



# OUR IMPACT

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2020 - 2021

"A local response, to an international pandemic"



Telford & Wrekin  
COUNCIL

# CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

I wanted to start this foreword with a very simple but sincere message: 'Thank you'.

'Thank you' to our staff and volunteers who have worked tirelessly through the most challenging of periods. We have continued to provide excellent and impartial advice every day and the team's commitment, resilience and hard work must be recognised and applauded.

'Thank you' too, to our strategic partners Telford & Wrekin Council who have continued their support for our work and have agreed a three-year grant agreement that is the cornerstone of our financial sustainability.

Looking back, we saw a seismic shift in the way we delivered our services and within a week of lockdown staff and volunteers were delivering telephone advice from their homes. But we never closed our doors, with our food bank continuing throughout the pandemic providing vital help for our community.

The quality of advice has remained consistently high, and we have helped 6,043 clients: 4,182 with advice and 1,861 with general information and signposting. Benefits, debt and employments remain the key areas of the advice given.

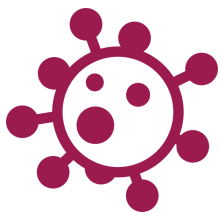
Our staff, volunteers and clients have adapted to new ways of working and as we move towards the 'new normal' we want to keep the benefits these have given us, both as an organisation and for clients.

That means we won't be going back to our traditional face to face only service. Instead, we will provide a mix of phone, email and webchat which are especially useful for those who find it difficult to access our service in person. But we will be providing access in the community through our outreaches, providing face to face appointments when required and clients can still drop into Tan Bank to book appointments if they are in crisis and need immediate support.

We will continue to provide confidential, impartial, non-judgmental, free advice and we know we are needed now more than ever because the right advice at the right time can change lives.



**David J C Shelmerdine**  
**Chair, Citizens Advice Telford and The Wrekin**  
**September 2021**



## SUPPORT THROUGH COVID

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Throughout the pandemic we have continued to offer advice and support to residents of Telford and the Wrekin. While the majority of our advice service shifted to telephone and online support, we never closed our doors to residents. We continued to offer food parcels as well as access to a phone and a computer for those without access at home. This service was particularly important for residents as digital exclusion became a rising issue with services focussing on online access during the lockdowns.

We also offered face to face appointments for residents who could not access our service another way, or where issues were particularly complex and required that extra level of support. These appointments were offered in a safe environment which adhered to government covid restrictions.

In order to best support residents, we looked at new ways of getting information out to the public. Placing flyers in food parcels, increasing our social media presence, and delivering live Q&A sessions on how to save money on energy.

## WE PLAY AN INTEGRAL ROLE WITHIN OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

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Through working with 6,043 clients last year, we have a detailed knowledge of issues that affect local people, reaching a diverse and broad community base.

We are able to utilise this knowledge not only by working to resolve our clients' problems, but by providing our on-the-ground perspective and insight to local stakeholders and working in partnership with other community bodies.

### KEY STATISTICS 2020-21



**6,043** clients assisted



**18,172** issues dealt with



**£88,202** debt written off



**£3,777,501** in additional income secured for clients



**73% of clients were supported by phone**

**16% of clients were supported by email, webchat or video call**



**8% of clients were supported face to face, within a covid safe setting**





## CASE STUDY: JANE\*

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Jane's husband passed away in a car accident while she was pregnant with their fourth child. She also has a disability and requires care support which was previously provided by her husband.

After originally applying for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and being declined she came to The Citizens Advice Telford & The Wrekin. With advice and support she advocated for herself, writing to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about her PIP decision. Thanks to our advice and support, Jane was able to convince the DWP to change their decision, awarding her advanced rates for Daily Living and Mobility for 3 years.

Jane received a back payment of £3,525.46 which brought her out of financial hardship. While her total award for the next three years came to £27,157.90. This money would allow Jane to pay for aids and care support to help her with her disability, allowing her to focus on her children.

\* Name changed to protect client confidentiality.

# THE VALUE OF FUNDING CITIZENS ADVICE

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In 2020/21 for every £1 invested in our service, we generated at least:

£2.74 in savings to government and public services (fiscal benefits). By helping stop problems occurring or escalating, we reduce the need for public services (health, housing, out-of-work benefits). **Total: £2,189,111**

£16.84 in wider economic and social benefits (public value). Solving problems improves lives – and this means better wellbeing, participation, and productivity for the people we help. **Total: £13,467,483**

£10.64 in value to the people we help (financial outcomes following advice). As part of advice, we can increase people's income, through debts written-off, taking up benefits and solving consumer problems. **Total: £8,507,672**

It's impossible to put a financial value on everything we do - but as far as we can, we have.



Our savings to the public purse:

£174,203 to the local authority by preventing homelessness and housing evictions and mental health services.

£298,287 to the NHS by reducing use of mental health and GP services and keeping people in work.

£1,198,972 to the Department for Work and Pensions by keeping people in work.





## CASE STUDY: DIANE\*

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Diane came to Citizens Advice Telford & The Wrekin just before Christmas. She had been left homeless after fleeing domestic violence with her 4 daughters. At the time she was also 12 weeks pregnant. Diane is disabled and has both epilepsy and Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS) type 3.

She was housed shortly after coming to Citizens Advice, but the flat was bare and with no electric or gas. An adviser provided her with a food parcel for over weekend, Christmas presents for herself and her daughters, vouchers for gas and electric £60 value, and applied to Telford & Wrekin Council for white goods and beds.

She was already in receipt of Personal Independence Payment, but we also showed her how to apply for a free bus pass (she estimates it will save her about £300 per year) and how to get an EDS medical alert card. While the estimate value of her white goods and furniture was £900.

Telford & Wrekin Council agreed to pay her first month rent, deposit and council tax. Thanks to this support from January 2021 onwards she was out of financial hardship.

\* Name changed to protect client confidentiality.

# Free, confidential advice. Whoever you are.

We help people overcome their problems and campaign on big issues when their voices need to be heard.

We value diversity, champion equality, and challenge discrimination and harassment.

We're here for everyone.

**[citizensadvice.org.uk](https://citizensadvice.org.uk)**

A copy of the full Annual Report and Accounts of Citizens Advice Telford & The Wrekin is available on request.

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