

A photograph of an older woman with short, curly hair, looking out of a window. She is wearing a patterned top. The image has a green tint. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**We're here for everyone,
Whoever you are,
Whatever the problem.**

Annual Report 2022/23

**citizens
advice**

Hartlepool

Chair's foreword



I am pleased to make this introduction to our new design Annual Report for 2022/2023. I hope you agree that the report is full of useful information about Citizens Advice Hartlepool and the significant value of our services to our local community. Firstly, I wish to thank all those involved: volunteers, staff, and trustees, for their help and support which ensures we continue to provide our vital services to our citizens at times of need. Plus, thanks to our funders and supporters for helping us to deliver our services. Together we all make it happen.

Throughout the year we continued to provide our wide range of services to our communities. Emerging from the pandemic, although more advice is being given by other channels, I am proud to say that Citizens Advice Hartlepool has maintained a full face to face delivery for our clients. This is central to our ethos in being able to provide the necessary help and support to those in most need.

2022/2023 was a crucial year for our funding with several contracts coming to an end and uncertainty over the future of the Money Advice and Pensions Service (MAPS) contract. I am pleased to confirm funding at the current level for MAPS will continue until March 2025. We were also successful in securing a 2-year funded Energy Advice contract with the British Gas Energy Trust.

When we say we're here for everyone, we mean it. People rely on us because we're independent and totally impartial.

However, in these times of high inflation, pressures on salary and energy costs, a non-inflation linked amount does not go as far this year as it did in 2021/2022.

I think it is important to emphasize that whilst we are part of the national Citizens Advice family, we are an independent local charity and are solely responsible for raising and obtaining the funding we need to provide services. We face the same cost pressures as everyone else and the next few years will be very challenging.

All this at a time when our services are needed more than ever. The emerging cost of living crisis, especially food and energy costs will have a widespread and significant impact on our communities, particularly the most vulnerable.

All the above issues, from fundraising to meeting the increasingly complex needs of our clients will be challenging but our track record shows we will help the people of Hartlepool to meet these challenges.

Tony Raine
Chair of Trustees

“We’re an
important part of
the community,
with a credible
understanding of
local needs”

Centre Manager's Report

It is certainly fitting to open my report by personally thanking the incredible staff and volunteers that are part of our Citizens Advice. As we all continued to live with and adapt our lives due to COVID and the increasing cost of living, our people never wavered in their determination and passion to deliver the best service and advice to our clients every day.



My thanks go to each and every one of you individually for your commitment to our amazing service. I also wish to express my gratitude to our Chief Executive Officer, Helen Howson for her support, guidance and leadership. Helen was instrumental in getting us through our year 3 Leadership Self-Assessment Audit.

We took our experiences of the previous year to develop our service delivery model in order to ensure we reach as many people as possible and in a way that meets their needs. We now offer services in a range of ways including phone, email, website, and of course in person. We recognise that everyone is different and our service is set to meet individual needs. I would like to echo our Chair's words in stating how proud I am that Citizens Advice Hartlepool has maintained its ability to provide a full face to face service for our local community. There are many offices that have not been able to do that.

Throughout our Annual Report you will see the incredible work done by all our staff and volunteers to help and support the people across Hartlepool. The data speaks for itself but it's what sits behind the numbers and data that is important. For every number there is a person each with their own personal story and that's what we are here for – to help with their own circumstances.

Over the course of the year, we were helping people with the challenges and impact of the 'Cost of Living' crisis – both in terms of their health and financial well-being. We were also able to maintain a high and sustained level of support to people with the Household Support Fund and energy vouchers.

Citizens Advice Hartlepool is lucky to have two very experienced specialist debt and energy teams. Both teams collaborate closely with regular cross-referrals and have been kept very busy throughout the year; the teams have exceeded all performance targets which is hardly surprising in this current climate.

