

Dear XX,

AN OPEN LETTER - OUR ASKS OF YOU

We are writing to you as the chief executive officers of the local Citizens Advice offices in the area covered by the West of England Combined Authority (WECA).

Our offices in South Gloucestershire, Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and North Somerset together help more than 26,000 people per year - supplying vital advice in areas such as benefits, debt, housing and cost-of-living-related issues. You can see key cost-of-living data trends from across our offices presented [here](#).

We are uniquely placed to share insights about how your potential constituents will be affected by factors you will have control over in office.

IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

We see public transport connectivity as a weakness in the region - with key locations not directly accessible from other hubs without going into the city centre and out again. For instance, there are no direct buses from Thornbury to Yate. This means Mary* - who needed to visit Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire's specialist debt team in Yate - had to travel into Bristol and then out again to attend an appointment.

We would like to know what you plan to do to improve connectivity in the region so public transport becomes a more viable option for people with and without cars. To read more about our asks around public transport, please [visit this link](#).

ENSURING EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO ADVICE AND INFORMATION REGARDLESS OF DIGITAL ACCESS

WECA's definition states: "Digital inclusion ensures that all individuals and communities have access to and can effectively use digital technologies". But we think it is more than this - it means that everyone has access to the information and services they need regardless of their digital access and competency. Mohammad* has struggled to plan journeys as he lives with his family in temporary accommodation in North Somerset - without internet access - and paper timetables are not available from the bus operator in the area.

We would want to see physical media such as printed bus timetables remain a part of the authority's digital inclusion strategy alongside improving digital skills for all residents.

It is also essential your constituents continue to have access to good quality, free advice at the point of contact. Funding for these vital services needs to be preserved, especially at time when so many are still struggling with cost-of-living related issues. Read more about our asks [here](#).

WORKING TOGETHER

We appreciate you will be very busy with campaigning, but would you be able to reply to us to acknowledge our asks of you and begin a dialogue which we can continue should you be elected?

If so, please email joint office contact Mark Cardwell, Communications and Campaigns Officer at Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire: mark.cardwell@southgloscab.org.uk. You can meet us together or alternatively visit our individual offices.

Yours sincerely,

Chantal Watts, CEO of Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire
Richard Yates, Operations Manager of Citizens Advice Bath & North East Somerset
Jon Shoesmith, CEO of Citizens Advice Bristol
Amy Jones, CEO of Citizens Advice North Somerset**

* composite case study

** North Somerset is currently not part of WECA but is likely to be joining