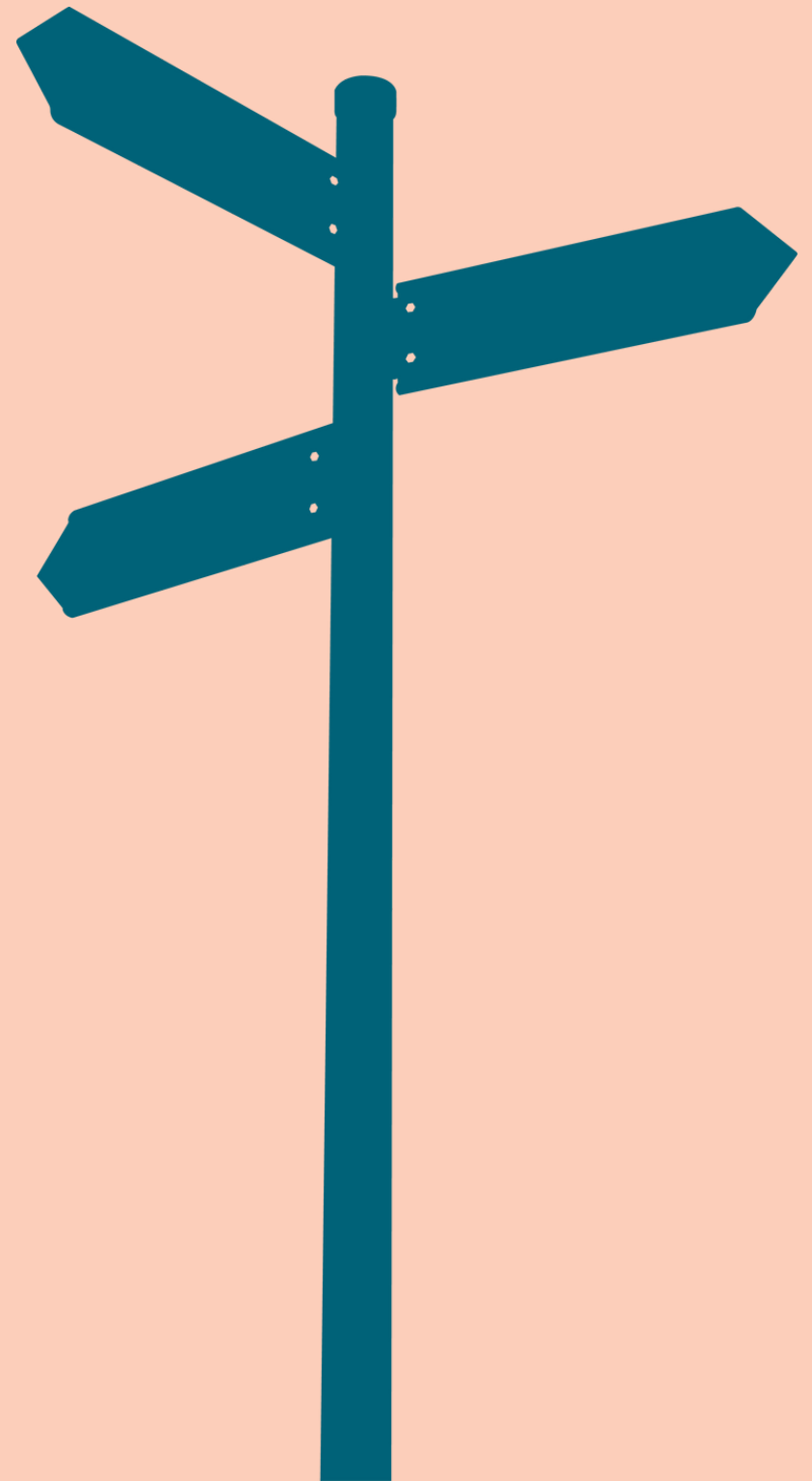


Annual Report 2020/21

Helping local people find
their way through lockdown



Barnsley

Welcome from the Chair of Trustees

Welcome to our annual report!

