



# **The difference we make in rural Cambridgeshire**

**Our impact in 2023-24**



# **We are Citizens Advice Rural Cambs**

our goal is to help everyone across rural Cambridgeshire find a way forward, whatever problem they face.

Our service is open to everyone, irrespective of ability, age, gender, gender identity, race, religion, belief, sexual orientation and social or economic status

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

Solving problems improves lives, and this leads to better wellbeing, participation and productivity for the people we help.

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.



**£15,847,416** saved by  
government and public services  
last year. That's **£17.27** for every  
£1.00 invested in our service.

# This is Patrick

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

Last year we saw 6,676 people about 48,170 issues.

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



Patrick, a client at CARC, initially sought assistance in June 2023 after a long wait for a decision on his Personal Independent Payment (PIP) application. Having applied in January 2023 and facing prior rejections without appeal, Patrick was nearing pension age with growing health concerns. Despite previous unsuccessful claims, he was determined to pursue support for his conditions.

# What we do

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

Patrick's health issues included Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), which severely impacted his mobility and breathing, and osteoarthritis, which limited his ability to perform daily tasks like meal preparation, dressing, and bathing. Despite these significant limitations, he received another rejection notice from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) after a late Mandatory Reconsideration, leaving Patrick feeling discouraged but willing to explore further steps with CARC's support.

# How we help\*

People access our service in different ways:

 **12%**  
face-to-face

 **48%**  
by telephone

 **40%**  
by webchat, email and text

\*This can include multiple activities/channel per client.

Oonagh, a benefits specialist at CARC, provided Patrick with a face-to-face consultation, during which he was encouraged to appeal the DWP's decision. With Oonagh's guidance, Patrick lodged an appeal, resulting in a revised DWP offer for PIP Standard Mobility. However, considering his daily care needs, Patrick, with Oonagh's support, decided to reject the offer and proceed to a Tribunal.

# 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.

Those who sought our help about charitable support and foodbanks also required advice on other issues e.g.

- ◆ Benefits & Tax Credits
- ◆ Benefits Universal Credit
- ◆ Debt
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Employment
- ◆ GVA & Hate Crime
- ◆ Health & community care
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Relationships and family
- ◆ Travel & transport

The journey to the Tribunal was not without setbacks. Initially scheduled for May 2024, the hearing was postponed to July 2024, which distressed Patrick as he would reach pension age in the meantime. Oonagh reassured him that, despite reaching pension age, he could still qualify for PIP if his appeal was successful. CARC also helped Patrick claim additional support through Pension Credit and a Council Tax reduction as he transitioned out of working-age benefits.



# Our advice is effective

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



**70%**

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

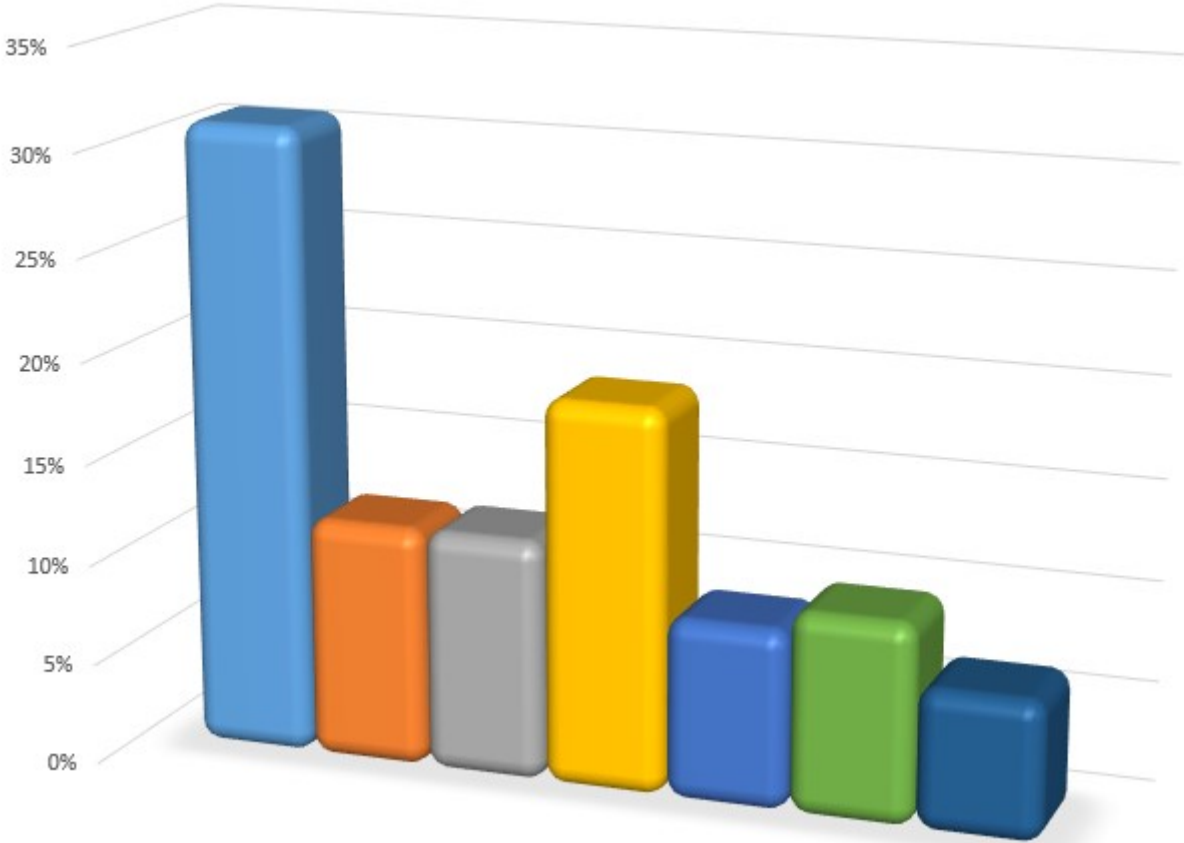


**82%**

said we helped them find a way forward

*These stats are taken from our Citizens Advice outcomes and impact research (2017) – undertaken with 3,600 people we helped. Find more information on the 'All our impact' page on the Citizens Advice website.*

