

# Message from the Chair

## Sangeeta Ahuja

This first report from the newly constituted Citizens Advice Tandridge District is a significant milestone for our local service. The former local citizens advice offices covering both Caterham & Warlingham and Oxted & District merged in April 2022 to form a single entity. As you will see from the detail of this report we are already strengthening the service we provide in our local area.

To make the merger a reality we unified our Board with representation across the district, including from Councillors. I am delighted to report we appointed new leadership. Sarah Henke-Monti is the CEO, and Catherine Wyncoll the Operations Manager. They are backed by an excellent team of staff, volunteer advisers and volunteer administrators.

Indeed, our volunteer advisers form the backbone of our service - we would not exist without them. We continue to operate from two locations in Caterham and in Oxted; we have a roving provision through a partnership approach across Surrey. While the legacy of the pandemic has meant more remote service provision (telephone and email), we are committed to providing face to face advice to those who need it.

This is a difficult time for the voluntary sector as we respond to increases in the cost of living and the many challenges faced by all sectors of our community. I am proud of our team. Each and every person - volunteer, staff, trustee - is committed, resilient and respectful, making a tremendous contribution. I am also proud to be part of a voluntary sector in Tandridge that works in ever closer in partnership - whether community hubs, foodbanks, local networks, Tandridge District Council, and I am grateful for all the funding support we receive. Thank you all.

I look forward to another productive year meeting the challenges together, strengthening our partnerships and evolving our own service to ever better meet local needs.

### A big thank you to all our funders and supporters



# Impact Report 2022 Citizens Advice Tandridge District

## Who are we?

We are **Citizens Advice Tandridge District**, your local independent charity providing free, confidential, impartial and good quality advice, to everyone on their rights and responsibilities since **1939**.

### Who



Anyone living or working in Tandridge (population 86,700)



Regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation



The advice people need for the problems they face

### How we do this



31 volunteers  
3.3 FTE paid staff  
1.3 FTE project staff



Over **10,500** volunteer hours each year



We helped **1,445** people with **4,984** issues over multiple channels

### The difference we made



We helped **673** people with **1,747** benefit issues



We helped **211** people with **546** applications for food and charitable support



We helped **276** people with **801** housing issues



# The difference we make in our community

Every year almost 1,500 people come to us for help solving their problems.

This means we're an important part of the community, with a credible understanding of local needs.

We use this to tailor our services and help improve local policies and practices.

Problems don't happen in isolation and can have severe consequences and people often come to us with multiple or complex issues.

We help people with a range of problems including issues with benefits, housing, debt, employment, relationships and consumer rights.

That's why we are here, to give people the knowledge they need to find their way forward



For every **£1** invested in our service we generated **£72.53**

That is:-

**£6.00** in savings to government and public services (fiscal benefits)

**Total £511,834**

**£44.66** in economic and social benefits (public value)

**Total £3,831,591**

**£21.87** in financial value to the people we help

**Total £1,866,968**

**6 in 10** people said they felt less stressed, depressed or anxious

**8 in 10** people said their problem was solved following advice

**3 in 4** of them said they could not have resolved their problem without us

# A Volunteer Perspective

## Christine

**'Supporting my community is very important to me.'**

I contacted Citizens Advice in September 2022 about becoming a volunteer. It was something I had considered before, but then a pandemic and home schooling took my attention for a while. I knew I wanted to volunteer somewhere where my passion for helping people in my community could be satisfied. I also wanted a voluntary role that would fit with my existing volunteering at the local primary school.

When I arrived to do my first advice session, I was made to feel very welcome by the whole team. I feel really inspired by the people I work with as they are all very committed and work to very high standards.

The atmosphere in the office is very supportive and other volunteers and staff are very willing to answer questions and share their knowledge and experience. The training programme I have been given is very comprehensive and I am working my way through it alongside getting experience through observing experienced advisers and starting to speak to clients. When I am a bit more experienced I will be able to undertake case work as well.