Our slightly different format is designed to bring information and insights which are timely and relevant. I hope you will be impressed by the flexibility, responsiveness and resilience of the services offered by Citizens Advice Barnsley during the COVID-19 pandemic.

New ways of working have developed, been refined and become well-established. Diverse technologies have been embraced and expanded to not only extend services but also reduce costs, enabling more funds to be diverted to serving the people of Barnsley – and beyond. Staff and volunteers have coped amazingly well by welcoming training and development and adapting to remote, flexible working. We have attracted new volunteers who find the flexibility of digital, home-based working, fitting and rewarding.

Our annual Friends event capitalized, in the COVID-context, on an on-line national initiative, from the Money and Pensions Service, entitled Talk Money Week. We used social media and our newsletters to engage and successfully involve not only Friends but also members of the public.

Our Friends share information and advocate, whenever possible, recommending and encouraging people to use our services. We welcome individuals, and organizations, to become Friends of Citizens Advice Barnsley, by looking on our website – it's free! We keep Friends up to date via news bulletins.

I am hugely impressed by the determination of staff and volunteers to not only maintain this key service but adapt and respond to the complexity of questions and challenges which clients face. Instead of talking about 'going back' they are taking up the challenge to envisage new ways of offering services to reach more and different people. They know that this 'agile' and flexible approach will be beneficial to both clients and staff, combining the best aspects of digital, telephone and face to face services with an enhanced, family-friendly work-life balance.

I offer my thanks to all of them, for making a vital contribution to the wealth, health and wellbeing of the people of Barnsley. Their expertise, experience and skills will be needed for many years as the real impact of this virus on jobs, relationships and finances emerges.

Do read this report and spread the messages it contains.



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Welcome from the Chief Executive

Without question, 2020/21 has been a challenging year for everyone. Despite the difficulties of providing a service through the Covid-19 pandemic, we have remained constant in our ability and commitment to safely advise clients and maintain our partnership work within the community.

We have provided people with the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are, and whatever their problem. We have structured our services to ensure that the most vulnerable people receive an increased level of support appropriate to their needs.

All of our advice is based in law and is quality marked and audited. We are accredited by the Advice Quality Standard (AQS), the Debt Advice Peer Assessment Scheme and the National Citizens Advice Performance and Quality Framework for all aspects of our services. We are also authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Throughout the year, we have continued to secure funding to deliver and expand our services to the people of Barnsley. We have provided advice via our dedicated team of volunteers and paid staff. Our board of trustees have brought a diverse range of skills and experience to support our services with strong governance.

We continue to use evidence brought to us by our clients to campaign both locally and nationally to ensure that we challenge unfair policies and procedures that impact on local people. We use evidence to show large organisations – including a range of companies right up to government level – how they can make things better for people.

I would like to thank the whole CAB team for their commitment to their clients and to our service. I would also like to thank all of our funders and partners for their support throughout the year.

We know there will be a huge surge in demand for advice after the pandemic ends and we have adapted and expanded our services to ensure that we can advise and support as many local people as possible.



**I would like to
thank the whole
CAB team for
their
commitment...
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Our Year in Lockdown

Pandemic Accessibility

At the end of March 2020, we quickly switched from face-to-face delivery in community venues, to all services being delivered remotely by advisers working from home. Local funders praised us for the speed at which we were able to adapt our service and get back to delivering frontline support to local people.

While lockdown conditions continue, access to our advice service is through the following channels:

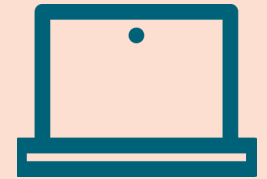
- Freephone telephone helpline
- Email advice via our online contact form
- Video Advice via our bookable online chat
- Self help services on both the national and local websites
- Webchat function on the national website

Agile Working

During lockdown we have introduced additional software, equipment and access channels to further adapt our service to the needs of local people.

This includes the introduction of 'in-person' advice via video chat, piloting of soft phones, the introduction of a local debt helpline and the re-introduction of our BSL service for Deaf clients.

