

Annual Report 2023/24

**citizens
advice**

Barnsley



**We Are Citizens Advice -
the people's champion**

Welcome from the Chair of Trustees



**Our staff
are a dedicated,
hard-working team,
reaching more and
more people, using
different forms of
technology**

It is a sad fact that more people are in debt and struggling to make ends meet; childhood poverty is increasing and support organisations such as Foodbanks find it difficult to meet demand. It would be easy to become depressed by the data.

Reading this report, you will realise how help is constantly on offer throughout these challenging times. Our staff at CA Barnsley are a dedicated, hard-working team, reaching more and more people, using different forms of technology as well as face to face appointments, in many community locations. Their work reduces debt; brings relief and hope to families and releases funds into our local economy.

We thank them for their commitment, knowledge, skills and tenacity in difficult times. This includes paid staff along with our valuable volunteers and Trustees.

We thank our senior management team for seeking funds and developing the service so that we reach more and different people in Barnsley. We are a local charity (a fact not realised by many) which, currently, is very healthy and growing.

Our annual Friends event demonstrated the importance of our partners and networks. Such activities are valuable in 'joining up the dots' to provide responsive and effective services across our town. We thank all our Friends of Citizens Advice, Barnsley. If you are not a Friend already, do join us – it's free!

Dr Janine Eldred, Chair of Trustees

Welcome from the Chief Executive

Citizens Advice Barnsley is a local independent charity. We are here to ensure that people in Barnsley have the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are and whatever their problem.

Our clients can be confident of receiving a good quality service due to our advice being quality marked and audited. We are accredited by the Advice Quality Standard (AQS), the National Citizens Advice Performance and Quality Framework and we are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

It has been a challenging year for everyone, particularly in terms of cost of living increases and negative budgets. We have been supported by our funders and partners to enable us to deliver services to help people navigate these difficult times and I would like to thank all funders and partners for their support throughout the year.

We have used the evidence brought to us by our clients to help us to campaign both locally and nationally to challenge unfair policies and procedures that impact on local people.

We are excited to be starting several new services during 2024-25 and we have plans in place to further expand and support more people, so please do keep an eye out for details. 2024 will be our 60th anniversary of providing advice services to people in Barnsley!

I hope you enjoy reading our 2023-24 annual report.

Jo Clark, CEO



**Once again,
huge thanks to our
trustees, volunteers
and paid staff for their
continued commitment
to our clients and
our service**

Who we are and what we do

We are Citizens Advice Barnsley!

We are an independent, local charity which has been supporting the people of Barnsley since 1964.

Our advice is free, confidential and impartial.

We can provide advice on all areas of law including debt and money worries, benefits, housing, employment, relationship, consumer and energy issues.

We give people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are and whatever their problem.

"I couldn't thank my Adviser enough. She went above and beyond to help me and now I can personally say I feel like I can start living again now all the weight on my shoulders has gone."

As an independent charity we source funding to support the running of our services and to deliver specific projects



In 2023/24 we received funding for

26

different projects or activities!

Our results: April 2023 - March 2024

We helped **6,527** people with
29,017 different issues

Top 5 issues

Debt	5,272
Benefits and Tax Credits	4,115
Universal Credit	4,082
Housing	1,452
Employment	934

Supporting local people with their debt and benefits issues continues to be a significant amount of the work we do.

Improving financial circumstances has such a big impact on people's health and well-being, reducing stress and anxiety, and helping to improve quality of life.

We helped
people claim over
£2.5 million
in Universal Credit
and other
benefits

We helped
people manage over
£7.7 million
in problem debt



Advice Trends - Contact Channels

During 2023-24 all of our outreach advice services resumed face-to-face delivery in community venues.

Providing face-to-face access to our services so that vulnerable people across Barnsley can access timely advice to help with their problems is still high on our list of priorities.

But going forward we will continue to incorporate telephone and digital options so local people can choose their preferred access channel.

In 2023-24 the most used access channels were:

Email	41%
Telephone/Adviceline	32%
Face-to-Face	10%

We now deliver an average of

100

community based drop-in advice sessions per month from

19

different venues all across Barnsley

In 2023/24 we made

9,044

contacts with clients via phone

In 2023/24 we made

11,635

contacts with clients via email. That's a 24% increase on the year before!

Advice Trends - Cost of Living Support

The continued cost-of-living crisis has meant that many people across Barnsley still need to access emergency charitable support, such as food parcels, fuel vouchers and shopping vouchers to help make ends meet.

