



**South
Gloucestershire**

Our Impact in 2024

The difference we make to South Gloucestershire

Charity registration number 1037480



Citizens
advice

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As Chair of the Board of Trustees, I am proud to present our 2023–24 Impact Report, highlighting Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire’s transformative work and our commitment to strategic excellence. This year, we strengthened governance with four new Trustees, enhancing expertise. Our focus on resilience and growth led to a 23% increase in people supported, generating over £25 in value for every £1 invested—demonstrating prudent stewardship and strategic investment.

We embedded equity, diversity, and inclusion in decision-making. Partnerships, like the When Advice Really Matters (WARM) initiative, reflect our innovative approach. With our forthcoming move to owned premises in Yate and unwavering volunteer dedication, we remain well-positioned to face challenges and sustain high-quality service.



John-Paul Corry

Chair of the Board of Trustees



Chantal Watts

Chief Executive Officer

In 2023-24, the cost of living crisis continued into another winter, with bills once again rising and fuel debts increasing. We remained committed to supporting households in crisis and through our ongoing partnerships, we were able to provide vouchers to those in need.

We continue to assist clients with Universal Credit claims over the phone and via web chat. With the national rollout of managed migration from legacy benefits to Universal Credit, we are expanding our team to handle the anticipated significant increase in demand.

With the purchase of our new, larger premises, we aim to better accommodate this demand, allowing us to recruit more volunteers and ease the workload on our existing team.



How we work

We help people find a way forward

We can all face problems that seem complicated or intimidating. We believe no one should have to face these problems without good quality, independent advice. That's why we're here: to give people the knowledge and the confidence they need to find their way forward – whoever they are, and whatever their problem.

We give advice to thousands of people

We're part of a network of independent charities that offers confidential advice online, over the phone, and in person, for free. In 2023/24, Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire helped 7,280 people with 25,827 issues. This is a 23% increase in the number of people helped compared to 22/23.

We speak up for our clients

No one else sees so many people with so many different kinds of problems, and that gives us a unique insight into the challenges people are facing today. With the right evidence, we can show big organisations – from companies to the government – how they can make things better for people.

We're proud to be awarded the Advice Quality Standard (AQS) - given to organisations which advise on legal issues. We are audited every two years and regularly meet the AQS criteria.





**"The help
I have received
makes me emotional
- they have saved my
life."**

Our year in numbers



We helped 7,280 people



We helped with 25,827 issues



We saved clients £16m million



We held around 300 public drop-in sessions



We had 8,395 telephone calls with clients...



..and we spoke with clients via email 2,090 times

Our value to society



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.

These include:

- 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

For every £1 invested in our service in 2023-24, we generated:



£25.18

in wider economic and social benefits (public value)

Total: £19.8m

£20.37

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

Total: £16m

£2.71

in savings to government and public services (fiscal benefits)

Total: £2.1m



"Some days I made do with one meal a day. Now I have money to pay my rent and still have money to see my kids."

Our impact



76% of our clients agreed it was easy to access our service



74% of clients felt the service helped them find a way forward



55% of clients said their problem was now resolved



92% of clients said they were likely to recommend the service to a friend



Equity, diversity and inclusion

Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire provides advice for anyone who needs it in the region - but demand is not uniform across the demographics of our area. There is inequality in how poverty and disadvantage affect people. It is being felt more acutely in certain groups.

Far more of our clients have a disability or long-term health condition (48%) than the proportion of people in South Gloucestershire living with a disability (16.5% according to the 2021 census). An explanation for this is that these groups of people are often unfairly disadvantaged when trying to access the welfare benefits system.

We helped more than twice as many clients from Black backgrounds (3.1%) compared to the proportion of Black people living in South Gloucestershire as a whole (1.4%). The proportion of our clients from Asian backgrounds (3.7%) was also higher than the population of Asian people living in the area (3.1%). We are highlighting this because it suggests clients with Black and Asian backgrounds have disproportionately high advice needs compared to their white neighbours.

Our data also shows 59% of clients were female while 41% were male - suggesting women have a greater need for help from our services than men. We monitor demographic information - including ethnicity, sex, age and disability status - to identify trends affecting particular groups of clients more than others.

We are undergoing a strategic shift to embed equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across our whole organisation. We are continuing to learn how to improve our approach through our work and training programmes with trusted local partners [The Diversity Trust](#) and [Stand Against Racism & Inequality \(SARI\)](#), through our local community networks and forums, and through our extensive outreach work across South Gloucestershire.

Client case study

A couple were full of praise for our Adviser Kate after she cleared up a problem which had held back vital funds.

The client left his job last year to care for his wife who has been diagnosed with a long-term health condition.