For us as an organisation, a charity funded through grants, contracts and donations, it was a challenging year. We have increased our partnership working and we will look to diversify our funding and continue to explore new opportunities in order to ensure we help as many people as possible. This is particularly important as Hartlepool is one of the most deprived areas in the country.

As the challenges presented in our society continue to put pressure on people every day, with our dedicated team of staff and volunteers, we will continue to be here offering free, confidential and impartial advice to everyone that needs us.

"Brilliant service, everyone was so helpful."

"I didn't realise the depth of service Citizens Advice offered."

"Janet was amazing, I couldn't have had better support or advice. "

"Everyone made me feel so welcome and were non-judgmental."

"To Jill.
Just a big thanks for all your help and support. You took away all our stress and we are finally debt free after years of struggle."

(Client feedback questionnaires)

Citizens Advice Hartlepool helps thousands of people every year. This provides us with a unique insight into the challenges our clients are facing every day.

We not only help people find their way forward in difficult situation but we also identify and tackle the underlying causes of their problems.

The people we help, our funders, government and the organizations we work with see the value we deliver and the impact we make

The impact of our service



80%

of clients said we helped improve their lives after contacting us



8 in 10

people say they feel less stressed or depressed after speaking to an adviser.

Our Value to Society



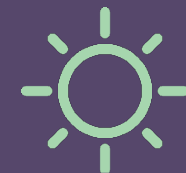
For every **£1** invested: There is **£3.61** in savings to government and public services

Total: £1,498,056
Our Fiscal Value



For every **£1** invested: There is **£25.68** in wider economic and social benefits

Total: £10,662,940
Our Public Value



For every **£1** invested: There is **£11.28** in value to the people we help

Total: £4, 683,707
Our Individual Value

How we helped

During the year, we provided multi-channel delivery of advice and support via telephone, email and face to face.



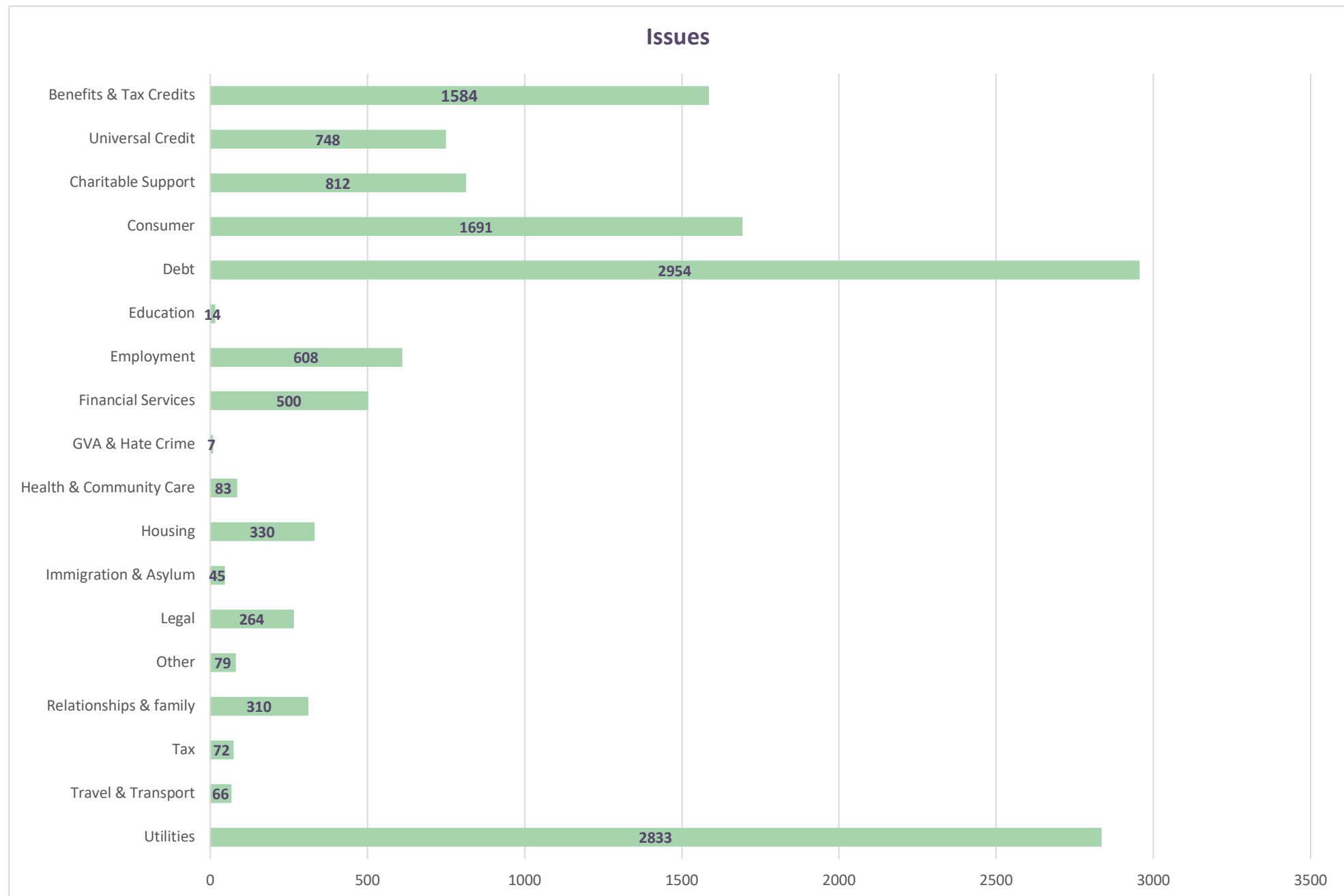
We advised **3,565** clients covering **13,000** separate issues. We recorded **5,219** separate cases with **10,981** separate activities over all channels.