As well as working with the Fuel Bank Foundation and the local food banks, we also sourced additional funding from the Household Support Grant and South Yorkshire Community Foundation to make sure we were able to provide crisis support to those most in need.

158

households who couldn't afford to eat were referred for help from a local food bank

271

fuel voucher referrals were made for people who couldn't afford to heat their homes

We distributed

453

shopping vouchers to help local people who were struggling with the cost-of-living crisis



Making a Difference - Survey Results



**"I'm very impressed that I have been provided with a clear plan to help me move forward, very quickly.
Thank you for being so helpful!"**

100% felt the service they received was good or excellent

100% said they would use the service again

99% said they would recommend our service to someone else

95% felt less stressed or anxious after seeing the adviser

91% felt more able to manage their own affairs

91% thought their health and wellbeing would improve as a result of seeing the adviser

Making a Difference - Mark's Story

When Mark* lost his job, he struggled financially and soon he owed a lot of money - including Council Tax. Luckily, the Council Tax Recovery team referred him to Citizens Advice Barnsley for help.

When he met with the adviser, Mark had no money left for food or utilities. She checked Mark's finances - his income was below the threshold, so she gave Mark immediate support in the form of fuel and shopping vouchers to help him to cope with daily life while they addressed his problems.

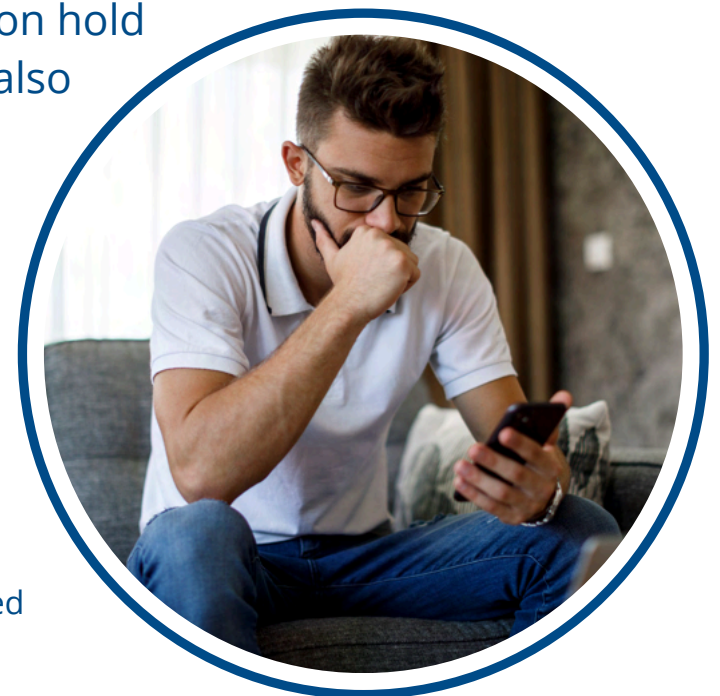
Together, Mark and the adviser evaluated his income and debts. She made sure he understood priority and non-priority debts and how to address them.

To maximise Mark's income, the adviser helped him to apply for Council Tax Support. She also spoke to the Council Tax recovery team, who agreed to place his account on hold to allow time for Mark and his adviser to address his arrears. They also stopped enforcement agency action, so Mark was less stressed.

Another appointment was made so the adviser could help Mark to apply for Council Tax Discretionary Relief and for a Discretionary Housing Payment.

Any increase in his income would help Mark get by until he was able to find full time work, as he wanted.

* Client Storytellers have been given different names and certain details have been omitted or changed to preserve their anonymity.



Ways to Access Advice

TELEPHONE HELPLINE:

0808 812 7148

Adviceline is free and is open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. It's usually busiest at the beginning and end of the day. It's not available on public holidays.

EMAIL:

barnsleycab.org.uk/get-advice/

Fill out the online contact form to receive a response via email. (Usually within 2 working days - however, at busy times this may take slightly longer.)

FACE-TO-FACE:

Face-to-face outreach advice is being delivered from community venues across Barnsley. Please see barnsleycab.org.uk/get-advice/ for full details.

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE:

Deaf clients who require BSL interpretation can drop in to Wellington House to receive face-to-face advice between 10am and 12 noon every Tuesday and Wednesday.

