

Citizens Advice Brighton & Hove

Delivering advice to the community since 1939



Annual Review 2022-23



Chair's introduction



Last year I said that Britain was facing its biggest cost-of-living crisis in decades. I said that Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove was helping more people with crisis support, energy problems and not having the money to make ends meet than ever before.

The cost of living crisis continues to dominate – but times are getting even harder. Typical energy bills are more than 50% higher than the same period in 2021, mortgage costs are staying high and private rents are continuing to rise.

Record numbers of people are coming to us with a homelessness issue.

Around half of the people we help with debt advice are now in a negative budget, where their income is not enough to cover their essential costs, even after being helped by one of our advisers.

Not being able to put on the heating means living in the cold, dark and damp, which is bad for your [health](#). Going without essentials like food has long-term impacts on our physical health. As ever, disabled people are most negatively affected.

We not only provide advice, we also campaign for better policies at Government and local level. Our staff and volunteers work closely with Brighton and Hove City Council and our local advice partners to share data and identify extra ways to help people through the crisis.

I stepped down as Chair in March and handed over to Nigel Meager. I want to thank our volunteers, staff and trustees for their commitment to the citizens of Brighton and Hove, and our Chief Executive Jo Carden for her leadership.

You too can get involved:

- Brighton and Hove has a cost of living help fund. [Please donate here.](#)
- [Share our advice](#) with your friends and neighbours on the support available
- Look at our [cost of living data dashboard](#) to find information about the issues we're helping people with across England and Wales

Fran Harrison, Trustee, Chair

We note our thanks, and give attribution, for the front cover image: By Qmin - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=35813629>

About Us

Citizens Advice Brighton & Hove is an independent charity that provides free, confidential and impartial advice.

Our goal is to help people find a way forward, whatever their issue.

Our Aims

- **To provide the advice people need for the problems they face**
This means helping people understand their options, their rights and responsibilities, so that they can make informed choices
- **To improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives**
This means we listen to our client's problems and provide research to policy makers on the impact of policies on people's lives

Our Principles

Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove provides free, independent, confidential, and impartial advice to everyone in the city on their rights and responsibilities.

We value diversity, promote equality, and challenge discrimination.

Our impact

- We helped over **5,612** people with **16,700** different issues
- For every £1 invested in our services, we financially benefit clients by **£6.71**
- Our advice led to client gains of over **£2.2 million**
- We received **9,838 (or 60%)** contacts via telephone
- We received **4,953 (or 31%)** contacts online
- We received **1,028 (or 6%)** contacts face to face

Our partnership work

We are stronger when we work together, and we work in partnership with a wide range of local charities.

We lead the delivery of two partnerships, called **Advice Matters** and **Moneyworks**, which provide essential services including **7788** people locally this year.

Report from our Chief Executive



Being the CEO of Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove is a busy and rewarding experience, and one that leaves me in awe of our staff and volunteers. I cannot praise their knowledge and dedication enough.

We know that hardship has increased in Brighton and Hove, in many different ways. This year, we worked to address existing and emerging issues in the following ways:

More general advice capacity: We have increased the number of volunteer advisers, to answer the growing number of general advice enquiries we receive. These volunteers have been trained by our Training and Advice Supervisors, to deliver high quality advice in an environment that is always changing.

We have expanded the ways that people can access us, adding face to face appointments and drop-ins to our phone and online enquiries. This has helped people who find it hard to access us by phone or the internet to access advice in person.

More specialist advice capacity: We have increased the number of specialist advisers and advice services we offer. This includes offering advice in food banks, with the Trussell Trust. We are now also working with people affected by gambling, to address debts and help manage money issues.

We have grown our Energyworks services, targeting advice to the many people finding themselves in fuel poverty as fuel costs have risen so much.

Influencing and awareness raising: The cost of living crisis continues to affect our communities, including our own staff and volunteers.

We continue to work to influence local and central government towards policies which address the harsh circumstances faced by people on a daily basis.

We are committed to the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers through policies, pay and supportive supervision, creating a dynamic and nurturing culture.

I want to thank all staff, volunteers and trustees who dedicate themselves to raising awareness of local needs and to providing advice to people across the city.

Jo Carden, Chief Executive

Our Team

Thanks to our amazing teams of staff and volunteers, who are the heart of the organisation.

Trustees		Leadership Team	
Chair	Nigel Meager	Chief Executive	Jo Carden
Vice Chair	Fran Harrison	Operations Manager	Alex Brining
Treasurer	Simon Blakeney	Partnerships Manager	Emma Daniel
Trustee	Harriet Gamper	Projects Manager	Rich Jones/Patti Kydd
Trustee	George Longfoot	Advice Session &	Sue Phipps, Julie Ruff
Trustee	Mark Green	Training supervisors	Glynis Boucher, Oriole Mullen
Trustee	Mark Clark		

Staff Team: As well as our fantastic managers and supervisors we have a team of **26 paid staff** who work hard to offer support to our clients across our projects.

