

**citizens  
advice**

**Derbyshire  
Districts**

# **Amber Valley Annual Report 2023/24**



**an annual review  
of our impact**

## Our work in Amber Valley...



**3,207**

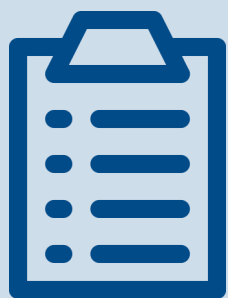
people helped

**61%**

were disabled or had a long term health condition

**22%**

disclosed mental health conditions



**29,989**

total issues dealt with



**16,417**

Benefit issues



**5,500**

Debt issues



**1,439**

Housing issues



**792**

Energy issues



**£5,832,628**

income gained through benefits and grants

**£1,742,801**

debts managed and/or written off

## Our services in Amber Valley...

We've made it even easier for people to access our advice services in a time of increasing need, ensuring we're always there for our local community...



### Heanor Office

We offer drop-in services and pre-booked appointments from our office at the Town Hall in Heanor



### Adviceline

Our telephone Adviceline answers over 16,000 calls per year, providing advice between 9am to 4pm every week day



### GP Outreach Services

We offer appointments in GP surgeries across Derbyshire for help with any issue



### Foodbanks & Community Venues

We offer advice services in the heart of the community from foodbanks and other community venues



### Specialist Services

We offer a range of services including debt, financial capability, energy advice and over 65's champions



### Supermarket Pop-up Events

We do pop up events at local supermarkets to promote our services and reach more people

# The impact of the rise in the cost of living for Derbyshire Families

At Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts, we continue to respond to the needs of our clients, however it is becoming increasingly difficult to help families who are in desperate need. All our data is telling us that 2024 will be just as tough, if not worse for many households in Derbyshire. We are seeing more families coming to us for debt advice that are in a negative budget - where they have more money going out than coming in. The crisis in living standards has become the new normal and many families are living on empty and cutting back their spending to unsafe levels to keep their heads above water.

With housing and energy prices being at historically high levels, people are making difficult decisions about what to cut back on and record numbers are having to rely on crisis support. We are helping more people who need to rely on foodbanks, and people that can't afford to turn on their heating or electricity. Our help has prevented many families from being cold this winter.

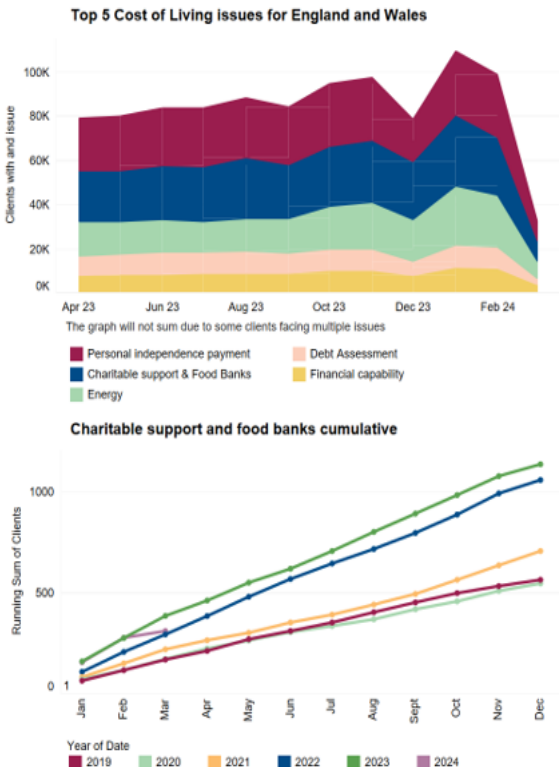
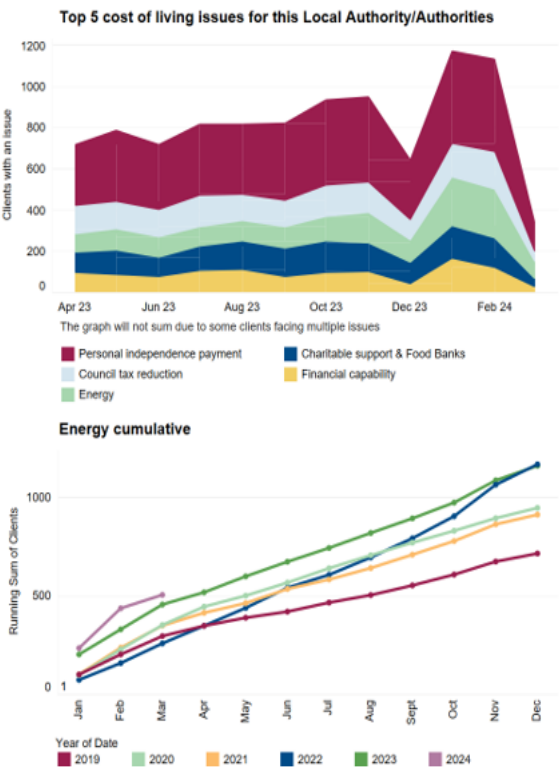
Energy affordability is a long-term problem that needs a long term solution, however our specialist energy projects have helped families access targeted energy bill support and efficiency advice. We are helping people avoid spending excessive amounts on their bills.