Through our Adviceline, Citizens Advice Hartlepool assisted **592** clients with an average call duration of 15.4 minutes.

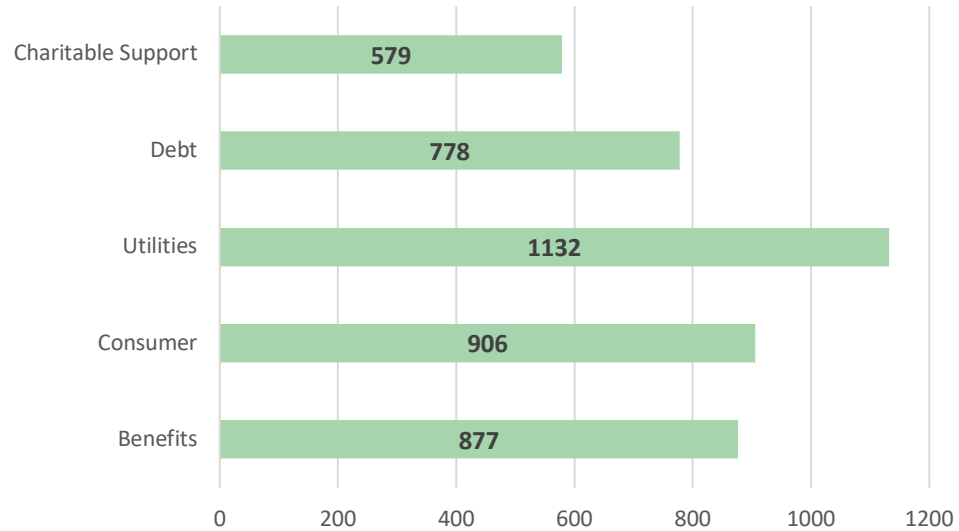
Through our local office telephone line, **1,856** = 10% of all activities were conducted and another **1,057** activities were conducted via email.

