

Our impact in 2021/2022

# The difference we make to Cheshire West



**citizens  
advice**

**Cheshire  
West**

# We are Citizens Advice Cheshire West

Every year thousands of people come to us for help solving their problems.

This means we're an important part of the community, with a credible understanding of local needs.

We use this to tailor our services and help improve local policies and practices.



**£1,958,739**

saved by government and public services last year. That's £2.61 for every £1 invested in our service.

# This is Chris

Chris is an example of one of the people we helped.

Last year, we helped 8510 people about 25,115 issues.

Chris's story shows how we help people solve their problems, and why this is important.



# What we do

We help people with a range of problems including issues with housing, debt, benefits, employment, relationships and consumer rights.

Sometimes people have more than one issue they need help with.



Chris contacted us by email one evening.

His disability meant that he finds it difficult to concentrate for long periods.

He prefers to email organisations and deal with things online wherever possible so he can go back and re-read the emails later.

He was very worried as he received a letter telling him that his benefit was stopping.

# How we help

People access us in different ways:



**61%**  
by telephone



**34%**  
by webchat and email



**3%**  
face-to-face

# £

Geoff, our volunteer found out that Chris was on Universal Credit top-up to his wages, and because of his disability has been receiving Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for ten years.

He had a recent review, and has received a letter saying he no longer qualifies for it. He's confused as his condition hasn't changed.

His fridge freezer broke last week, he was planning to use some of his PIP to buy a second-hand one.

He has no money for the next ten days until his Universal Credit is due. His council tax is due at the end of the week.

Chris said he struggled to concentrate and asked if we could email copies of any advice we gave to him. He preferred to do things online if he can.

# How we help

People often come to us with multiple or complex problems.

We can deal with most of the issues people come to us with, tailoring our advice to their needs.



Geoff called council tax department to explain Chris's situation. They agree to put the account on hold while we help Chris with his benefit review. This prevents Chris going into default with extra charges, saving Chris and the Council money.

Geoff also referred Chris to the HELP scheme for support with gas/electricity payments, and an application for a discretionary council tax reduction grant.

Geoff then made a food bank referral, asking them to deliver as Chris is struggling to get out at the moment.

Geoff puts all actions in an email for Chris, so he can read through later.

# Our advice is effective

Problems don't happen in isolation and can have a severe consequences. Solving them stops these situations escalating.

We help thousands of people like Chris.



**8 in 10 people**

said their problem was solved following advice, and 3 in 4 of them said they could not have resolved their problem without us



**9 out of 10 people**

said we helped them find a way forward

# The difference this makes

The wider impact of advice – what we achieve as a result of solving problems and providing support – is just as important.



**60%**

said they felt less stress, depressed or anxious as a result of the help they received from us



Our help stabilised Chris's financial situation through a benefit review.

This relieved pressure both on Chris and his family.

Chris later told us that his application to Help scheme for fridge freezer was successful.



# Our impact



**Around 4 in 10**

had more money or control of their finances



**Over 4 in 10**

had a more secure housing situation



**6 in 10**

felt less stressed, depressed or anxious



**Around 4 in 10**

found it easier to do their job or find a job



**Over 4 in 10**

felt they had better relationships with others



**6 in 10**

found it easier to manage day-to-day

# Why fixing problems matters

If left unsolved, problems don't just affect the individual – they affect this community. Solving them creates considerable value to society.



**Over 9 in 10  
people**

we help say that their  
problem negatively  
affected their life



**Around 1 in 5  
people**

are not confident using  
the internet, including  
to search for  
information online



**3 in 5 people**

Lack confidence in  
taking action to solve  
their issue

# Our value to society

For every £1 invested in our service in 2021/22, we generated:

**£2.61**

in savings to  
government and  
public services  
(fiscal benefits)

**Total: £916,275**

**£20.19**

in wider economic  
and social benefits  
(public value)

**Total: £19.7  
million**

**£10.02**

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

**Total: £13.1  
million**

# How we calculate our financial value

It's impossible to put a financial value on everything we do – but where we can, we have.

We've used a Treasury-approved model to do this.

From our robust management information, we've also separately considered the financial benefits to the people we help.

- Keeping people in employment or helping them back to work
- Preventing housing evictions and statutory homelessness
- Reducing demand for mental health and GP services
- Improving mental wellbeing and positive functioning
- Improved family relationships

# Our value to this community

Our savings to the public purse include:



**£ 630,469**

saved by local government,  
through reducing  
homelessness

Maximising the income for those we help prevents more costly intervention.

This helps reduce financial difficulty, promotes inclusion and benefits the economy.

This is only one fraction of our true value. We also:

- help clients negotiate local processes, such as welfare reform changes
- help local authority rent and council tax arrears to be rescheduled, and reduce the associated administrative costs

# This is Geoff

## The wider value of volunteering

People like Geoff give their time, skills and experience to enable us to reach as many people as we do.

There are also has considerable benefits for them too, such as improved employability.

This year our trained volunteers gave up **£284,070** worth of volunteering hours to help deliver our services.



# Impact of Covid-19

In March 2020, Covid-19 caused unprecedented challenges for our service and the people we help.

People continued to access quality advice through phone, webchat and online channels even when our service stopped delivering face to face support.



**6139**

calls answered



# Local Delivery

We have worked closely with Cheshire West and Chester and other stakeholders to provide support for money advice, access to food and fuel and advocacy.

**Over 1600  
people helped  
through the  
Heating Bank**



**Our community  
connectors  
helped 1168  
people with  
ongoing  
support**

**We supported  
1058 people  
with housing  
issues**





# Research and campaigns

We collaborated with Trading Standards on raising the public's scams' awareness and on promoting National Consumer Week.

We also worked with Trading Standards on local information around Big Energy Saving Week.

We contributed to the local Covid response by highlighting the issues residents were facing.

We campaigned to maintain the the Universal Credit uplift to help those who most need it.



# Citizens Advice Cheshire West

[www.citizensadvicecw.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvicecw.org.uk)



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