I have noticed that everyone from the staff and volunteer team, without exception, is very dedicated and highly committed to their roles and work to professional standards.

The training everyone gets is very comprehensive. Nonetheless, I feel very assured that I can get support at any time and never feel I am on my own.

We are seeing a great deal of clients who are being impacted by the cost of living crisis and feeling very anxious about their financial situation and affording even the basic things, such as food and heating. It's a great feeling to know how to help people in a practical way, such as referring them to their local foodbank.

Even though I am at an early stage in my training, I already feel as fulfilled as I had hoped. The feeling of being able to help people in my local community is really satisfying.



# Research & Campaigns

2022

## We are the voice for the people we help

As a service, we hold a huge amount of insight and data about the problems our clients and their wider communities face.

We can use this insight and data to do several things:

- to help us research issues further
- to influence decision-makers to change policies and practices
- to campaign to get decision-makers to change policies and practices

Our dedicated Research and Campaign team works closely with our advisers to understand the problems that our local community face.

We are best placed to know the most about what issues our clients are facing and what policies or practices aren't working,

This helps us address the root causes of the problems people come to us with.

## Some of our recent Campaigns

### Keep the lifeline - 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.

**National Consumer Week, Scams Awareness Fortnight, Big energy Saving Campaign** are annual campaigns we participate in locally to raise awareness in our community.



### Energy Market Meltdown

At the beginning of 2022, 4 million households in the UK saw their energy company go bust. As the statutory energy consumer advocate, worked at the forefront of this volatility in the energy market to protect consumers as suppliers failed.

### Cost of living Crisis

We engaged with our local politicians and MP to push the government to put a plan in place for the low income households who need it most.

# Just when we thought it was all over ...

Sarah Henke-Monti, CEO

**Having adapted amazingly well** to the difficulties caused by numerous lockdowns, the global pandemic in 2020 and 2021, we have completed a merger and are facing even more extraordinary challenges in 2022.

We have seen energy prices soar, a cost of living crisis, the devastating war in Ukraine creating another wave of refugees forced to leave their country and lately industrial action causing disruption and further economic turmoil.

That is why the work of Citizens Advice is more important than ever. It is no surprise that we have seen rising demand for our services which shows no sign of abating in 2023.

As well as more people seeking help we're finding that they come to us with an increasing number of issues. Our advisers can feel that they are running out of tools! Measures in place to support people struggling financially are better suited for short-term problems than the sustained crisis we are seeing. This translated into an increase of 22% in adviser activity in 2022 as different avenues of support are identified.

**That is why I am incredibly proud** of our team who are made up of local people committed to helping not just the most vulnerable people in the community, but everyone in Tandridge who needs our help, advice and support with the problems they are facing.

We have grown in strength and resilience as a single organisation and some of our successes include:

**Retaining** our fantastic, highly skilled volunteer advisers and support team in the face of the increasingly pressured landscape of advice giving.

**Continuing** to recruit new volunteer advisers to meet the rising demand and finding more effective ways of training people through different channels.

**Supporting** our volunteers by restructuring our small team of excellent paid staff into roles that best meet our needs.

**Expanding** our advice services through new projects and funders, to reach even more people.

**Maintaining** our high level of advice standards by meeting and surpassing our rigorous quality control processes.

**Campaigning for change** through our Research and Campaign team who work tirelessly to raise awareness on national and local campaigns such as scams awareness, consumer issues and energy.