These specialists are trained to offer high quality advice across our services - to help our clients find a way forward.

We value our staff and want to make sure that Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove is an inclusive place to work.

91% of our staff feel their views are listened to and valued

98% of our staff would recommend our charity as a place to work or volunteer

Volunteers: Volunteers provide a huge contribution to Citizens Advice Brighton & Hove, and how we deliver advice would not be possible without tens of thousands of dedicated volunteering hours.

Much of our advice is provided by **60+** volunteers, who are trained and supported to deliver different levels of advice by a team of paid Supervisors, to make sure that the highest levels of professional standards are met.

Our **Research and Campaigns Volunteers** are essential to our work in influencing local policy, raising awareness and helping our clients' voices be heard.

Our volunteers kindly donated to us **20,000 hours** last year which is a saving of **£269,000** per year

“My colleagues and fellow volunteers have been so kind, and I have helped to resolve many queries to a high standard. Having been part of this has made me feel as though I have made a difference.”
Volunteer Adviser

Our core Advice Service

Our Advice Service is at the core of our advice offer. Anyone in Brighton & Hove can get information and advice on a range of subjects including housing, problems at work, relationship breakdown and money worries.

This service is run by a team trained Volunteer Advisers who are supported by an experienced supervisor.

During 2022 - 23 we gave advice to:

- **5,612** clients
- on over **16,700** issues
- The financial gain to the client was **£2.2 million**

Top issues across all advice services



Benefits and tax credits
5,254 issues



Housing
2,897 issues



Debt
2,423 issues



Employment
1,055 issues

The value of advice¹

Value to the people we help - £2.2 million: We advise around 5,600 people a year and our advice helps people to achieve financial outcomes like claiming benefits, writing off debts and getting refunds on goods, or unpaid wages.

Value to the public purse - £16.8 million: Our work creates savings for the public purse as people remain in work and their homes, meaning public money can be spent where it is most needed. Our calculation of public value includes the value of a volunteer-run service.

Economic and social value - £12.1 million: There are wider economic and social benefits to our work. Finding a way forward with issues can help improve people's physical health, mental health, and wellbeing.

¹ These figures are collated by the national Citizens Advice Impact Team. The Impact Team lead work to understand and measure the impact of Citizens Advice's work by collecting feedback from more than 70,000 clients each year.

Our work in the health sector

Our advisers work in the Macmillan Horizon Centre and The Sussex Trauma Unit. We work alongside clinical staff and provide:

- benefits advice and casework
- applying for charity grants
- support around housing, employment, health issues and more

Most clients have multiple, ongoing, issues and our specialist advisers support clients until these are resolved.

We have found that providing advice in the same places and alongside treatment can be a valuable aid to recovery. We believe in the value of embedding services at the key point of need.

We are keen to develop new partnerships to help more people benefit from services like these, at the time they need them most.

Please contact us if you feel our work could help your patients and service users.

The Sussex Trauma Unit: The Sussex Trauma Unit is a regional centre for patients that have experienced sudden trauma – which can range from car and household accidents to serious assaults.

Macmillan Horizon Centre: The Macmillan Horizon Centre offers a range of support for local people and their families as they face cancer, including specialist information, complementary therapies and physical activity services, practical support and workshops and a cafe and a space for self help and support groups.



During 22/23 the Major Trauma Project has supported **124 people** to access the help they need to be successfully discharged from hospital and delivered over **£74.5k in financial gains**. Our Macmillan team have supported over **500 people** and delivered financial gains of over **£9.7k** for cancer patients and their families.

K's Story

K was admitted to the Royal Sussex County Hospital with serious wounds after being assaulted with a knife. He couldn't walk or carry out many daily activities. He also has a history of OCD, anxiety, PTSD and depression following his time in the armed forces.

Through a number of sessions we supported him to apply for the disability benefit Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and a blue badge.

The PIP claim was successful, bringing in an extra £172.75 every week to help K manage. The blue badge application was successful, and K's partner uses it when they travel on a daily basis.

Energyworks - Energy Advice

Energyworks: We worked with Brighton & Hove Energy Services Cooperative and Money Advice Plus to reach people in the city who are most vulnerable to fuel poverty, funded by the council's Public Health team.

Energyworks has worked with **628 clients** during the year

£271,020 claimed in benefit gains for clients

£347,054 distributed in fuel payment grants

We knew that fuel poverty was going to be a key issue for households in the city so we fundraised to develop Energyworks into a more sustainable service.

We now have an energy advice and grants project that runs all through the year.

Access to the service has improved with the help of our new funding.

We offer email, online forms, telephone, drop-in and outreach advice, which is all listed on our [website](#).