WEBCHAT:

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

ONLINE ADVICE:

Self help information and advice can be found on our website: barnsleycab.org.uk/

Other Specialist Citizens Advice Services

UNIVERSAL CREDIT: 0800 144 8 444

For help with the claiming process - from making an application to getting your first payment.
Available 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday.

DEBT: 0800 240 4420

If you're worried about money or debt, call the debt helpline. Available 9am to 8pm, Monday to Friday and 9.30am to 1pm Saturday.

PENSIONWISE: 0800 138 3944

Book an appointment with one of our pension specialists to talk through your pension options.
Available 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

CONSUMER HELPLINE: 0808 223 1133

If you need more help with a consumer problem. Available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.



"My adviser was very professional and extremely helpful. I now feel that a very complicated problem has started to be resolved."

Quality and Assurance

Quality of Advice

Our organisation is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

All staff carry out Part 1 of the 'Senior Managers and Certification Regime' to understand and comply with the FCA rules of conduct. Senior Managers, Trustees and all debt workers undergo further training to comply with Consumer Duty regulations.

We are regularly audited as part of our membership of Citizens Advice through the Citizens Advice Performance Quality Framework. Our latest Leadership and Management Assessment gave us top grades in all areas.

Information Assurance

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

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

Our information assurance team ensures the confidentiality, integrity and availability of all personal and sensitive data is maintained to a level which is compliant with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018.



**All paid
and volunteer
advice staff are
trained to AQS
Advice Quality
Standard**

**We also
have the AQS
Telephone Advice
Standard and the
Debt Casework
Standard**

Support Our Charity - Donations



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.



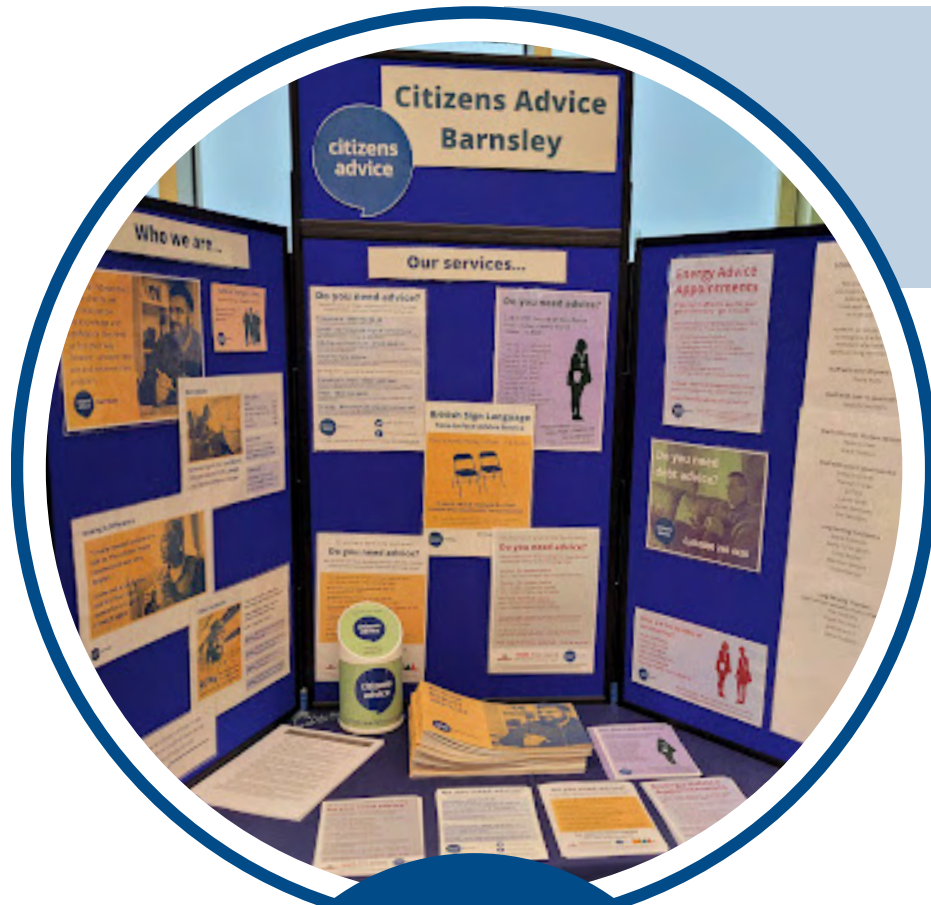
**Scan the QR
code to sign
up and start
supporting
us today!**



**You
can also
make one-off
donations!**

**Donate
now!**

Support Our Charity - Become our Friend!