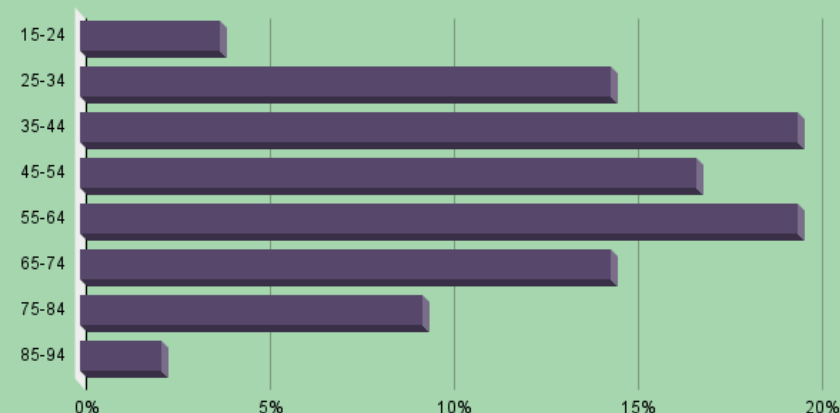
*You have made a positive change to my life. We were literally collapsing under the stress*

# Activities and demand

2022

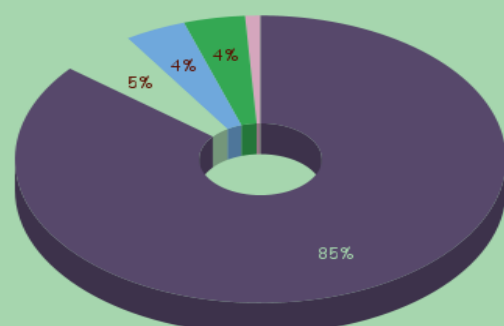
Clients, issues etc	
Clients	1,445
Issues	4,984
Activities	7,492
Cases	1,575

## Client Age (declared)



## Ethnicity (declared)

● White ● Black ● Asian ● Mixed ● Other



## Gender (declared)

■ Female ■ Male ■ Other



**Arnold**— Arnold was struggling to make ends meet. He had always managed before. His friends had told him to claim benefits but he had no idea how,

Julie, a volunteer adviser, helped Arnold and found out that his service charges had increased that this, together with the cost of living and energy crisis meant that he was struggling to pay. Julie carried out a benefit check and established that Arnold was entitled to Pension Credit, a means-tested benefit for people of retirement age. This would passport him to receiving Council Tax Support from the Local Authority which will reduce his Council Tax payments.

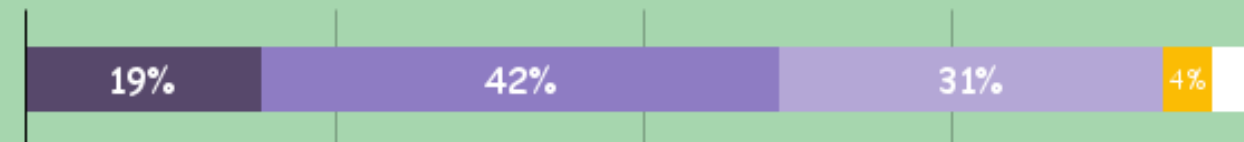
Julie assisted Arnold in completing the application forms, and supported Arnold with regular foodbank vouchers whilst he was waiting for his benefit to come through to help him with budgeting.

# Activities and demand

2022

## Channels

■ In Person ■ Phone ■ Email ■ Letter ■ Other



## Issues by client

● Benefits ● Housing ● Charitable help ● Debt ● Relationships & family  
 ● Legal ● Employment ● Financial Services ● Utilities & communications  
 ● Other



*I think citizens' advice is a brilliant service. I would recommend it to anyone who needs help in any situation.*

**Mary**—Mary called us to ask for a food voucher.

One our volunteer advisers, Sam, found out that she was laid off work several months ago and had been surviving on her savings until they ran out. He also established that Mary was beginning to build up debts.

Sam issued Mary with a food voucher for the local foodbank and carried out a benefit check. Mary is entitled to several benefits whilst unemployed, such as Universal Credit and Council Tax Support, and gave Mary guidance on how to apply.

Sam also helped Mary collect together information on her debts and referred her to one of our debt specialists, Jess, for advice on her debt options. Mary was given information on how to negotiate token payments with her creditors whilst she was looking for work.