At a time when rising prices are putting immense pressure on disabled people budgets, millions of pounds are being held up each month due to delays in PIP reviews. This payment can act as a lifeline for many people with extra living costs linked to their health condition.

The following graphs show how the cost-of-living crisis got even worse in January 2024. But in February 2024, we can see how the latest £299 Cost of Living payments, alongside the warmer weather, have made a difference.

Cost of Living Dashboard  
Top 5 CoL Issues over time

Dates  
01/04/2023 00:00:00 to 31/0...



## Lisa's story...



Lisa first contacted us via our Adviceline to ask for help. She is 36 and lives with her two children in private rented housing. She works part time, and receives Universal Credit and child benefit. She has **physical and mental health issues**.

Lisa has been stressed by the challenge of trying to **meet the cost of basic essentials**. She also has an ongoing dispute with her ex-partner about child maintenance and **owes money** on Council Tax (£200) and Water (£300).

Our adviser supported her to claim Personal Independence Payments and checked her **entitlement to Universal Credit** which showed a significant underpayment. Arrangements were made to challenge the DWP and her **award increased** as a result. The Adviser assisted Lisa to **negotiate affordable repayments** of energy and council tax and helped to apply to the Big Difference Scheme to reduce her water costs. She also was referred to sources of specialist relationship and maintenance advice.

**As a result of our advice Lisa's income increased by £8,780 per year, and her £500 debts were negotiated into manageable repayments.**

## Grace's story...

Grace was referred to us by her GP for advice. She is 51 years old and lives on her own in a local authority rented property. She has a history of **mental health issues** including **bipolar** disorder, as well as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). She is unemployed and receives Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support.

Grace was finding it **difficult to pay for food and energy costs**. She was scared to use energy for heating, cooking, and hot water because it is **unaffordable**. She had used high-cost credit to meet household bills and amounted debts of £3,675. The **stress** this was causing was preventing her from socialising and leaving the house.

Our adviser supported Grace to **claim Personal Independence Payments** and made referrals for help from the **Foodbank**. We identified that Grace needed specialist support with her debt problems, and we supported her to apply for a **Debt Relief Order** and a **charitable application** to cover the fees. Grace was registered with her energy suppliers **priority service register** as a vulnerable customer.

**As a result of our advice Grace's income increased by £4,680 per year, and her debts of £3,675 were written off.**





## Our advice...

There are many reasons why people turn to our service. Often concerned about one issue, such as housing, this may be linked to other issues such as debt, benefits and/or

employment issues. We take a **holistic approach** to advice, ensuring every client leaves our service empowered and ready to tackle their issues.

In the face of rising living costs it is no surprise that our most significant area for advice has been benefits. Sickness and disability benefits account for a large portion of the work we do, including **helping vulnerable people** to make and manage Personal independent payment (PIP) claims.