The issues we helped people with throughout 2022/2023

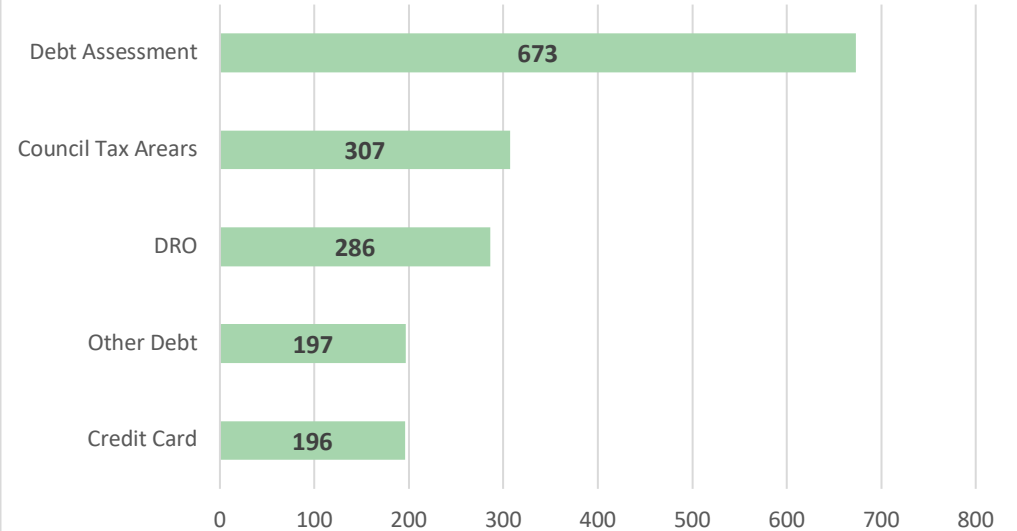


Top 5 issues

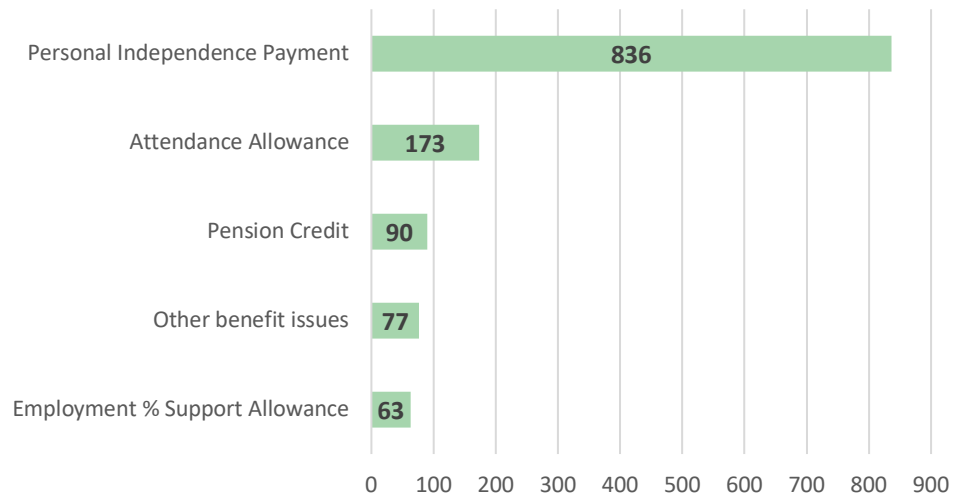
Top 5 Issues



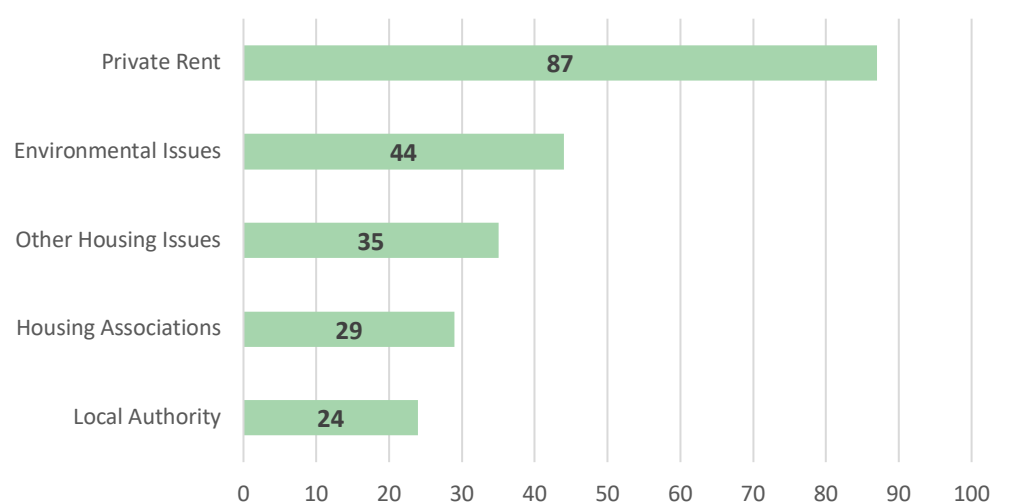
Debt



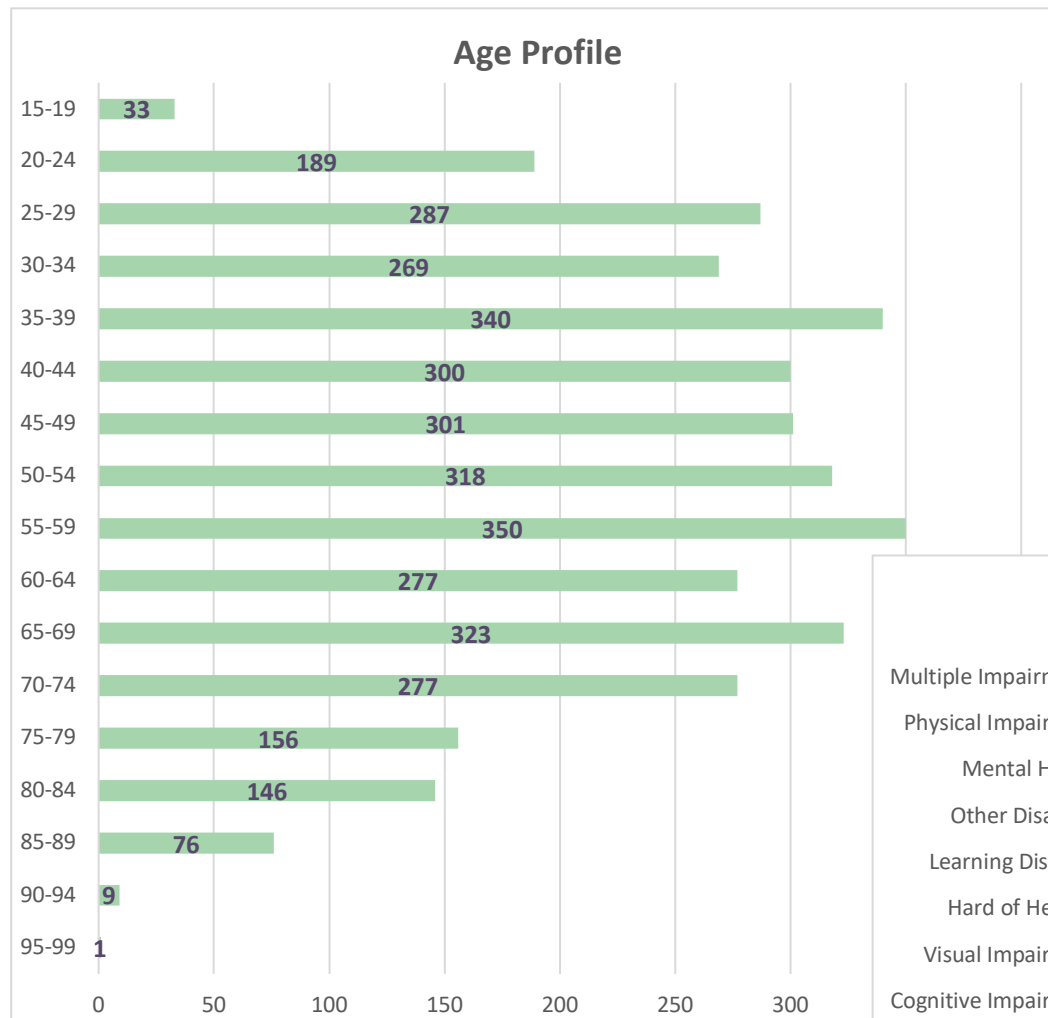
Benefits



Housing

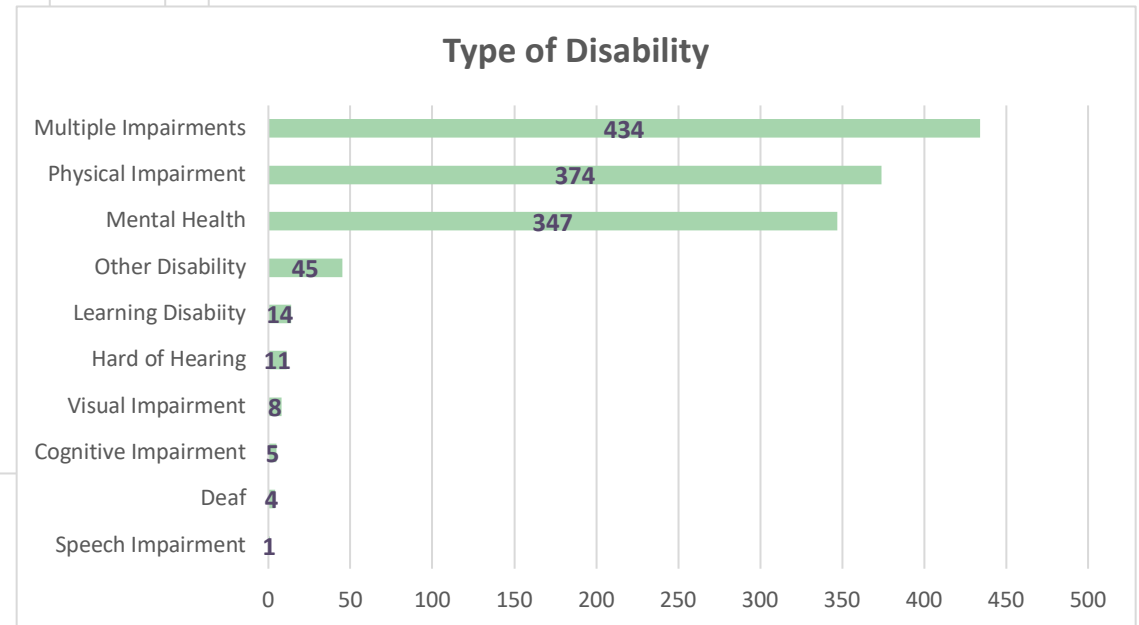


Client Profile



We use our data and insight to tailor our services as well as help improve policies and practices locally.

We put our clients' needs at the heart of our decision making.



Our impact



During 2022/2023 we assisted **1,242** clients with benefits. This involved new benefit claims, reviews and appeals.

Another **778** clients were assisted with debt via repayment plans, debt write-offs and formal insolvency.



Throughout the year, we found many more people struggling financially with more complex issues. Our debt team has three approved DRO intermediaries and a total of **£900,994** of debt was written off. A further **£554,000** of debt was managed via repayment plans with our assistance.



Across the service we helped people gain a total of **£1,175,937** in additional income via benefit claims that they were entitled to.