The pair had been living on their life savings since February last year.

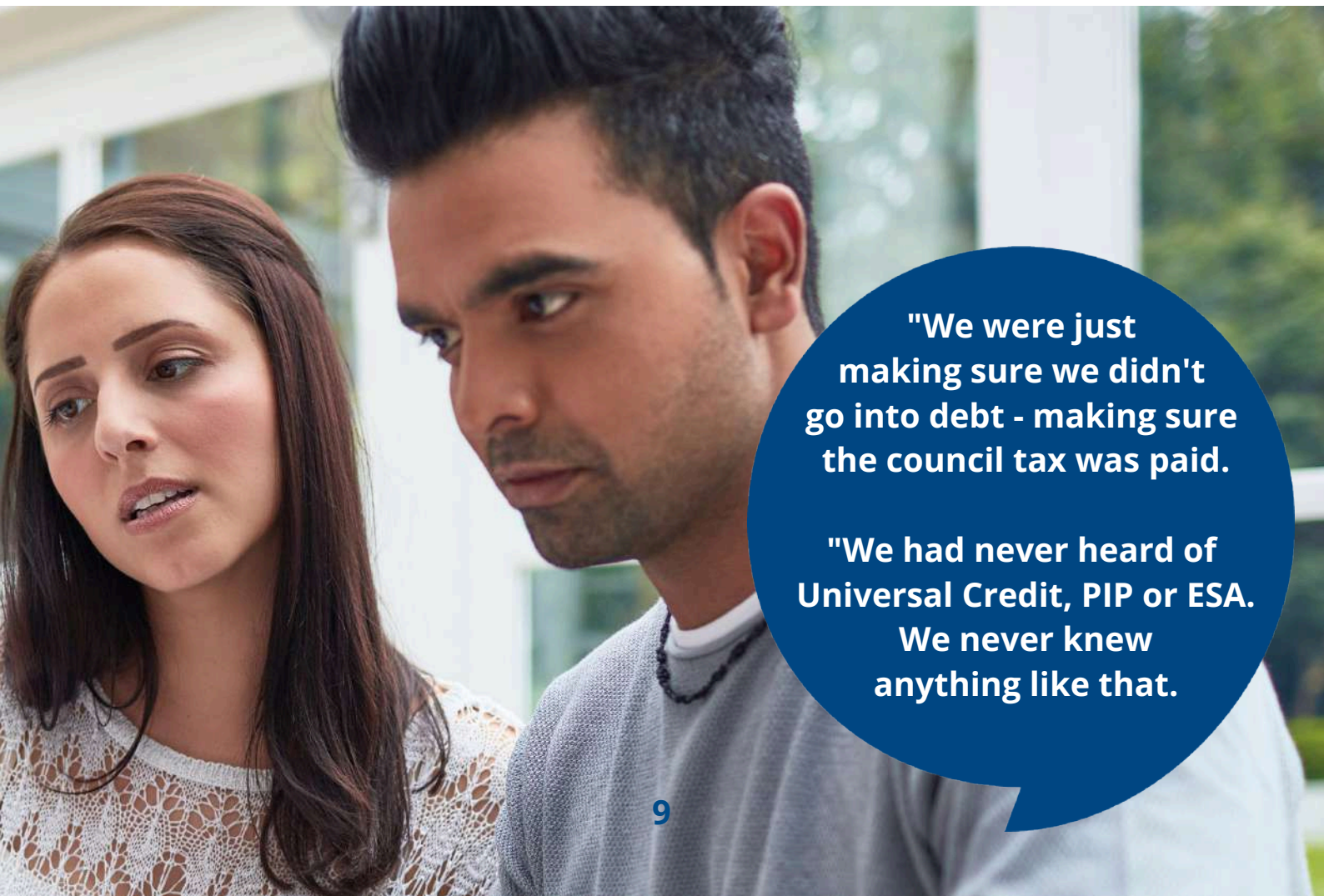
But they had almost run out of money and had applied for food bank help in January of this year.

They had recently applied for Universal Credit (UC), Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and New Style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

But Kate found they were not being paid ESA. After investigating, she discovered it was because the Department for Work and Pensions had lost the sick notes the client had sent.

The client has now received £845 in back-dated ESA payments.

Kate was also able to secure the couple £80 of Tesco vouchers through the welfare grants scheme as well as £120 from charitable organisation The Gloucestershire Society before they received their back-dated ESA.



"We were just making sure we didn't go into debt - making sure the council tax was paid.

"We had never heard of Universal Credit, PIP or ESA. We never knew anything like that.

Volunteering

Volunteering is essential to the service we provide - we couldn't help the community in South Gloucestershire without the skills of our dedicated Volunteers.