We have also seen an increase in people in employment approaching our service for assistance with **new benefit claims** in an attempt to maximise their income.

The demand for help with Universal Credit has remained high with many people claiming it for the first time. Our Help to Claim (HTC) service has dealt with this demand to ensure that our clients have been able to get full support with the process in Amber Valley. This service will continue to provide advice as managed migration comes into effect.

## Our Over 65's Project...

Our over 65's project is delivered across Derbyshire and funded by Cadent Gas Network. The project allows us to provide **specialist tailored advice to anyone aged over 65** in Derbyshire through a mixture of one to one advice appointments, group events and home visits for the most vulnerable.

Some of the things we advise on include:

- Attendance Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Priority Services Registers
- Gas Safety
- Blue Badge Applications
- Lasting Power of Attorney

We can also provide access to **free support measures** such as carbon monoxide alarms, slow cookers, heated blankets, heated seat covers, torches and more.



## Our Money Advice service...



Our money advice team provide expert advice on **all areas of debt**, from council tax arrears to credit card debts. We work with people in rent arrears to **prevent homelessness**, through our interventions we help them prioritise payments such as rent and council tax, help them to manage their money better through budgeting advice, look at long term **debt options** such as Debt Relief Orders and maximise their income through benefits and grants.

Citizens Advice was crucial in influencing the government to abolish the £90 Debt Relief Order fee from April 24, our advisers worked tirelessly to provide critical evidence to support the abolishment of the fee. This highlights the extra value Citizens Advice brings to local communities on a wider scale.

Locally we have also been campaigning for the implementation of our '**Council Tax Protocol**'. This is an agreement between the local authority, enforcement agents and Citizens Advice to allow vulnerable people time to receive specialist money advice prior to enforcement action taking place and give them some breathing space to work with Citizens Advice to come up with an affordable payment plan. To date Erewash Borough Council and High Peak Borough Council have signed up to the protocol, we are hopeful that in the coming year Amber Valley Borough Council and Derbyshire Dales District Council will also sign up.

## Our Energy Projects...

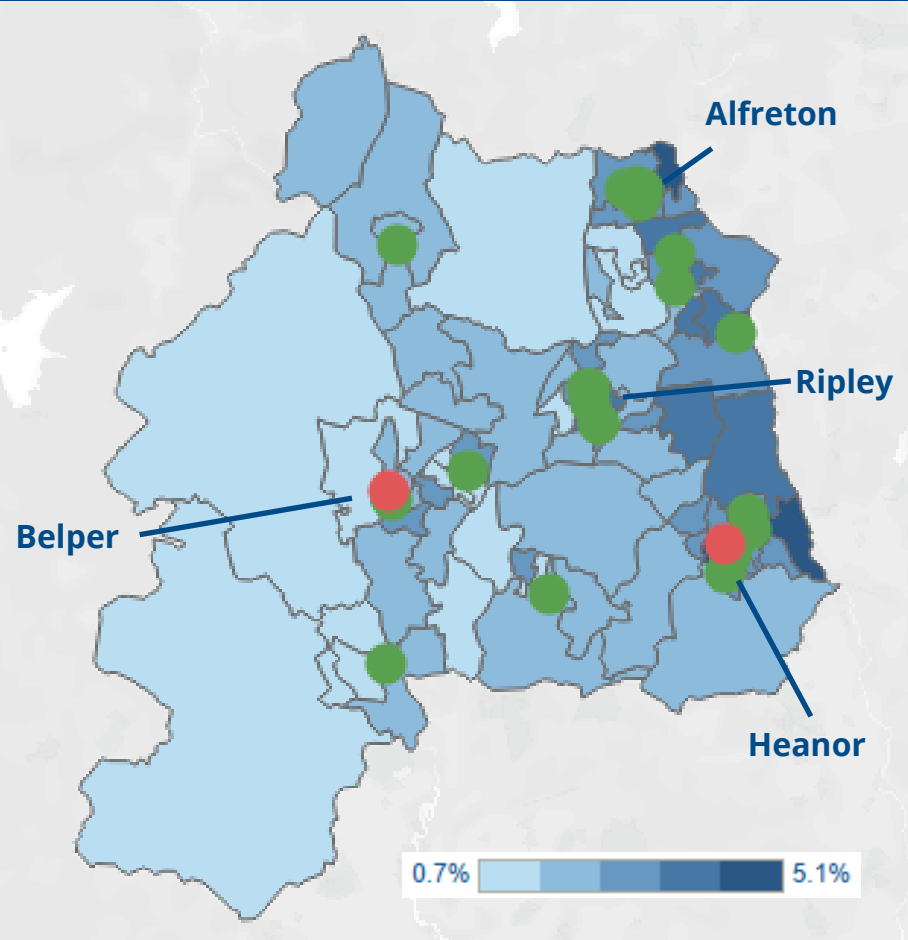
We offer specialist energy advice services funded by National Grid Electricity Distribution. Our team can provide advice on any energy related issues including:

- Priority Services Registers
- Access to grants and schemes
- Understanding and disputing bills
- Fuel vouchers
- Energy efficiency measures
- Behavioural changes to save money
- Smart meters and new technology
- Heat Pumps and carbon neutral technology
- Solar panels

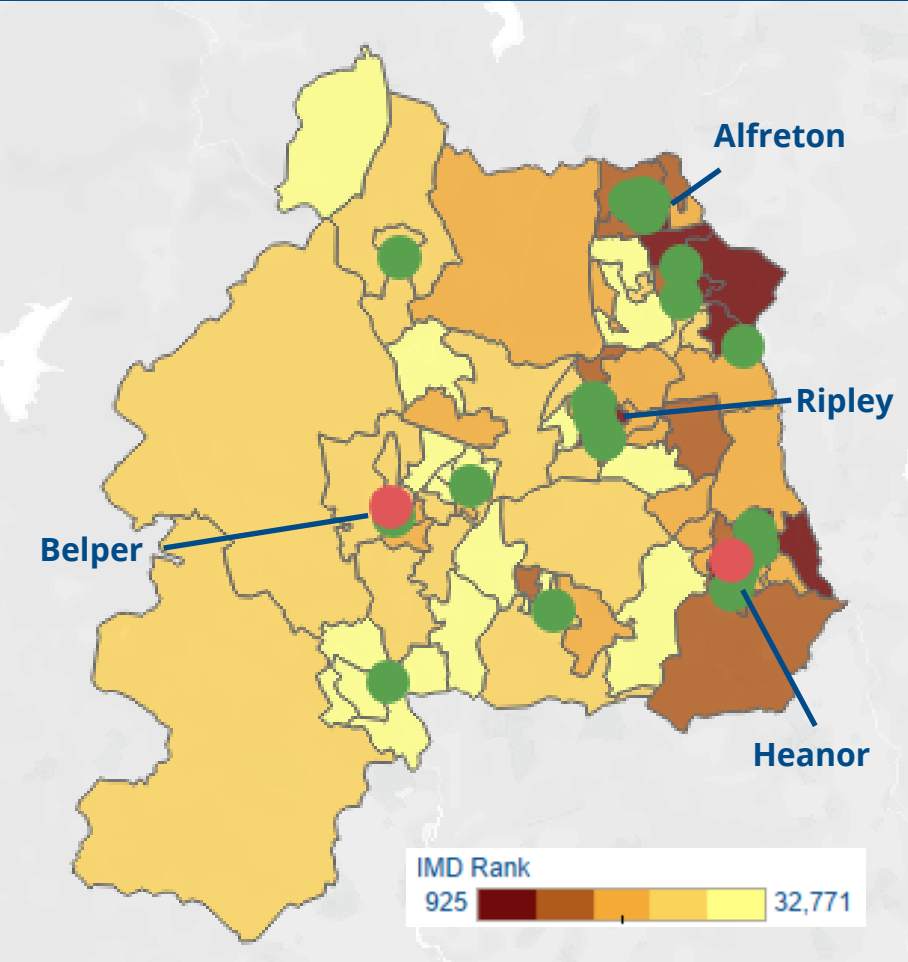


# The community we serve...

## Clients helped:



## Index of multiple deprivation:



## Our advice office:

Heanor Citizens Advice  
Town Hall  
Market Place  
Heanor  
DE75 7AA

## Our advice outreaches:

### Alfreton

Alfreton Children's Centre  
Jessop Medical Practice  
Limes Medical Centre  
Parkside Surgery

### Belper

Belper Food and Community Hub  
Riversdale Surgery  
Whitemoor Medical Centre

### Crich

Crich Medical Practice

### Duffield

Appletree Medical Practice

### Heanor

Brooklyn Medical Practice  
Heanor Children's Centre  
Kelvingrove Medical Centre  
Salcare  
The Park Surgery

### Horsley Woodhouse

Arthur Medical Centre

### Langley Mill

Langley Mill Childcare  
Langley Mill Foodbank

### Riddings

OSCARI Community Pantry  
and Foodbank

### Ripley

Ivy Grove Surgery  
Jessop Medical Practice  
Ripley Library  
Ripley Medical Centre

### Somercotes

Somercotes Medical Centre





## The community we serve, at ward level...

We scrutinise our client data at ward level to ensure our services are accessible and reaching the wider community, with increased targeted support in the areas of highest deprivation. This data gives us an insight into where we need to focus our attention for outreach and promotional services such as our work in local food banks, community cafes and pop up events in supermarkets.