Case study

Annette was an unemployed single mother and had deteriorating chronic health conditions, both mental and physical but was not claiming any disability benefits.

She came to our offices in a distressed state as she was 'drowning' in debt and owed over £17,000 to both priority and non-priority creditors. She was also facing enforcement action and the situation was exacerbating her already poor mental health.

We assisted the client with a Debt Relief Order (DRO) making her debt free and providing her with a fresh start and closure on her debts.

We also assisted the client with two disability claims which resulted in her being awarded Limited capability for Work Related Activity and the enhanced rate of the Daily Living component of Personal Independence Payment resulting in an increased income of £754.68 per month.



Case study

A photograph of an older man with a grey beard and dreadlocks, looking down and to the side with a thoughtful expression. His hands are clasped together near his chin. The image has a green tint.

Mark was self-employed and will not reach pension age until 2024. His work was physical in nature, and he started to have significant problems with his physical health a couple of years ago. He tried to maintain his work level as much as his chronic pain would allow but his mobility deteriorated, reducing his ability to work.

What affected him most was the prospect of being financially dependent on his partner. He was using savings to maintain his independence; however, this was unsustainable until he retires.

We assisted him with making a claim for Personal Independence Payment and Limited Capability for Work as part of his Universal Credit claim.

Both claims were successful and with the increase in disability benefit income, he was able to maintain some financial independence.

Case study

David presented to our service with two priority debts, owing £1,291 in fuel arrears and £1,012 in Council Tax.

He was unemployed due to several health conditions and his only source of income was welfare benefits. The consequence of this led to the inability to keep on top of his finances.

One of our 'Gateway' advisers set up an appointment with one of our debt caseworkers. The specialist debt adviser provided budgeting advice and worked with the client to set up a payment plan with Hartlepool Borough Council for the Council tax mitigating any further action.

David was then referred over to one of our energy advisers who then assisted David with a grant application to the British Gas Energy Trust Fund for the fuel arrears; the application was successful.

The outcome of this application meant that the David's energy arrears were written-off in entirety thereby completely removing the burden of this debt moving forward.



Client feedback

"Thank you so much for your amazing help and support, without this we would not have got the temporary then permanent accommodation."

" We really appreciate the support we got from you and the professionalism"

"Thank you so very much for your help and accept our deepest regards. Please pass on our appreciation to all the team."

"If there is any customer survey, I will rate the service you gave us a 5* - flawless and perfect!"

"The service has been brilliant; CAB has been very helpful and took so much pressure off me"

"I just want to let you know that I appreciate so much for all your help and support these past few months when I was going through such a difficult time."

" You and your advice has helped a lot to not break down or give up"

" I don't know you personally, but you have made the world of difference to my life. Thank you for everything you have done for me"

" I can now sleep at night and not worry about how I am going to keep my home"

" The service provided to me by Citizens Advice was outstanding, I would not cope for long without your help"

Volunteering

Just some of the words used to describe our volunteers by our clients in 'thank you' letters.

thorough **fantastic** **amazing** **priceless** **valuable** **giving**
awesome **selfless** **brilliant** **incredible**
dedicated **professional** **friendly**
relentless



Without our volunteers, we simply couldn't do what we do.

By training and investing in our volunteers, we help to develop individuals' personal abilities, the way they feel about themselves, their skills and their community.

This can have a significant impact through:

- gaining practical skills.
- increasing employability.
- increasing sense of purpose or self-esteem.
- having a positive effect on health.
- feeling more engaged with the local community.

There is no typical volunteer at Citizens Advice. Our volunteers have a range of ages and come from different backgrounds with varied life experiences.

The roles we can offer volunteers are both challenging and rewarding and our volunteers enjoy being able to make such a valuable contribution and positive impact to people's lives.

