



**We provide the advice
people need for the
problems they face.**

Annual Report 2023/24

**citizens
advice**

Hartlepool

Chair's foreword



I must start by thanking all involved for delivering this incredibly vital service to our clients – staff, volunteers and trustees. I remain constantly inspired by the dedication of this organisation. Our success is directly linked to the hard work, energy, commitment, and consistency our teams show in driving us forward towards our common goal of serving the community through the provision of quality and accessible advice. Thanks of course must also go to our contributors and supporters who allow us to continue to deliver this vital, impartial service.

The continued quality of service and advice that is delivered is particularly impressive when against the backdrop of another tough year for us in the UK. We have felt the continued enormity and impact of the current financial climate, both on us as an organisation and on our clients. Whilst we are seeing inflation in the two most impacted areas of food and energy costs begin to steady, the costs remain high and will significantly impact the most vulnerable in our society.

It is important to emphasise 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.

Our primary objective is to get the best for our clients and that is what determines the advice we give – ‘best advice’ is part of our ethos.

We face the same cost pressures as everyone else and the next few years will be very challenging. That being said, we have some very exciting plans for the coming year, and we will continue building and delivering a sustainable and efficient service, working together to achieve the best possible outcomes.

In the meantime, well done everyone for the efforts throughout the past year. I know that the staff and volunteers will continue to strive for the best outcome for their clients. Finally, thanks must also go to all our trustee board, and partner organisations and all those who support us in our shared objectives. Together, we can and will make our community a better place.

Tony Raine

Chair of Trustees

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

General Manager's Report



Put simply, it is the value and contribution of all the people at Citizens Advice Hartlepool which underpins the service we are ultimately able to provide for our local community. Our staff and volunteers take up a range of roles within our organisation with each role vital in ensuring that we deliver much needed advice and support. In the face of ongoing challenges of ever-increasing demand and complexity of client need, they have the most incredible knowledge, skills, experience, commitment and caring attitude.

Volunteers remain at the heart of our service delivery, and we would be unable to deliver the amount of advice, help and support we do without them. They are central to the ethos of Citizens Advice. The majority of our volunteers are local people who are passionate about helping those in their area. However, we also have a number of impressive undergraduate student volunteers from other areas in the North East who are equally as passionate about our service.

I couldn't ask to be surrounded by a more amazing team and I thank you all.

As we continue to support our clients with the challenges presented in the previous year during this brutal financial climate, we have been presented with new sets of challenges - increasing energy costs, rising food prices and inflation rates that households could not keep up with which meant that demand for our service was and will continue to be more vital than ever. This has also impacted on our own increasing costs.

In order to meet these challenges, we continue to adapt our service to meet the needs of our clients with an increasing number of vulnerable clients, complex issues and clients struggling with their health. Our range of services, including new projects this year, aim to reach as many clients as possible while we strive to look at how we ensure our services are accessible to everyone.

We have seen a shift in how our clients work with us; more clients are choosing to reach us by phone and email, however, as always there is the significant reliance on our physical presence which we will continue to review and invest in.

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. Moving into 2024-2025, we have two new employability and financial inclusion programmes underway in partnership with 'Humankind' and I am delighted to continue our partnership working with the British Gas Energy Trust who have secured for us in excess of £200,000 in funding over the next 2 years for the very successful Supporting Communities At Risk Programme (S.C.A.R.P) All of this is only possible thanks to the continued support of our funders who recognise how valuable our support is to people.

These relationships all ensure we collectively deliver support in the most efficient and effective way possible. Reflecting back over the last year, we have provided the most amazing service to our clients over multiple channels. Unfortunately, we know that these challenges will continue beyond 2023/24 but I am confident that because of the people we have, Citizens Advice Hartlepool will be here to support our communities with the challenges we all face.

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 why we are here – for everyone, whoever they are and whatever the problem.

Ross Brooks
General Manager

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 situations, but we also identify and tackle the underlying causes of their problems.

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

Our value to society

Our Public Value

For every **£1** invested:
There is **£34.73** in wider economic and social benefits.

Total: **£14,420,738**



Our Individual Value

For every **£1** invested:
There is **£15.86** in financial value to the people we help. (Specific outcomes to individuals)

Total: **£6,587,087**



Our Fiscal Value

For every **£1** invested:
There is **£4.44** in savings to government and public services.

