

**citizens
advice**

Shropshire

Impact report

2020/21



The difference we make

Our impact in 2020/21

We provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities.



In 2020/21 we helped **6,689** clients
with **26,494** unique queries

83% were
aged 15 to 64
years old *

47% had a household
income of <£1,000 a
month *

41% were managing a dis-
ability or long term health
condition *

49% needed
Benefits
advice

14% needed help with
Debt issues

We helped individuals in-
crease their income by
over **£3.4m**

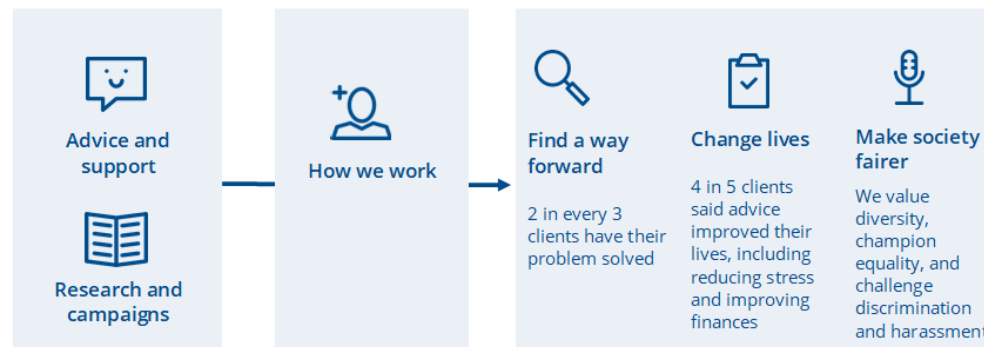
We are made up of **64**
volunteers and **35** paid
staff

Since March 2020 we have provided free
and independent support by phone

* of known values

**At Citizens Advice,
we believe no one
should have to face
problems without
good quality,
independent
advice.**

We give people the knowledge and the confidence they need to overcome their problems. We help people find their way through complicated processes and difficult situations they may never have faced before. With the right information and support, people can make the best choices for themselves.

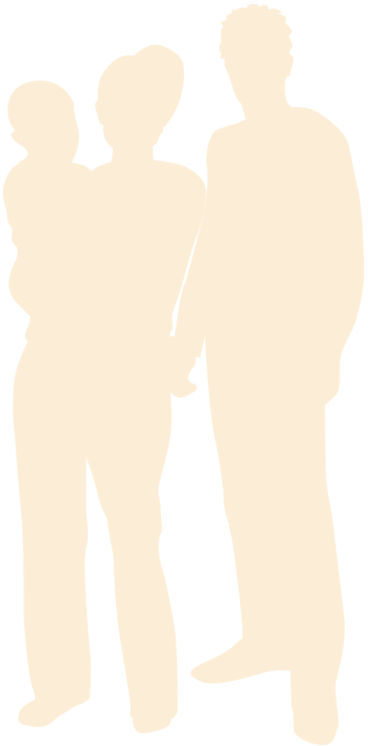


Why people come to us

Everyone experiences problems - sometimes they can be quickly resolved, other times it's not that simple. More complex problems are rarely neatly packaged up as a single problem - often the effect of one problem can be the cause of another.

These problems have the capacity to affect other aspects of people's lives as well as their family and friends, or ultimately the state if a situation escalates to the point of intervention. Trusted help and support isn't always readily available - someone might not have informed or contacted family or friends, or have the money to pay for advice. In such situations, being able to access free, impartial, confidential advice at the right time is essential.

Our advice helps to prevent detriment occurring or escalating further, including where problems can affect other aspects of people's lives.



Joan's* story

In 2020/21 Joan, who has mental health issues, had their electricity cut off after struggling to keep up with heating costs during winter. They had to throw away food and were worried, as they had been told they've had the maximum help from local foodbank.

Joan lives alone and was paying £30 a week to prepayment meter to heat their cold flat. They were also concerned if they did get food parcel they wouldn't be able to store or cook any of the food.

We helped Joan get their electric turned back on and get them on the priority services register. They were given a credit code which they can use throughout the winter to top up the meter even if they don't have money available. Joan will make repayments on this credit code as and when they receive money.

We helped them to access local food bank and told them about other community initiatives (OsNosh).

Joan was incredibly pleased with our advice and support.

