mental Health Hub and encourage more people to access this programme and make a



Recovery Worker at the Gardening Project

positive change in their lives.

The Future We are always looking for ways to raise awareness for our project and can regularly be found at local community events to support this aim. Approximately only 1 in 8 adults with a mental health problem currently receive any kind of treatment (source: Mind), so we know how important it is to make people aware of the support we can provide.

Case Study

The programme participant was referred via Health In Mind. At the initial assessment he stated that he suffered with stress, anxiety, and panic attacks. He hoped by joining the programme he would be able to improve his confidence, people skills and work towards beginning a university course.

At first he struggled to overcome the feeling of panic remaining very quiet, avoiding eye contact and working alone at the back of the shop. His shift ended at the same time as schools finishing, which meant he stalled leaving the site as he was afraid of being caught in a crowd and having a panic attack on route home.

Over the first 3 months progress was slow but a friendship with a more experienced participant grew and a mentoring dynamic began. With confidence building, the summer saw him feel comfortable enough to participate in the allotment project and shortly after he also joined the cycling group. Since then he regularly attending both weekly sessions, even taking time at the allotment to teach others how to grow plants from seed. In January, this interest in gardening led us to refer him for a voluntary position with TDC, helping to maintain the public gardens.

After 6 months he had successfully completed the MHH retail training programme and began to take on the responsibility of listing products in our shop. Feeling like he had reached a stage where he was able to remain focused, he even enrolled on a degree course with the Open University and has completed 3 modules to date. With the assistance of Signpost, he created a new C.V and cover letter and has since completed 3 job applications with one progressing to the interview stage.

He had been working on 3 personal goals: reducing isolation, gaining confidence and starting part time employment or mainstream volunteering. Having completed the first 2 goals it was time to tick off the third. After receiving the news that he was unsuccessful with his job interview, he decided to embark on a permanent volunteering role with the Advice Service.

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