Total: **£1,844,907**



How we helped

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

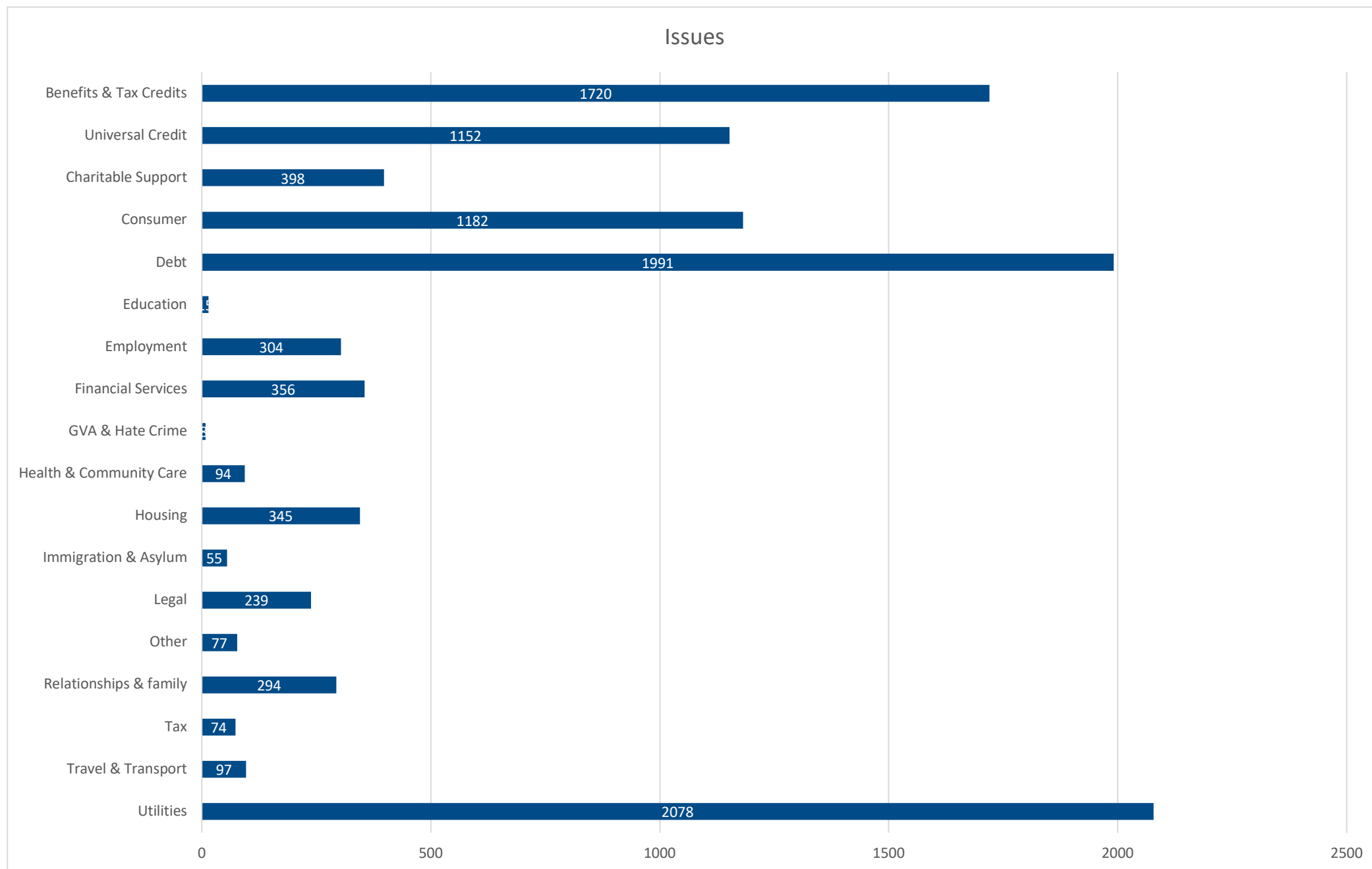


We advised **3,198** clients covering **10,476** separate issues. We recorded **4,727** separate cases with **8,785** separate activities over all channels.