Ward	People helped	Issues tackled
Alfreton	241	2,478
Alport	49	390
Belper Central	142	1,346
Belper East	85	698
Belper North	93	754
Belper South	144	1,113
Codnor & Waingroves	133	1,354
Crich	61	442
Duffield	69	445
Heage & Ambergate	107	1,230
Heanor & Loscoe	147	1,335
Heanor East	190	1,740
Heanor West	214	2,065
Ironville & Riddings	188	1,972
Kilburn, Denby & Holbrook	141	1,076
Langley Mill & Aldercar	243	2,498
Ripley	250	2,666
Ripley & Marehay	181	1,747
Shipley Park, Horsley & Horsley Woodhouse	130	1,241
Somercotes	216	1,941
South West Parishes	45	460
Swanwick	93	579
Wingfield	45	409

## Our value to society...

**For every £1 invested in our charity, we generated:**

**£2.67**

in savings to  
government and  
public services  
(fiscal benefits)

**£28.69**

in wider economic  
and social benefits  
(public value)

**£13.12**

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

Our savings to the public purse include:



**£564,105 saved by local government, through reducing homelessness and scheduling council tax repayments.**

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:

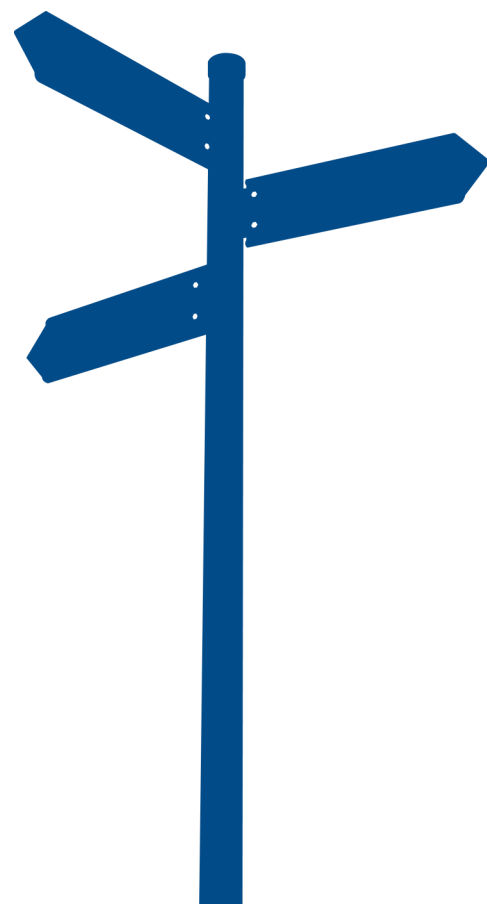
- Help clients negotiate local processes, such as welfare reform changes
- Help older people live independently for longer avoiding care homes, through supporting them with benefit claims and access to care and support in their home

Our **community outreach service** is particularly focussed on tackling the root cause of problems **before** they develop into health and crisis issues.