R's story



R is a single mother with mental health issues. She is on a low income. She came to us for help with an energy debt along with other debts.

Our adviser saw that the housing costs Rhiannon's landlord had reported to the DWP were wrong. We corrected this mistake, and with a back payment of the correct amount, Rhiannon's rent arrears were reduced by over £1000.

The adviser also supported Rhiannon to make an application to the council for what is called a 'discretionary council tax reduction'. This was successful and Rhiannon got over £200 to help with what she owed for council tax.

We claimed a Southern Water grant so Rhiannon could get an oven, which she didn't have.

Our Energyworks service was able to provide energy vouchers and a grant from another programme, which all together cleared Rhiannon's energy debt.

Money Advice Service

This service helps people who are struggling with debt. Many people need face to face help, which we provide.

Some ways we help people are:

- making a fresh start, clearing debts through bankruptcy and Debt Relief Orders
- challenging debts that might not be right or don't have to be paid
- defending money claims against the client and helping to complete court forms
- problems with bailiffs and deduction from earnings or benefits
- help people increase their income and reduce their expenditure through benefits, grants and other help

During 22/23 we have helped **717 people** and have helped them to write off debts equal to over **£96.5k**.

"I am so grateful for this service and the staff who helped me with kindness & respect at a very difficult time. My adviser was dedicated and sympathetic and I will be forever grateful for their help." **Debt advice client**

New services launched for 22/23

Since our last report we have expanded our project team of advisers. We now offer a wider range of services, aimed at tackling key issues faced by our communities.

Citizens Advice - in Trussell Trust food banks: provides key advice on the ground at 2 Trussell Trust food banks across the city, supporting clients with a range of issues to help end their need for food bank support.

Citizens Advice - Gamble Aware Aftercare advice: provides debt and money management advice for people in recovery from gambling harms, to manage the effects of gambling on their finances and wider wellbeing to support sustained recovery.

Volunteer reception and information assistance service: a new team of volunteers providing assisted information to visitors to our waiting area, to offer more support to the many people who visit us for advice and guidance.

Looking ahead to 23/24: We have launched a pilot outreach service, delivering drop-in advice to underserved communities and group advice training in the community. We now offer advice to individuals 50+ years old with the Ageing Well partnership.

Our Partnership Work

Moneyworks

We coordinate a wide range of charities that help people access financial support and education, funded by Brighton & Hove City Council.

In 2022- 2023 we worked with Money Advice Plus, Brighton Housing Trust, St Luke's Advice Service, and Possability People, to deliver advice and casework.

Community education and support projects in Tarner, Whitehawk and Hangleton and Knoll gave one-to-one support, access to IT skills and financial inclusion help.

What Moneyworks does:

Money advice: one to one in-depth advice and casework on debt and benefits

Home energy advice: advice on switching, bills, tariffs, and energy saving measures

Small hardship grants: to support clients in keeping warm at home

Moneyworks has worked with:

1,562 clients during the year

£339,133 claimed in benefits for clients

£459,207 in funds raised for other services (mostly Energyworks - see above)

Advice Matters

This partnership brings together all the charities that provide formal advice in Brighton and Hove who are funded by the council.

It brings in and coordinates extra funding from Trusts and from donations to deliver even more advice in the city. Coordination and mutual support makes the most of the resources available to us.

Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove delivers triage and information and advice. Money Advice Plus, St Luke's Advice Service, BHT Sussex Advice (Immigration Law) and YMCA YAC (youth advice centre) provide advice and casework across the city.

Advice Matters has worked with:

6,226 clients during the year

£2,205,851 claimed in benefit gains for clients

£878,685 additional direct funding levered in for the service

£222,414.50 value of volunteer hours at Brighton and Hove's living wage

Research and Campaigns

Our work to improve the policies and practices that impact people's lives

Brighton and Hove Food and Fuel Fund: We teamed up with the local charity Brighton & Hove Food Partnership and raised over £75,000 towards providing food and fuel locally.

Healthy Start vouchers: We promoted uptake of this help scheme for pregnant people and people with young children.

Home safety and alternative heating campaign: We shared information on risk factors around heating homes in the context of rising energy bills, and what support is available.

Local needs assessment: An assessment of the need for advice and financial inclusion locally, used as a basis for citywide decision making in the voluntary and public sector.

Cost of Living crisis and Frontline worker Survey: Ongoing research using our own data, public data, client interviews and interviews from local frontline advisers.

Raising awareness of city need with councillors and MPs: We share our data about local need to support local decision making.

You can find more information on our [website](#).

Addressing the cost of living crisis

The increasing cost of living continues to hurt here in Brighton & Hove.

Food and energy bills are going up but household incomes aren't.

People are experiencing great hardship, especially the most vulnerable people in our communities.

For a long time, we have warned that some people have to choose between heating or eating. We are now in a serious situation where people can't afford to do either.