# Our main advice areas in 2023-24



- Benefits and Tax Credits
- Benefits Universal Credit
- Debt
- Financial Services & Capability
- Housing
- Utilities & communications
- Charitable Support & Foodbanks

# 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.



**42%**

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

Patrick attended the Tribunal in July 2024, where he was awarded both Standard Mobility and Standard Daily Living PIP, backdated to January 2023. This resulted in a significant backdated payment exceeding £11,000, along with ongoing monthly payments of £593.60. Oonagh also supported Patrick in securing backdated Pension Credit from June 2024, adding a weekly amount of £78.45.

Grateful for the outcome, Patrick expressed his appreciation to Oonagh, acknowledging the extensive support he had received throughout the process by saying, “You swam the channel.” His case reflects the critical role CARC can play in helping individuals like Patrick navigate complex benefits systems, secure essential support, and achieve financial stability despite health-related challenges.

# 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.



**40%**

had a more secure housing situation



**64%**

found it easier to manage everyday life



**22%**

found it easier to do their job or find a job



**40%**

felt they had better relationships with others



**40%**

were seeing a health professional less

# 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 society

For every £1 invested in our service in 2022-23, we generated:

**£10,639,679** in financial value to the people we help (specific outcomes to individuals). That equates to **£11.59** for every £1 invested in our service

As part of our advice, we can increase people's income through debts written-off, taking up benefits and solving consumer problems

**£2,773,044** in savings to government and public services (fiscal benefits). That equates to **£3.02** for every £1 invested in our service

By helping stop problems occurring or escalating, we reduce pressure on public services like health, housing or out of work benefits

# Our value to this community

Our savings to the public purse include:



**£266,088**

saved by local government, through preventing homelessness, housing evictions & mental health services

Maximizing income for those we support helps to prevent the need for more costly interventions. This approach not only eases financial hardship but also promotes social inclusion and contributes to the broader economy. However, this is only a part of the value we provide. We also:

- assist clients in navigating local processes, such as welfare reform changes
- ♦ support the rescheduling of local authority rent and council tax arrears, reducing related administrative costs

# These are our volunteers



## The wider value of volunteering

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

There are also considerable benefits for them too, such as gaining new skills, making new friends and making a difference locally, frequently also gaining enough confidence to move into employment.

This year our trained volunteers gave up **£234,346** worth of volunteering hours to help deliver our services.



# Research and campaigns



One of the aims of the Citizens Advice service is to *"to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives"*. This means that the central Citizens Advice service talks to Government and other policy makers to help improve the laws and services that affect ordinary people.

During 2023-24, volunteers and staff at Citizens Advice Rural Cambs submitted 612 evidence forms to Citizens Advice (a 24% increase on last year), on behalf of local clients in respect of a range issues, the top 5 being:

- ⇒ Charitable Support and Food banks
- ⇒ Benefits & Tax Credits
- ⇒ Benefits Universal Credit
- ⇒ Housing
- ⇒ Debt

If you would like to know more about this side of the Citizens Advice service please visit: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/our-work/our-campaigns/>

# Local Delivery

Our service was provided across rural Cambridgeshire through:

Our core funders:

- **Fenland District Council**
- **Huntingdonshire District Council**

Our outreach services funded by the local town and parish councils in:

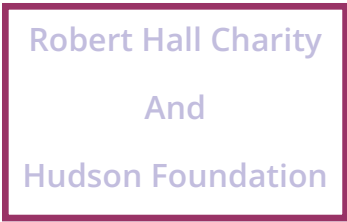
- ♦ **Chatteris**
- ♦ **St Neots**
- ♦ **Whittlesey**
- ♦ **Wimblington**

Our projects funded by other organisations:

- ♦ **Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme**
- ♦ **Change Grow Live**
- ♦ **Cost of Living support**
- ♦ **Energy Advice Programme:**
- ♦ **Income Maximisation**
- ♦ **Money and Pension Service**
- ♦ **Over 55's Benefits Clinic (Wisbech)**
- ♦ **Yorkshire Building Society**
- ♦ **Foodbank projects at:**
  - \* **Ely Foodbank**
  - \* **Godmanchester & St Neots Foodbanks**
  - \* **Wisbech Foodbank**

# Thank you to our funders

## In 2023-2024





Rural Cambs



## How to contact us:

**Adviceline: 0808 278 7807**

Monday, Thursday and Friday 09:30 to 15:30

Tuesday and Wednesday: 09:30 to 19:00

**Universal Credit Help to Claim line:** 0800 1448444, for anyone seeking to make a new claim for Universal Credit

**Webchat or Email via:** [www.citizensadvicerruralcambs.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvicerruralcambs.org.uk)

**Visit our website at** [www.citizensadvicerruralcambs.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvicerruralcambs.org.uk)

**Appointments:** Following a telephone assessment, these are offered at our offices and various community locations across rural Cambridgeshire

**Drop-in service:** please visit our website for full details. Please note that the number of people that we can see at each drop-in session is limited and they are operated on a first come first served basis.



# [citizensadvicerruralcambs.org.uk](http://citizensadvicerruralcambs.org.uk)

Citizens Advice Rural Cambs is the operating name of Rural Cambs Citizens Advice Bureau Ltd

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Company limited by guarantee, Registered Number: 07931354 England

November 2024