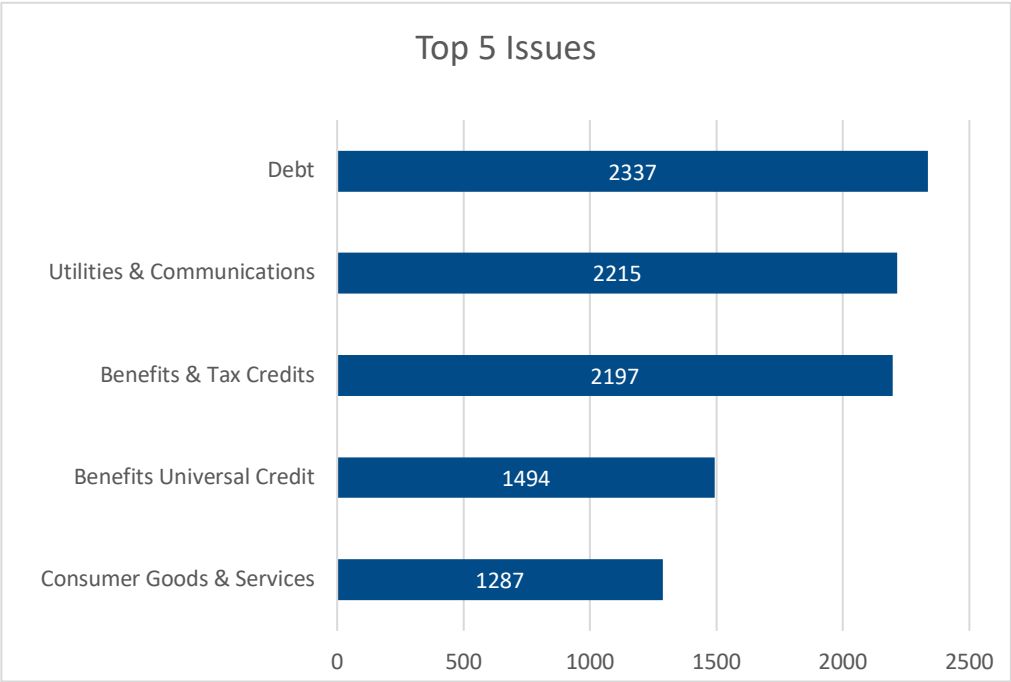


Through our Adviceline, Citizens Advice Hartlepool assisted **1,813** clients with an average call duration of **8.6** minutes. Another **486** clients were supported via email.

