

**citizens
advice**

**Derbyshire
Districts**

Derbyshire Dales 6 Month Impact Report



April - September 2024

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Our service is available to Derbyshire Dales residents through a mixture of platforms, including our drop in and appointment services from our Matlock office, open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, our telephone Adviceline service open Monday to Friday 9am-4pm and our various outreach locations across Derbyshire Dales in GP surgeries.

Demand for our services in Derbyshire Dales has increased slightly in comparison to the same time period last year and our clients are also presenting with multiple complex problems that require an increased amount of time and resource. The demand for our service is at a consistently high level.

The funding we receive from Derbyshire Dales District Council helps us to provide these vital services, and without this continuous support we simply wouldn't be able to do what we do.

Derbyshire Dales Statistics	23/24	24/25	Increase
Individual clients helped	1,045	1,051	0.6%
Contacts (appointments and sessions carried out with clients)	2,930	3,046	4%
Problems tackled	7,031	8,066	15%
Client Benefits and Grants secured	£1,127,967	£1,593,668	41%
Client Debt managed	£302,902	£295,950	2% decrease

Month	Clients	Issues
April 24	281	1,450
May 24	288	1,411
June 24	277	1,336
July 24	281	1,625
August 24	246	1,348
September 24	255	1,361

Our clients

Age of clients

<25 yrs	4%
25-29 yrs	4%
30-34 yrs	5%
35-39 yrs	7%
40-44 yrs	7%
45-49 yrs	7%
50-54 yrs	9%
55-59 yrs	12%
60-64 yrs	12%
65+	33%

Gender of clients

Female	60%
Male	40%

Ethnicity of clients

White	97%
Black, Asian, Mixed & Other	3%

Health of clients

Disabled or Long Term Health Condition	66%
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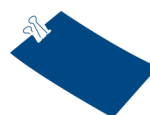
The problems we helped with

The number of issues we helped Derbyshire Dales residents with has increased this year by 15% in comparison to the same six month period last year. The biggest increases were in Utilities (68% increase), Benefits and Tax Credits (16% increase) and Debt (31% increase). These issues are reflective of the impact of the cost of living crisis on individuals who are increasingly turning to Citizens Advice for support.

Issues by type

Benefits & Tax Credits	3,541
Benefits Universal Credit	1,405
Charitable Support & Foodbanks	126
Consumer Goods & Services	193
Debt	850
Discrimination & GVA & Hate Crime	23
Education	21
Employment	139
Financial Services & Capability	313
Health & Community Care	146
Housing	385
Immigration & Asylum	15
Legal	129
Other	27
Relationships & Family	222
Tax	45
Travel & Transport	81
Utilities & Communications	405
Grand Total	8,066

These past two quarters we...



Assisted **157** clients make a claim for PIP



Dealt with **1,405** issues surrounding Universal Credit



Gave employment advice to **67** clients on pay and entitlements at work



Helped **63** clients with homelessness issues



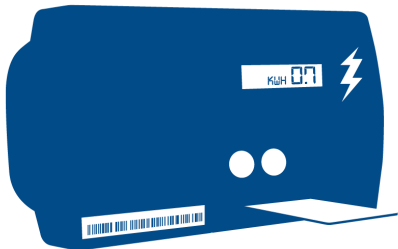
Dealt with **405** issues around fuel (gas, electric, water, oil)

Our response to the cost-of-living crisis

Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts is experiencing unprecedented demand for our services as people grapple with the cost-of-living crisis. People struggling the most are having to choose whether to eat or heat their homes. Even with recent government support measures, we know it's going to be an incredibly tough winter for the people we help and demand for our services is likely to increase further.

Our trained advisers can help people find a way forward with advice on benefits, employment, housing, debt and money issues. We have a dedicated energy advice team who are able to identify savings for people through behavioural changes, as well as helping people access the latest grants, trust funds, schemes and other local support.

Did you know we can also help by...



Issuing free pre-payment meter energy vouchers



Reducing water bills via the big difference scheme



Making referrals for food parcels

Providing sim cards with up to six months worth of free data, calls and texts



Case Study...

William's Story

William is a single father who was referred to Citizens Advice by his GP surgery. He had recently taken full custody of his young son who has moved to live with him from a different local authority area. His son had just been diagnosed with Autism and has significant behavioural and learning difficulties.

The suddenness of Alfie's move and his care needs meant that William had not been able to work. William's support network was not able to help care for Alfie more than an hour or two at a time due to his needs and their own circumstances.

Alfie also requires 24-hour supervision and although due to start school in September did not have a suitable place available. William, who is self-employed, was forced to give up work and was claiming Universal Credit and Carers Allowance.