Our funders

Citizens Advice Hartlepool has a range of contracts, service level agreements, grants and donations and is funded by:

- **Money Advice and Pensions Service**
 - **The British Gas Energy Trust**
- **The National Lottery Community Fund**
 - **The James Knott Foundation**
 - **Hartlepool Borough Council**
 - **Step Forward Tees Valley**

We also receive donations from local companies and private individuals.

We are thankful for the financial help we receive from all who support us. It enables us to develop innovative projects that make a difference to the community. We always welcome new partners who can help us to build on our work

Money Advice and Pensions Service



Step Forward Tees Valley



The British Gas Energy Trust



The James Knott Foundation



SIR JAMES KNOTT TRUST

Hartlepool Borough Council



The National Lottery Community Fund



Volunteers

Advisers/Assessors

Elizabeth Cooper
Reginald Gant
Shirley Spence
Vera Martinez
Katy Pounder
Mercia Watson *
Sam Fletcher
Helen Williams *
Janet Payne
John Winter

Gillian Hargin *
Nouran Tohmeh *
Dawn Christal *
Zoe Lee *

Clerical/Reception

Dorothy Storr
Kathleen Laffey
Sheila Nicolson
John Jenkins
Julie Fox
Fallon Eglintine
Jackie William
Rebecca Lloyd *
Lesley Griffiths *

* Left the organisation during the period 22/23

Paid Staff

Helen Howson
Ross Brooks
Janet Noble

Chief Executive Officer
Centre Manager
Training Officer & Supervisor

Debt Team

Jill Hutton
Janet Noble
Gillian Hargin *
James Gilbert-Jupp
Ross Brooks

Energy Team

Carol Dees
Lisa Anderson
Warren Rowbotham

Advocacy Support Worker

Carol Dees

Administrative Officers

Sheila Nicolson
Wayne McCormack

Cost of Living Worker

Beth Noon

Telephone Advice

Julie Lloyd

Employment Advice

Simon Buckle

* Left paid employment with the organisation

Trustees

CHAIRMAN

Tony Raine

VICE CHAIRMAN

Edwin Jeffries

TREASURER

Gayle Longmire

ELECTED MEMBERS

Tony Jackson
Ken Natt
Yousuf Khan
Brenda Harrison
Dr Lynne Humphries

Strategic Aims

Public Benefit of Citizens Advice

The charity's aims and achievements set out have been undertaken within this report. The activities set out in this report have been undertaken to further the organization's charitable purposes for the public benefit.

The Trustees have complied with the duty under Section 4 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charities Commission and the Trustees and have paid due regard to this guidance in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

The organization's main objective is the promotion of any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community in Hartlepool by the advancement of education, the protection of health and the relief of poverty, sickness, and distress.

Statement of Purpose and Strategic Objectives

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential, and impartial advice and counsel to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

Citizens Advice Hartlepool aims to:

- Provide the advice people need for the problems they face.
- Improve the policies and practices that affect peoples' lives.
- Train all workers to provide an accurate, high-quality client-centered service.

Citizens Advice Hartlepool provides services that work to: Inform people about the law and how it affects them.

- Advise people of the possible options available to them and the potential consequences of different courses of action.
- Listen to and support people as they consider and decide what to do.

- Assist people in pursuing their chosen course of action.
- Influence those responsible for policies and services by recommending changes based upon

Citizens Advice Hartlepool Key Objectives

- The maintenance and development of high-quality client-centered service
- Increased partnership working as a means of meeting client expectations.
- The provision of support and advice, particularly for clients with the greatest needs
- To maintain effective governance and increase the reputation and profile of the organisation in Hartlepool.
- To build upon the commitment of the staff through effective recognition and personal development strategies
- The development of a finance strategy that supports the aims and aspirations of the organisation and its long-term viability.

Citizens Advice Hartlepool is the operating name of Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau.
Registered office:

87 Park Road, Hartlepool TS26 9HP. Registered charity number: 1140773
Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority FRN 617628
enquiries@hartlepool.cabnet.org.uk