The issues we helped people with throughout 2023/2024

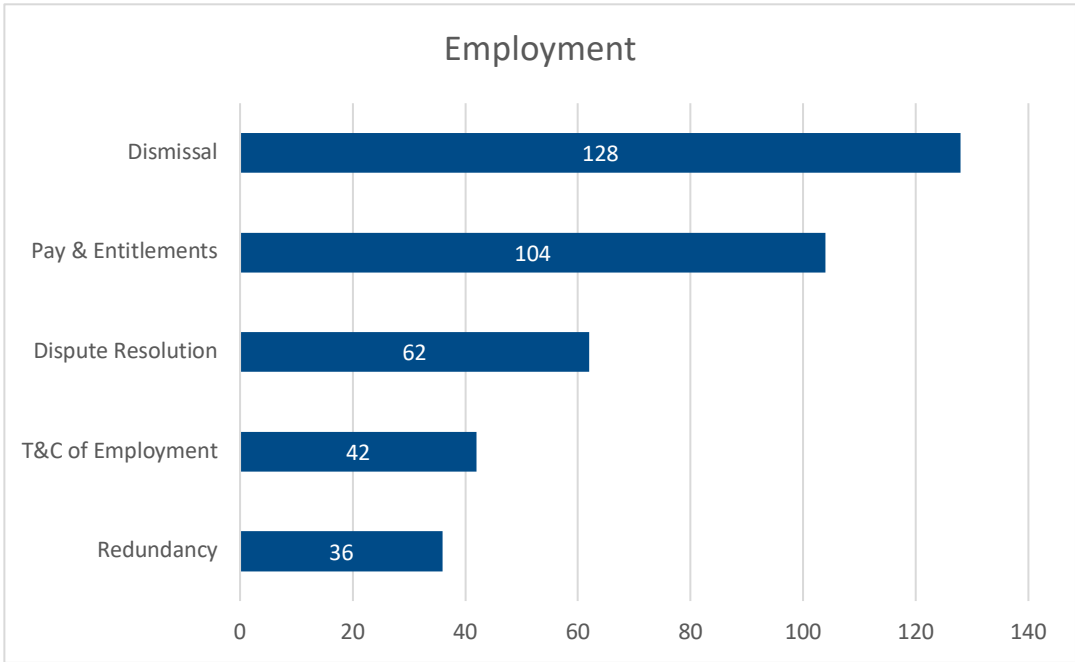


Top 5 Issues

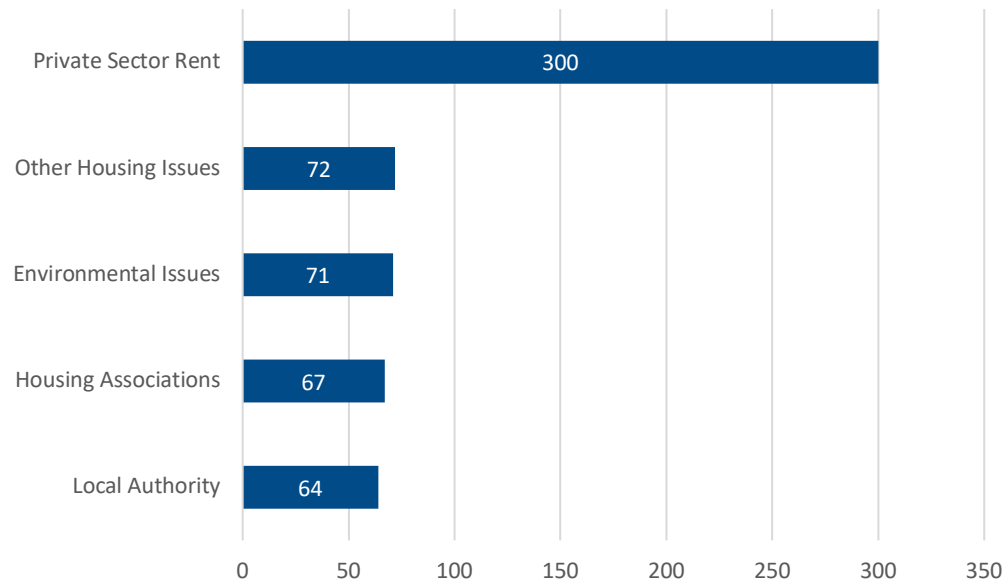


We use data and insights to tailor our service as well as help improve policies and practices locally.

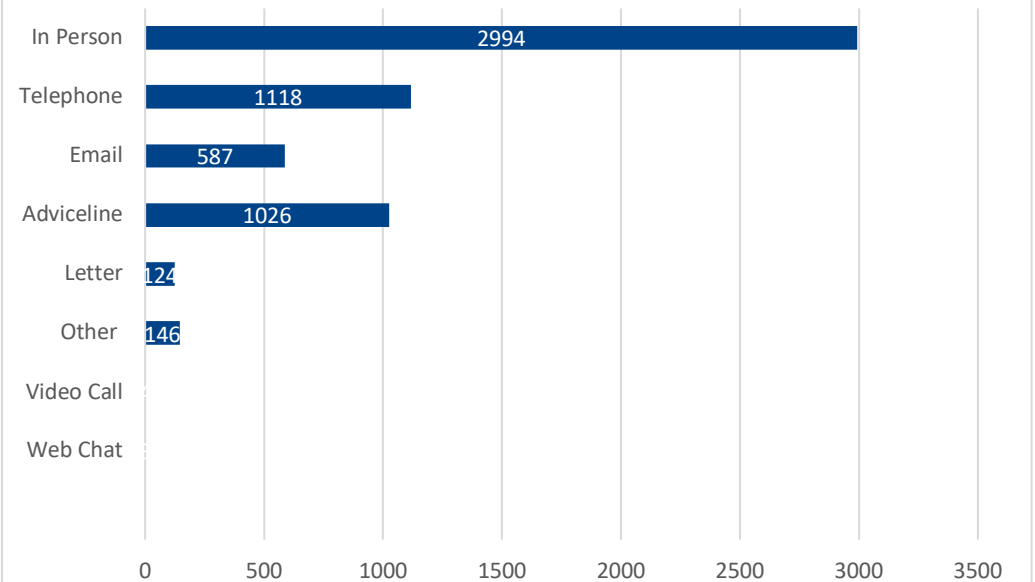
We put our clients' needs at the heart of our decision making.