**Becoming
a Friend of
Citizens Advice
Barnsley
is FREE!**

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 services to people who may need help, assisting us with research, and sharing any opportunities to develop new projects or gain alternative funding.

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

barnsleycab.org.uk/friends/

Support Our Charity - Become a Volunteer

We couldn't run any of our projects or services without our wonderful team of volunteers!

Volunteers operate in a variety of different roles, contributing in many ways to the aims of the service.

Typically, we support people to train as Advisers, Information Assistants, Receptionists and Administrators.

Volunteers get to learn new skills, meet new people and most of all, know they are making a difference!

VOLUNTEER VACANCIES - We accept new volunteer applications all year round...

You'll get full training and support from our Training Officer, and travel expenses will be paid.

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



barnsleycab.org.uk/volunteering/

Work for us

WANT TO JOIN OUR TEAM?

We're always on the look out for more funding to expand our services, and when new projects start we often need to recruit paid staff!

As an organisation, we're friendly and supportive. All staff receive in-depth training relevant to their role, as well as ongoing supervision.

We belong to both the Mindful Employer and Disability Confident Schemes and have trained First Aiders, Mental Health First Aiders and Menopause Advocates throughout the team.

We also have a generous staff benefits package including:

- 32 days holiday (plus public holidays)
- Hybrid/Flexible Working Options
- 5% Employers Matching Pension

Keep an eye out for vacancies on social media or visit: barnsleycab.org.uk/jobs/



With thanks to our Team

A great big thank you to all our staff and volunteers who have contributed so much time and energy to help to support the people of Barnsley. We really couldn't do it without you!

In 2023/24 we worked with many staff and volunteers including:

Paid Staff

Abbie Buckley
Abu Ferdoush
Adam Roznowski
Amy Morris
Amy Pearson
Carl Fox
Carol Hanwell
Chris Rock
David Andy
Elisabeth Evans
Emily-Jane Stott
Helen Corker
Jo Clark
John Ball
Karol Block
Kyle Turner
Laura Smith

Lauren Matthews

Linda Rayner
Lynda Carey
Lyndsey Saunders
Richard Hodgkinson
Sharon Draper
Simon Hickson
Sue Shipton

Volunteers

Danielle Joseph
G'Ann Hepburn
Kathy Cunningham
Linda Rayner
Olanrewaju Sanni
Thisuri Wijesinghe

**The
adviser was
very informative,
really helpful
and very
friendly**

**I felt
very comfortable
and at ease. The adviser
went through things that
I didn't know which
helped me. I was
very impressed**

**I was
very happy
the team was
able to help me.
I am most
grateful.**

With thanks to the Friends of CAB & our Trustees

Friends of CAB include:

Abbie Churchill
Angela Andrews
Barry Eldred DL
Brenda Wade
Caroline Parker
Claire Meager
Dave Fullen
David J Hawkins
Elaine Oliver
Ian Guest
Jen MacPhail
Jonathan Tweedle
Lorna Lewis
Lucy Levitt
Norah
Philip Michael Watson
Rudo Mkumba
Ruth E Willis
Samantha Miller
Suzanne Storey
Tracy Bryant

CAB Trustees:

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



With thanks to Our Funders

Without the generous support of our funders, we wouldn't be able deliver any of our activities or services.

During 2023-24 their funding contributed to:

Community Outreach Advice
Community Engagement
Core Running Costs
Energy Advice
Purchase of IT equipment
Provision of a BSL Interpreter
Shopping Voucher Distribution
Specialist Benefits Advice
Specialist Debt Advice
Telephone and Email Advice
Universal Credit Support



Free for everyone,
finding you a way forward at



Funded by
UK Government

Delivered by
THE NATIONAL LOTTERY
COMMUNITY FUND



North Area Council
Darton East, Darton West, Old Town, St Helens

Penistone Area Council
Penistone East, Penistone West

South Area Council
Darfield, Hoyland Milton, Rockingham, Wombwell

Central Area Council
Central, Dodworth, Kingstone, Stairfoot, Worsbrough

Barnsley and District Citizens Advice Bureau

1st Floor, Wellington House

36 Wellington Street

Barnsley

S70 1WA

Online Contact Form: barnsleycab.org.uk/get advice/



www.facebook.com/barnsleycab/



[instagram.com/barnsleycab](https://www.instagram.com/barnsleycab)

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