We deliver advice sessions in most of the **GP surgeries** and **community venues** across Derbyshire Districts. Across such a rural patch this allows us to reach many socially and geographically isolated people that we otherwise would be unable to help in a face to face setting.

**Social value to the NHS** our services bring by reducing the use of mental health and GP services and keeping people in work: **£1,420,212.**

**9 out of 10 people** who contacted Citizens Advice said that we helped them **find a way forward** and **3 in 4** of those people said they could not have resolved their issues **without our help** and advice.



## Celebrating achievements...

Winners of the Public Health Nursing award for our collaborative project with Derbyshire Community Health Service (DCHS).



This award celebrates the impact of health visitors working in partnership with us to impact on public health and health inequalities.



• Melanie Mallinson

## Derbyshire LGBT+ Rainbow Accreditation...

Proud to have achieved



Derbyshire LGBT+  
Rainbow Partnership Accreditation

We have recently been awarded the Derbyshire LGBT+ Rainbow Accreditation, making us one of the first organisations in Derbyshire to achieve this accreditation.

Derbyshire LGBT+ audited our organisation against a set of equity and diversity standards. The aim was to build on and develop our policies, practices and engagement with our LGBT+ staff, volunteers and clients.

## Award winner for outstanding service provider for Salcare...



• Jessica Foy

Salcare is a charity – a “one-stop shop” providing support for the people of Amber Valley and Erewash. Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts support this service by providing weekly advice sessions and appointments for people needing help.



## Celebration event to relaunch the Public Health Advisory service 2023

This is a collaborative project bringing together all local Citizens Advice services in Derbyshire to deliver advice in GP surgeries and community settings.

## The value of volunteering...

**90%** of volunteers said they felt more connected to their local community



**£459,402** the 'public value' of our volunteers

**29%** of volunteers went on to find paid work after volunteering for Citizens Advice



**72%** of volunteers said they felt more confident in general



Our volunteers bring skills, experience, time and energy to Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts. Through information and advice giving roles, research and campaigns, admin, trusteeship and more, volunteers add huge value and increased capacity to the service.

Through volunteering with us our volunteers benefit from gaining new skills and personal development, as well as better wellbeing, a sense of fulfilment from helping others, and community engagement.

These positive effects on individuals' lives have additional value for society, through the advantages and savings associated with having happier, healthier and productive members of the community.

If you're interested in volunteering with us, you can find more information and register your interest at:

**[citizensadvice.derbyshiredistricts.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering/](https://citizensadvice.derbyshiredistricts.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering/)**



**Thank You!  
to everyone  
helping us  
help our  
communities**

**We are a charity for our local community,  
giving free, confidential, independent and  
impartial advice to everyone living and  
working in Amber Valley.**

**We are extremely grateful to our funders,  
partners and stakeholders whose generosity  
and support enables us to deliver our much  
needed services.**

**Amber Valley Borough Council  
Derbyshire County Council  
Derbyshire Public Health Locality Partnership  
Belper Town Council  
Heanor Town Council  
Ripley Town Council**

**We couldn't continue to do what we do without you.  
Thank you.**



**Chloe Doxey, Chief Officer**

**On behalf of everyone at Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts**

**Whatever the issue,  
we're here for you...**

**Freephone Adviceline**

**0808 278 7954**

**Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm.**

**For RELAY UK call 18001 then our  
local Adviceline number**

**citizens  
advice**

**Derbyshire  
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