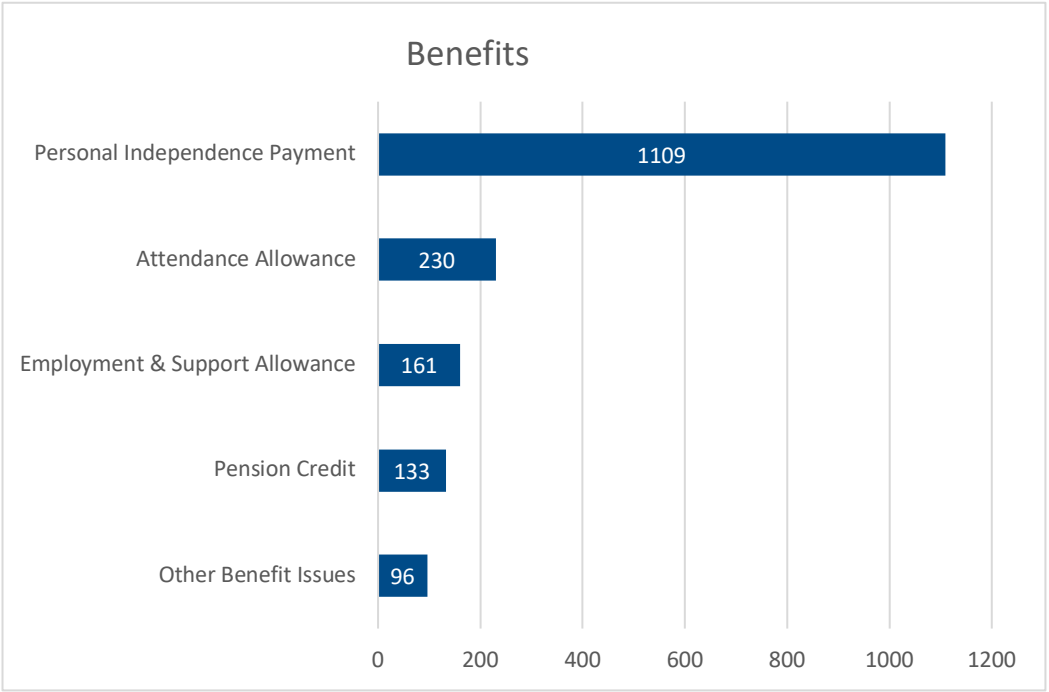
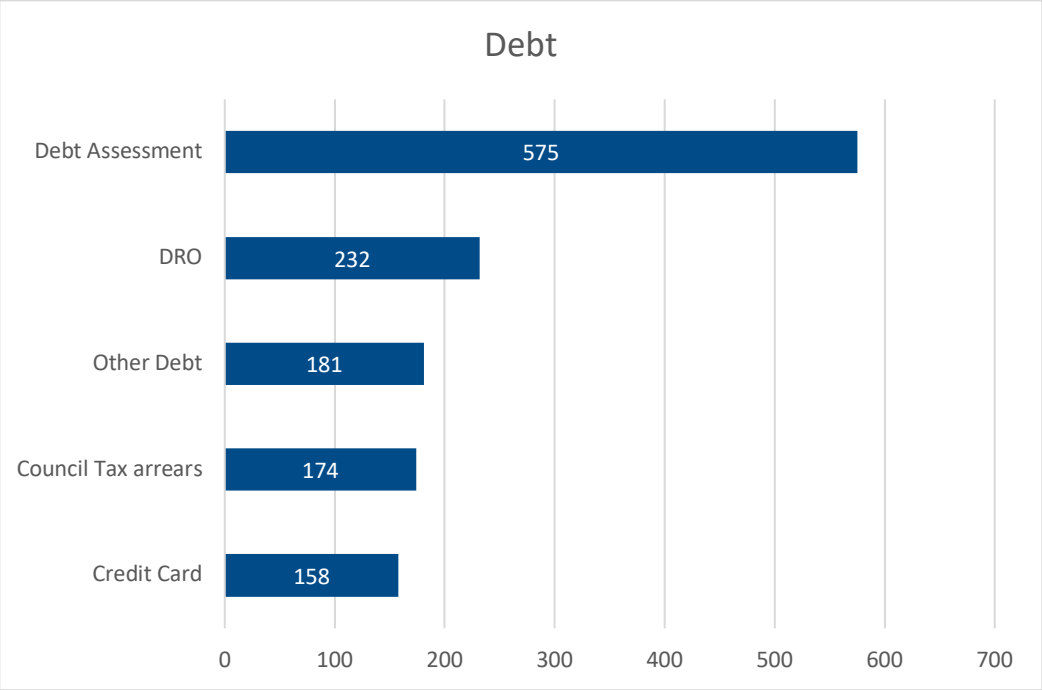


Housing



Channel of Delivery





Our Impact



During 2023/2024 we assisted **1,466** clients with benefits. This involved new benefit claims, reviews and appeals. This resulted in **£1,695,875** in income gains for our client.