All our staff now have the required equipment to work remotely from any venue.



Research & Campaigns

During 2020/21, our advisers sent evidence to National Citizens Advice on 169 campaign issues.

We have participated in Scams Awareness work and we also helped to raise awareness of the effects of the proposed removal of the Universal Credit £20 uplift.



Growing our team

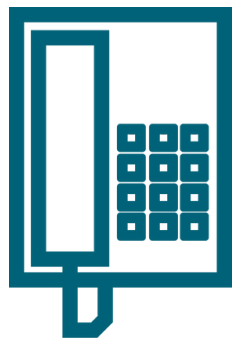
Recruitment has been ongoing throughout the pandemic and we are pleased to have welcomed many new members to our team. This helps us to increase capacity so we can help more people.



Our results

Between April 2020 and March 2021 we helped 3,783 people with 16,885 different issues.

With all our face-to-face services closed because of lockdown restrictions we expected to see an increase in the number of people accessing services through remote means... and in fact, the number of people we spoke to via telephone more than doubled compared to the previous year - and email contacts were almost five times higher!



x2
more



x5
more



Barnsley

TOP 5 ISSUES

Debt	5,775
Benefits Universal Credit	3,328
Benefits & Tax Credits	2,938
Employment	1,053
Financial Services & Capability	832

Benefit Gain

We helped clients to claim £6,245,529 in Universal Credit & other benefits.



Problem Debt

During 2020/21 we helped people manage £6,215,197 of problem debt



Working together to make a difference

Dom was really worried by the arrival of his Council Tax bill – it was even higher than last year's, and they still hadn't paid most of that.

It wasn't that they ignored bills, but with his partner unable to work due to her health, things were tight. That, and two periods of Dom being furloughed from work had brought them to their knees, financially.

Dom knew he couldn't just ignore the problem, so he worked out what they could afford to pay and phoned the council.

Dom was referred to Citizens Advice Barnsley for debt/budgeting advice, and after a thorough assessment to gather more information, our adviser contacted the council and they accepted Dom's proposed repayments for the whole year - agreeing to review if finances improved.

Our adviser also gave Dom advice and information regarding other benefits and discounts they might be entitled to – including immediate help in arranging energy vouchers.

The support Dom received meant his family were able to get control of their finances before their debts got any worse.



"It is such a huge weight off my mind. I wish I had known I could seek advice from Citizens Advice Barnsley much sooner - I could have avoided so many sleepless nights!"

Client Feedback

"I was very happy... the adviser explained everything well. I didn't feel judged. It was wonderful. **In one day, my life was changed.**"

"It's good that there are different ways to get in contact. The adviser was really helpful - **we are in a far better state going forwards.**"

"I found the adviser very helpful and knowledgeable. **He gave me the confidence to begin my application.** I could manage without Citizens Advice - but I feel I stand a better chance of success with them"

94% of people felt less stressed or anxious after speaking to one of our advisers

98% felt the service they received was good or excellent

99% said they would use the service again

99% said they would recommend our service to someone else

97% found it easy or very easy to access the service

Our Services

Despite the operational difficulties of delivering advice during a pandemic - by pivoting to remote/digital working - we were able to continue to deliver a full service.

Here's a list of services we delivered between April 2020 and March 2021:

Berneslai Homes Adviser

Berneslai Homes provides funding to support vulnerable tenants with income maximisation, money advice and support with other issues that are affecting their tenancies.

Council Tax Support Adviser

Delivering income maximisation, debt and money advice to people with council tax arrears. Funded by BMBC Council Tax Department.

Central Area Council Outreach

Advice service funded by Central Area Council and Central Area Ward Alliances.

Dearne Area Council Outreach

Advice service funded by Dearne Area Council, Dearne Development Fund - offering general advice and specialist debt assistance.

Employment Project

Funded by the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund, this 6 month project provided employment advice.

MaPS Debt Advice Project

This project delivers debt advice by telephone, email and webchat channels. Funded by the Money and Pensions Service.