Our highly-skilled Volunteers are Advisers, Receptionists, Fundraisers and Trustees, and we are extremely grateful to them for giving their time and efforts to work at the front-line of our charity.



We have a team of over 20 Volunteers giving on average 10 hours per week - which comes to 220 hours per week, the equivalent of 5.9 full-time Staff.



Volunteers contribute an incredible 10,560 hours per year...



.. and this equals £146,784 in savings per year to our organisation based on £13.90 for each Volunteer hour gifted in-kind.



South Gloucestershire Advice Services



We are delighted to be the lead delivery partner of this consortium alongside our trusted and valued partners; Age UK South Gloucestershire, Bristol Law Centre, North Bristol Advice Centre and Talking Money.

Back in 2021 we worked together with South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) to co-design a new information and advice service and were delighted to have secured this contract until 2027.

Recognising the devastating impact of the cost-of-living crisis on local residents, the Council made the decision to invest an additional £120k in 2023/24 to expand the services of the delivery partners. We are incredibly grateful for this additional investment which has been welcomed by the consortium. The extra funding enabled the expansion of front-line advice services at pace which has helped so many more local residents with complex advice needs who were deeply affected by the crisis.

The difference the whole project has made to local residents across South Gloucestershire in 2023-24 has been huge:

Number of clients seen under this contract	1,984
Number of issues	3,772
Financial gains secured/protected for clients	£3.7m
Volume of debt managed for clients	£3m
Number of clients supported with appeals to overturn unfair decisions	75
Number of home visits	525
Number of face-to-face sessions in hours	595.5
Total number of South Glos volunteers	127
Total number of South Glos volunteer hours	10,325
The economic value of volunteering hours contributed	£143,522

New projects

In 2023-24, Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire took on new projects to expand the advice we give and reach new client groups.



"It's such a relief to get help and it was so quick which helped with my anxiety. I am sleeping better."

When Advice Really Matters (WARM)

A collaboration with health services in South Gloucestershire, **When Advice Really Matters (WARM)** is an innovative project which aims to support clients with low to moderate mental or physical health needs which are being made more challenging by practical difficulties such as debt.

Ingeus-funded project - supporting local people on probation

Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire is delighted to be part of a project offering welfare benefits and debt advice to people on probation. Since October, our specialist Adviser has been working as part of a team of four in the South West through a partnership project with Ingeus and the Probation Service to provide practical support to which can help to reduce re-offending rates.

Aviva-funded remote advice project

This year also saw us take on a project funded by Aviva which is particularly helpful for reaching clients who we may not otherwise have contact with. These include clients who have accessibility needs which make attending an open-door session difficult, or those based elsewhere in England and Wales who are having difficulty reaching their local Citizens Advice office.

Research and campaigns

Research and Campaigns is integral to what we do at Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire. Campaigning on the big issues on behalf of clients is one of the twin elements of our mission - alongside offering free, confidential and impartial advice to anyone who needs it in South Gloucestershire.



Negative budgets

Negative budgets is a term used by Citizens Advice for when someone's income is not enough to cover the essentials - meaning they are likely to fall into (or further into) debt. Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire and Citizens Advice North Somerset, working with colleagues at national Citizens Advice, found the number of clients coming to see us who are in this situation rose by a factor of three from 2019 to 2023 - from 331 to 1,061. We were able to secure powerful coverage with a main item slot on BBC Points West in March 2024, ahead of the Spring Budget. This can be seen on the home page of our website at: www.southgloscab.org.uk

Social tariffs for water

Our Debt team has found that a new water supplier in the area has not made social tariffs available - meaning there is a postcode lottery in terms of support available depending on whether clients are served by Bristol and Wessex Water or the new supplier. We took this on as a research and campaigns issue in 2023/24 and approached both the supplier and regulator Ofwat to press for changes to the situation. The new water supplier has agreed to work with us on providing social tariffs for customers - and although there is still work to do to bring this about, we feel this is a victory.