Another **520** clients were assisted with debt via repayment plans, debt write-offs and formal insolvency.



Our debt team has four approved DRO intermediaries and a total of **£591,729** of debt was written off. A further **£354,000** of debt was managed via repayment plans with our assistance.



Across the service we helped people gain a total of **£2,379,718** in additional income via benefit claims that they were entitled to.

Case study



Vincent came to Citizens Advice in a very distressed and agitated state with multiple priority and non-priority debts totally nearly £67,000. He had become unemployed six months previously due to long-term ill health and was no longer able to service his debts.

He was initially directed to our specialist debt team who then provided advice on all the accessible options. Vincent's preferred strategy was to opt for bankruptcy as he wished for a fresh start and closure. He was assisted by a debt specialist in petitioning for bankruptcy and all of his debt was subsequently 'written-off'.

Vincent was also referred to an energy & benefit specialist who then provided assistance in ensuring he was maximizing his energy efficiency which included guidance with budgeting.

As a result of the impact Vincent's health conditions had on his life, he also assisted with a claim for Personal Independence Payment. The claim was successful on appeal with an award of the enhanced rate of Daily Living component.

Volunteering & feedback

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. "

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

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

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.

Our funders

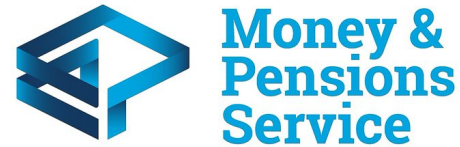
Citizens Advice Hartlepool has a range of contracts, service level agreements, grants and donations and is funded by:

- Money Advice and Pensions Service
- The British Gas Energy Trust
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- Hartlepool Borough Council
- Tees Valley Move Forward

We also receive donation 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 build on our work.

Money Advice and
Pension Service



L.E.A.P.



The National Lottery
Community Fund



Tees Valley Move
Forward

The British Gas Energy
Trust



Hartlepool Borough
Council



Humankind



Volunteers

Advisers/Assessors

Andrew Will
Anne Gardiner
Chris Pendlington
Connor Exley*
Elizabeth Cooper*
Emily Wilson*
Fallon Eglintine
Geoff Weighill
Jaedan Ali
James Simpson
Janet Payne
John Winter

Katy Pounder*
Laura Sorby*
Lea Linda Binda
Mercia Watson
Pinkie Kwaitane
Reginald Gant*
Rosan Barnett
Sam Fletcher
Samuela Ansah
Shalom Akinwolemiwa
Shirley Spence
Simon Buckle*

Reception/Clerical Staff

Dorothy Storr
Kathleen Laffey
Sheila Nicolson
John Jenkins
Julie Fox
Jackie Williams
Susan Alsop

Administrative Officers

Sheila Nicolson
Wayne McCormack

Paid Staff

Helen Howson
Ross Brooks
Janet Noble

Chief Executive Officer
General Manager
Training Officer

Debt Team

Gillian Hargin
Janet Noble
Jill Hutton
Ross Brooks

Energy Team

Carol Dees
James Gilbert-Jupp
Lisa Anderson
Vera Martinez
Warren Rowbotham

Telephone Advice

Beth Noon
Julie Lloyd
Lisa Anderson
Vera Martinez

Advocacy Support Worker

Carol Dees

Financial Inclusion Adviser

Brandon Mahoney

Trustees

Chairman

Tony Raine

Vice Chairman

Edwin Jeffries

Treasurer

Gayle Longmire

Elected Members

Tony Jackson
Ken Natt*
Yousuf Khan*
Brenda Harrison
Dr Lynn Humphries

*Left the organization during
the period 23/24

Public Benefit of Citizens Advice Hartlepool

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 people's 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 people's experiences.

Citizens Advice Hartlepool Key Objectives

- The maintenance and development of high quality client-centred 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 helps people find a way forward

We provide free, confidential and independent advice to help people overcome their problems. We are a voice for our clients on the issues that matter to them.

We value diversity, champion equality, and challenge discrimination and harassment. We're here for everyone.

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