MIND Mental Health Project

Advice service for patients and staff of Kendray Hospital and Cygnet Oaks. Funded by the Coronavirus Mental Health Response Fund, distributed via MIND.

Our Services (continued)

North Area Council Outreach

Advice service jointly delivered by Citizens Advice Barnsley and DIAL Barnsley, funded by the North Area Council.

North East Area Outreaches

Advice service funded by the North East Area Council and Ward Alliances for residents in Monk Bretton, Cudworth and the North East Wards.

Penistone Area Council Outreach

Advice service for local residents funded by Penistone Area Council.

South Area Council Outreach

This project delivers general and specialist welfare rights advice to residents of the South Area and is funded by the South Area Council.

South Yorkshire Community Fund Flood Project

Working with Rotherham Citizens Advice, this project delivers advice to people across South Yorkshire who were affected by the 2019 floods. Funded by the South Yorkshire Community Fund, Flood Disaster Recovery Fund.

Universal Core Service

Provision of telephone and email advice funded by BMBC. Since June 2019 this service has been delivered in partnership with Age UK Barnsley and DIAL Barnsley.

Universal Credit - Help to Claim

Advice service to provide support for new Universal Credit claimants. Funded by the DWP via Citizens Advice.

Welfare Benefits Caseworker

Funding for a stand-alone Welfare Benefits Specialist to undertake Casework, Mandatory Reconsiderations, Appeals and Complaints. Funded by the Community Justice Fund.

Ways to Access Advice

FREEPHONE TELEPHONE:

0800 144 88 48

Phone lines are open Monday to Friday 9am till 4pm. For help with making a new claim for Universal Credit, please call 0800 144 8 444.

EMAIL:

barnsleycab.org.uk/contact-us/

Use our online contact form to tell us what you need help with. You can usually expect a response by email within two working days.

LOCAL DEBT LINE:

01226 446997

If you need help with debt or money worries, please call our local number to speak directly with a debt adviser.

VIDEO APPOINTMENTS:

01226 666017

To book, please call this number and leave a message. We will contact you within two working days to arrange an appointment.

ONLINE ADVICE:

barnsleycab.org.uk/

Information and advice on many different topics can be found on our website.

WEBCHAT:

Available for selected topics from the Citizens Advice website: citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/web-chat-service/



Barnsley

Face-to-face services from our office and community venues will resume when it is safe to do so. Please follow us on social media for further announcements

Quality and Assurance

Information Assurance

Our trustee board oversees the information security of all of the personal information we process, including data from clients, staff, funders and strategic partners.

We jointly hold responsibility for the client data that is held in our case management system with the national Citizens Advice Service.

Our Information Assurance team ensures that the confidentiality, integrity and availability of all personal and sensitive data is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018.



Barnsley

Quality of Advice

All paid and volunteer advice staff are trained to AQS Advice Quality Standard. We have also obtained the AQS Welfare Benefits Standard, the Telephone Advice Standard and the Debt Casework Standard.



Our organisation is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FRN: 617498). All advisers carry out Part 1 of the Senior Management Certification Regime to understand and comply with the new FCA rules of conduct.

We are regularly audited both internally as part of our membership of Citizens Advice through the CitA Performance Quality Framework and externally through Recognising Excellence.

Friends of Citizens Advice Barnsley

Become a friend...

We are seeking individuals and organisations who want to become a **Friend of Citizens Advice Barnsley!**

As our Friend you will receive occasional updates about the work we do and the impact it has on the people we help, opportunities to network with our other friends, as well as an invitation to our annual event.

In return, we hope you will support our charity by signposting our advice to people who may need help, assisting us with research, and sharing any opportunities to develop new services or gain alternative funding.