*all names are pseudonyms to protect the privacy of people we help.



Spotlight on the work of Shropshire Information Advice and Support Service (IASS)



Since October 2015, IASS has been part an integral part of Citizens Advice Shropshire, providing information, advice and support to parents and carers of children aged 0 to 25, and young people aged 16 to 25 who have, or may have, special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

Our IASS Officers listen to clients' concerns, provide information about SEN and disability law to enable clients to make informed decisions regarding their child's education, help to explore their options and support clients to prepare for upcoming meetings including annual reviews.

In this time, we have supported 312 clients with 368 issues.

Volunteering with us

97%
would recommend
volunteering at
Citizens Advice

9 in 10
volunteers gain more than
one 'practical skill'
through volunteering

4 in 5
believe that they
have increased their
employability

Over half
of our volunteers say
that they feel less
at risk of social isolation

4 in 5
believe it has had
a positive effect
on their health

Volunteering benefits our volunteers – they improve their skills, resilience, health and wellbeing, while strengthening community engagement.

Our volunteers contribute their time and energy to make a huge difference to people's lives and help keep our vital service running.

If you'd like to help people in your community, and can spare a few hours a week, we'd love to hear from you.



Our unique insight and evidence

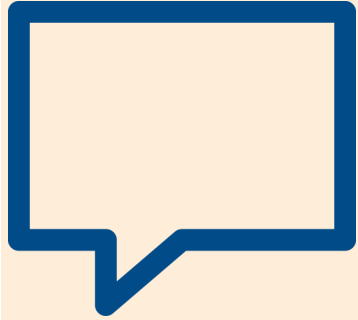
We use our clients' anonymous data to campaign for positive change, speaking up about the policies and services that cause people problems. As a local Citizens Advice we can spot emerging issues early and tackle the root cause of problems.

The Board of CAS recognises the importance of good research and ensures that, where necessary, funds are available to support our research post. This enables us to enhance our understanding of who needs our help, how we can best support them and what services make the most difference to them. We will continue to fill any gaps in our evidence base and give a voice to people's concerns.

Increasing our understanding of people's needs means we will be well placed to act with our partners as an 'intelligent provider' for commissioners, not just delivering services but also well-equipped to advise on and influence the shape of provision.

During 2020/21 we continued campaigning on the changes to Council Tax Support. Additional Covid-19 support from Government has meant that many of those on low income have had their 20% reduction for 2 years and now the Council have also agreed to review the Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2022/23.

We have also campaigned on Universal Credit and the potential loss of the £20 uplift during the pandemic. We have also been working with partners including Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance, Public Health and Health Watch Shropshire on research into food insecurity in South West Shropshire. This has been an important piece of research which has led to a number of recommendations to help reduce the impact of food insecurity in Shropshire and the barriers that people face. We are currently awaiting the results of a funding bid to continue this work.



"I cannot thank you enough for the help you gave me..."

I was in a dark place and thanks to you my life is far better now."

- **client**

Our value to society

We can put a financial value on our role in:

- keeping people in employment or helping them back to work
- preventing housing evictions and statutory homelessness
- reducing the demand for mental health and GP services
- improving client mental wellbeing and family relationships

(Source: Modelling the value of the Citizens Advice service in 2017)

Some of the financial outcomes accrue directly to individuals – this income is likely to be spent locally, benefiting local communities.



For every £1 invested in our service in 2020/21, we generated:

£2.20

in savings to government and public services (fiscal benefits)

Total: £2.5m

£15.60

In wider economic and social benefits (public value)

Total: £18.2m

£8.48

In financial value to the people we help (specific outcomes to individuals)

Total: £9.9m

Our impact



8 in 10
people said their problem was resolved following our advice



8 in 10
people said we helped them find a way forward



9 in 10
people said they would recommend the service

Source: Client satisfaction survey 2019/20

You can support our work by volunteering with us in a number of different roles, or by making a donation.

You can make a donation by writing a cheque to Citizens Advice Shropshire.

Contact us



Adviceline: **0808 278 7894**

Text relay: **18001 0800 144 8884**



For general enquires (not advice):
contact@cabshropshire.org.uk

For more detailed information about Citizens Advice Shropshire go to **www.cabshropshire.org.uk**

Follow us on social media for news, information and campaign updates:



@CABshropshire