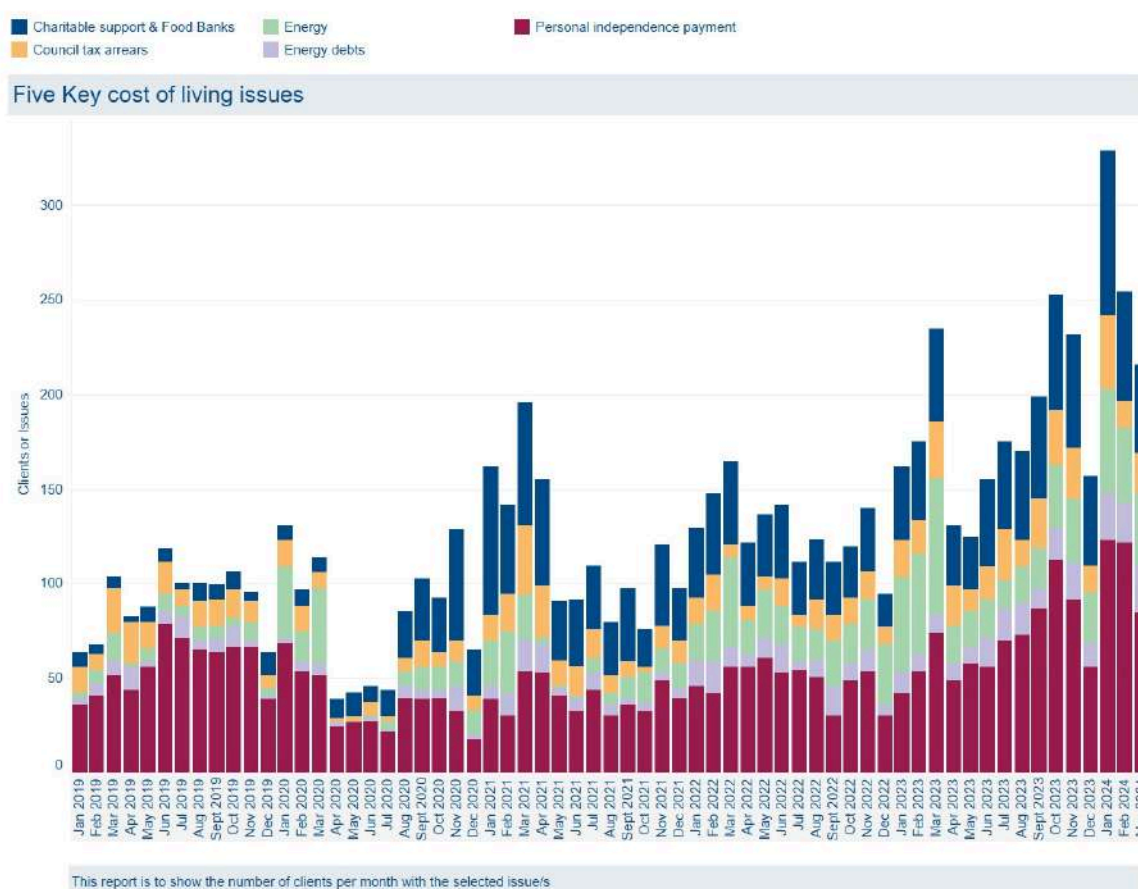
Living in exceptional times

Despite falling inflation, the cost-of-living crisis continued to cause challenges for many in South Gloucestershire in 2023-24. The support we provide is needed now more than ever. We will continue to work with decision-makers to speak up for our clients.

January 2024 saw the biggest peak in five “key” cost-of-living issues we’ve ever recorded. These issues are charitable support & food banks, council tax arrears, energy, energy debts and Personal Independence Payments (PIP). January 2024 saw around 330 of these issues recorded by our office - 43% higher than the previous all-time high in March 2023 at around 230.

This shows last winter was particularly harsh for our clients who have been struggling. Anecdotally, our Advisers have said many clients were able to weather the storm up until now by drawing on their savings to pay for higher energy bills and other essential costs. But many are now finding they have no more financial resilience left and are increasingly needing help accessing, for instance, food bank support. In that same month, we helped around ten times as many clients (around 85) with charitable support & food banks as we were helping per month prior to the pandemic (around 8).

We will always be there to support our clients and do our best to help them through the tough year ahead.



This report is to show the number of clients per month with the selected issue/s

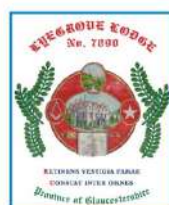
Thank you to all our funders - we couldn't do what we do without you



Delivering for you



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St Monica Trust



THE NISBET TRUST



HANHAM PARISH COUNCIL



Rockhampton



BITTON PARISH COUNCIL

Also thank you to individual donors and the following organisations: Frampton Cotterell Parish Council, Pilning and Severn Beach Parish Council, Almondsbury Parish Council, Falfield Parish Council, Dodington Parish Council, St Helen's Church, Doynton Parish Council, Rangeworthy Parish Council.

We've raised £10,481 since the start of 2023-24 from sponsored challenges - where our team and members of the public give their time to fundraise and train for sponsored walking and running events. Thank you to everyone who has sponsored our teams during these events.

Contact details

www.southgloscab.org.uk

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