For more information about becoming a Friend, please visit our website:

<https://barnsleycab.org.uk/friends/>

The Friends of CAB include:

Abbie Churchill, Ison Harrison Solicitors
Angela Wright, Northern College
Anne-Marie Holdsworth, BMBC Adult Learning
Barry Eldred DL
Carmel Seston, NHS Walking for Health
Caroline Parker, Romero
Claire Gilmore, People Directorate Barnsley Council
Claire Rawlinson, Barnsley North East Methodist Church
Dave Fullen, Berneslai Homes
David Scarth, BMBC
Diane Lee, BMBC
Gary Simpson, CEO Community First Credit Union
Jane Taylor, SWYT NHS
Jane Wynne, South Yorkshire Police
Jennifer Macphail, BMBC
Lisa Pogson
Maria Milner, My Best Life SYHA
Mireille Eastwood, BMBC Family Information Service
Norah Gregory
Phil Watson, Co-op
Ruth Willis, CEO South Yorkshire Community Foundation
Suzanne Storey, Barnsley Foodbank Partnership
Vicky, Mayor's Office

Support Our Charity

We've registered Citizens Advice Barnsley with #easyfundraising, which means over 4,000 shops and sites will now donate to us for FREE every time you use #easyfundraising to shop with them.

These donations help SO MUCH, so please sign up to support us – it's completely FREE and doesn't take long.

Use this link to sign up - and once you've raised £5 in donations, easyfundraising will give us an extra £5 bonus donation!

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/citizensadvicebarnsley/?invite=1O9KXH&referral-campaign=c2s

You can also make one-off donations by clicking www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/citizensadvicebarnsley/donate



Raise
FREE funds

for us every
time you
shop
online



Thanks to Our Team

Our service wouldn't be the same without our staff and volunteers!

We want to thank everyone who's contributed to making this challenging year so much easier - and we look forward to welcoming back more of our volunteers when we return to the office.

Become a Volunteer

We are also still accepting applications for new volunteers to help us deliver remote advice.

All new volunteers will be given full training and support from our newly appointed Training Officer.

More information about our volunteering vacancies can be found on our website:

barnsleycab.org.uk/volunteering/

Active Team Members - As of 31st March 2021

Paid Staff

Abbie Buckley
Abu Ferdoush
Andrew Butler Walker
Anna Louise Noble
Carol Hanwell
Dan Turnpenny
David Andy
David Taylor
Emily Stott
Hannah Cripps
Harvi Hyman
Helen Corker
Jo Clark
John Ball
Laura Smith
Lauren Matthews
Linda Rayner
Lindsay Heffer
Lynda Carey
Lyndsey Saunders
Marilyn Toseland
Nigel Cole
Rachel Burton
Sharon Smith
Shaun Johnson
Simon Hickson

Steven Fox
Zoë Georgiou

Volunteers

Charlotte Henshall
Chris Rock
Jack Burton
Janet Gillot
Kane Walker
Kathy Cunningham
Louissa Welford
Max Ellington
Ray Woodhams
Sheila Barnes
Vimbai Mukuze

CAB Trustees

Dr Jan Eldred: Chair
Adam Leece: Vice Chair
Alan Methley
Cllr Joe Hayward
Frank Parnham
Linda Burgess
Marie Hoyle
Rev Mick Neal
Sarah Poolman



Thanks to Our Funders

During 2020/2021 our work was supported by funding from the following organisations:



In partnership with
**THE NATIONAL LOTTERY
COMMUNITY FUND**

Central Area Council and Ward Alliances
Dearne Area Council
North Area Council
North East Area Council and Ward Alliances
Penistone Area Council
South Area Council

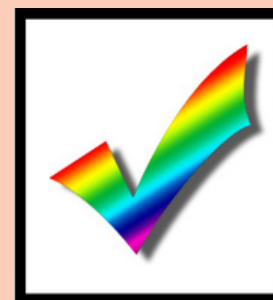




<https://twitter.com/BarnsleyCAB>



<https://www.facebook.com/barnsleycab/>



**Citizens Advice Barnsley is a
Hate Crime Reporting Centre**

**Barnsley and District Citizens Advice Bureau
1st Floor, Wellington House
36 Wellington Street
Barnsley
S70 1WA**

Telephone: 0800 144 8848

Online Contact Form: barnsleycab.org.uk/contact-us/

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