Household incomes do not meet living costs. This is why we have set up an appeal to try to make sure that people in the city can be warm and fed.

The situation is made worse because lots of people in our city are private renters, and the gap between the value of housing benefit and the cost of renting has widened.

Help with housing costs, for people in and out of work, hasn't increased in years, and the actual cost of renting is soaring.

Brighton Hove Cost of Living Crisis Funds

Last year we raised £76,739 to help people locally with food and fuel. We have teamed up with Brighton & Hove Food Partnership and are launching the second annual appeal for donations, with support from Brighton & Hove City Council.

The fund pays for prepayment vouchers for energy and for food parcels or food vouchers. It has been used to purchase equipment for food and fuel where needed.



S's story

S lives with their husband and two children in temporary accommodation. S and their family had to flee Sudan after war broke out, and came back to the UK with nothing and nowhere to live.

S has PTSD and multiple mental health issues related to what they saw in the war. They haven't been able to work, and were struggling with daily essentials.

We helped S make a claim for the disability benefit Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and the application was successful.

To get items and clothes for the children, we made applications to the Brighton Fund for desks for the children to study at, and to Pelican Parcels for winter clothes.

We helped S replace their white goods with an application to the Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP). Our Energyworks service was able to provide a grant to help them stay warm over winter.



J's story

J is a 70+ years old woman. She lives alone, and has some health conditions which are affected by the cold. English is not J's first language, and she finds communicating with her energy company very difficult.

When she came to our Energyworks clinic, J's gas and heating had been off for 3 days, without any explanation from her energy company.

Over the next week, we made lots of phone calls on the client's behalf and every available option was explored, but the client's gas was still not working. By now we were becoming more concerned for J's health as the weather became colder.

Eventually, after more calls and visits from energy company engineers, the client's meter was replaced. Now, J's heating is working again. An Energyworks grant payment will see her through the worst of the winter.

Feedback about our work

There are a number of ways clients give feedback about our services, the quality of our advice, and how they access us.

Our clients tell us our advice is high quality, and helps them find a way forward, but it is hard to access. Our services are more in demand than ever, and we know there are many people who are struggling to get through to us as we try to tackle the challenge of so much demand.

We are working with partners to help us meet more demand, which shows no signs of slowing down, in a challenging funding environment.

We would like to thank all who use our services and share their experiences with us. These are some examples:

"Our advisor was great at keeping in contact and calling back to assess what help we required as the issue progressed. They were conscientious and seemed to really care about our issue. Thank you."

Client of our Debt Advice Service

"They were very easy to talk to and helped very well with the issue I was having, and also helped with something that I didn't realise would become a further issue, so that was amazing.

Thank you for all your help."

Client of our Macmillan and Citizens Advice Welfare Benefits Service

Citizens Advice has been the best service I've used, I've had to come to them once or twice in the past and they're attentive, understanding and informative. They've helped me a great deal and I could not be more grateful for such an organisation.

Client of Energyworks Energy Advice

"Citizens Advice were absolutely fantastic, clear with answers and skilled. Thank you."

Client of our advice service

82% of our clients said that they would recommend or service to others

79% of our clients said that we helped them find a way forwards

Thank you to our generous supporters

Citizens Advice is able to provide services to the community thanks to the time and commitment of our volunteers and the generosity of our funders.



We are very grateful for your continued support. If you would like to get more involved you can support your local Citizens Advice in a number of ways:

Volunteering

You can learn more about our volunteering opportunities on our website, at www.cabrightonhove.org/volunteer/

Get involved online

You can support us online and hear about new opportunities on Facebook and Twitter:



Search Facebook for:
Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove



@BrightonHoveCA

Donate

You can make donations by direct debit through our [website](#).

Contact our Chief Executive

For more information or to discuss new ways of working together:
joanne.carden@cabrightonhove.org

However you choose to support us, you'll be making a difference to thousands of people in the city every year



Citizens Advice
Proud to support the
LGBTQ+ community



Citizens Advice Brighton & Hove is a local charity and company limited by guarantee.

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Registered office: Tisbury Road Offices, Hove Town Hall, Tisbury Road, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 3BQ



**Brighton
& Hove**

Get free, confidential advice

Call Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove on:

08082 78 78 15

Our freephone advice line is open:

Monday	9.30 - 12.30, 1.30 - 3.30
Tuesday	9.30 - 12.30, 5.00 - 7.30
Wednesday	9.30 - 12.30, 1.30 - 3.30
Thursday	9.30 - 12.30, 1.30 - 3.30
Friday	9.30 - 12.30, 1.30 - 3.30

You can visit us face to face at our drop-ins:

Monday afternoon - 1.15pm
Thursday morning - 9.15am
Friday morning - 9.15am

Make an online enquiry on our website:
cabrightonhove.org