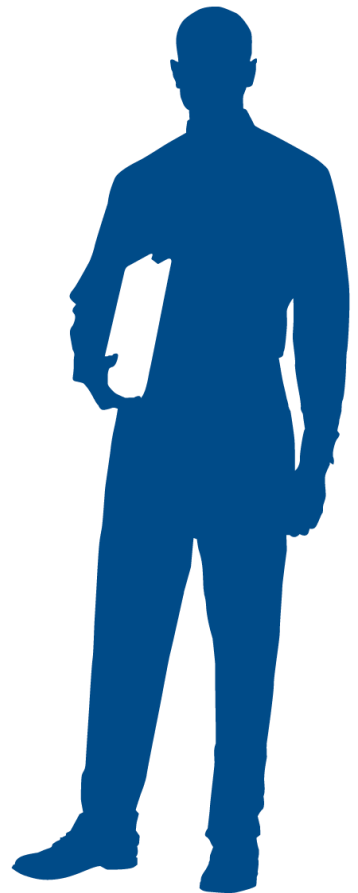
William's main concern which has been causing him considerable stress was ensuring Alfie had a suitable school that would be able to offer support for his needs. He had initially been supported in contacting Social Services by the local Early Years SENCO, but he was unhappy about their lack of communication with him and the substantial delays in finding Alfie a school placement. He was very worried about Alfie's education and the potential impact it may have on him if he were not able to find a suitable school place.

Support Given

Over a series of face to face and telephone appointments, emails and text correspondence, Citizens Advice were able to support William in raising a complaint with the County Council regarding the delays and lack of educational provision for Alfie. Although some acknowledgement of the issues was achieved following the initial complaint no real progress was made and it was necessary for it to be taken to the second stage with a view to forwarding to the Ombudsman if no resolution was found.

The second stage was successful in progressing Alfie's case and resulted in him being allocated a placement in an appropriate school. William was also awarded an **ex-gratia payment of £4,600** to compensate for the injustice of the delays.

We also supported William in ensuring he was being paid all of the benefits he was entitled to. We identified that Alfie's conditions had changed since he was awarded DLA and recommended that a review of the award be completed. We provided full assistance with this and the review was successful. Alfie was awarded the high rate of Care and also Mobility. This meant an extra **£82.75 per week**.



Potential negative impacts:

- Risk of impact on Alfie's educational needs
- Impact on both William's and Alfie's mental health
- Reduced income because of incorrect DLA award for Alfie
- Potential for debt to become an issue
- Increased behavioural problems for Alfie
- William is not able to do any work because of the stress and time ensuring that Alfie's educational needs will be met

Positive impacts:

- Better able to afford to manage day-to-day living expenses
- Alfie is now receiving the educational and additional support he needs
- Less stress and worry
- Improved behaviour and interaction with family
- William can now return to some work and reduce reliance of welfare state benefits
- Increased confidence to contact Citizens Advice for help with further issues
- Lump-sum payment meant William has some savings to pay for anything unexpected

Potential negative impacts on health and wellbeing:

- Reduced risk factors from debt and poor finances for worsening health including stress
- Deterioration of mental health, anxiety/stress for both William and Alfie
- Increased behavioural problems for Alfie
- Potential for social isolation for both William and Alfie

Potential positive impacts on health and wellbeing:

- Positive outcome means better feelings of self-worth and ability to complete things
- Better heating for home
- Improvements in Alfie's behaviour and interaction with his family
- Improved mental health for William
- Reduced risk of deterioration of existing health conditions
- Positive feeling generally more secure due to lump-sum payment and having some savings

Case Study...

Gillian's Story

Gillian is single and living in her own property, and she has various health issues including a degenerative condition in her lower back. Her income consisted of a State Pension and a private pension. She had a small amount of savings which she kept for emergency expenses and was worried about heating bills for winter. She said this was causing her some stress and making her existing health condition worse. Her daughter had assured her that she will help with her heating costs over winter, but Gillian said she did not want to rely on her daughter and the whole thing was making her feel uncomfortable.

Support Given

We focussed on income maximisation. Gillian was by her own admission very organised and had managed her outgoings very well and kept up to date with all her priority payments such as council tax and utility bills. She emphasised that it was important for her to retain her savings as she felt it gave her security against any emergency expenses.

We carried out a full benefit check and identified that Gillian was entitled to Attendance Allowance because of the problems she was having with her back. We helped her to apply for this and she was awarded the higher rate of **£108.55 per week (£5,644 per year)**. Because she was entitled to Attendance Allowance it made her eligible for **£1.50 per week** Pension Credit. While this does not sound like much it also gave her entitlement to full council tax reduction of **£1,258 per year** as well as the **Winter Fuel Payment of £300**. In total our advice had benefited her by a total of **£7,280 per year**. There is now no need for Gillian to use her savings or rely on her daughter for help with heating costs over winter.



Potential negative impacts:

- Anxiety, stress and negative impact on her mental health
- Inability to meet basic costs of living
- Cold home making her health conditions even worse
- Not being able to meet household bills

Positive impacts:

- Improved health
- Able to live on her own
- Able to meet household bills and cost of living without worry
- Keeping her savings to give security against emergency expenses
- Knowing where to come for further help when she has any problems.

Potential negative impacts on health and wellbeing:

- Worry about getting into debts
- Further stress
- Increased social isolation, depression, and anxiety
- Worsening of health conditions
- Heightened risks of falls and injury
- Cold home making arthritis worse

Potential positive impacts on health and wellbeing:

- Reduced risk factors for health issues
- Reduced risks from serious health conditions
- Better management of risks from health conditions
- Improved mental health and wellbeing
- Stronger social connections improve brain health

Call our freephone Adviceline on:

0808 278 7954

open Monday-Friday 9am-4pm

You can access via text relay by calling **18001** then our Adviceline number.

You can access us online at:

www.citizensadvisederbyshiredistricts.org.uk