

RUSHMOOR COMMUNITY ADVICE SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Rushmoor Borough Council and Citizens Advice Rushmoor was agreed on, amongst others, the following overarching terms:

- **Duration:** 1 Year (1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024)
- **Profile:** Citizens Advice Rushmoor will provide a free, impartial and independent service of generalist advice, information, support and representation in a confidential manner to vulnerable people in need of help and support who reside in Rushmoor
- **Funding:** £189,960.10 (in the form of a grant exclusive of VAT)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Citizens Advice Rushmoor has had a simple but compelling mission over the last 84 years – to use the power of good advice to help people solve their problems, and drive the change needed to tackle the underlying causes of those problems. Last year was, however, one of the more challenging we've faced as a charity. Not ourselves immune from the cost-of-living crisis, already so acutely impacting our clients, we faced a significant financial shortfall that led to the painful decision to restructure the service, contributed to in part by two years of consecutive cuts to our grant from Rushmoor Borough Council (10% in 2022/23 and a further 5% in 2023/24).

Despite the loss of valued people and experience through redundancy, and an increasingly difficult operating environment, we have continued to deliver for those who need us most. This is a testament to the dedication and commitment of our team of staff and volunteers. However, meeting local demand with the resources available continues to be a challenge. In addition, client cases are becoming more complex and more often presenting at crisis point. This requires us to continually review our service model to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

This report illustrates the incredible impact and value of the **Rushmoor Community Advice Service** our team delivers, with over **5,000 clients** supported with almost **16,000 issues** as a direct result of that investment over the last year. This project was just one of our many advice projects that worked with 10,706 people on 43,046 issues during 2023/24.

For **every £1 invested** in Citizens Advice Rushmoor, we generated at least:

- **£1.67** in fiscal savings to government;
- **£24.22** in wider economic and social benefits
- **£7.10** in value to our clients;

Last year, though income gained by benefits awarded, debts written off, and consumer problems resolved, our team achieved staggering client outcomes of **£7,791,672**. A fuller set of figures relating to our services' impact and value can be found at **Appendix 1**.

50 volunteers supporting all aspects of our service, provided on average **270 hours per week**, with a combined value of **£363,877** for 2023/24.



MONITORING REQUIREMENTS:

Key Requirements	Outputs/Supporting Evidence
Quarterly statistics and an update on current trends, including main issues, outcomes, channels, client demographics etc.	<p><i>Key Statistics, organisational KPIs, and projects overview shared with Council as part of quarterly SLA monitoring meetings.</i></p> <p><i>See Appendix 2 for full breakdown.</i></p>
Ward breakdown of new issues and clients	<p><i>Quarterly ward breakdowns are published online and on social media, as well as shared directly with councillors by email and with physical copies placed in pigeonholes.</i></p> <p><i>See Appendix 3 for a ward-by-ward data overview.</i></p>
Outcomes	
1. Provide a free, impartial and independent service of advice, information, support and in a confidential manner to people in need of help and support who reside or work in Rushmoor.	<p><i>Citizens Advice Rushmoor exists to help people in Rushmoor face fewer problems – its overarching aim remains to ensure our services remain accessible, relevant, and sustainable for everyone who needs them, with clients and our community at the heart of all we do. Our services are designed to reflect the needs and profile of our community and are based on a breadth and depth of local knowledge, data analysis, and consultations, with internal and external input from funders, stakeholders, trustees, operational staff and volunteers across the organisation. This includes the continued impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the most marginalised, alongside a landscape of increasing demand against reducing resources, which mean we must carefully plan how we can continue to deliver services that meet client needs.</i></p> <p><i>Services are delivered by email, webchat, phone, and face-to-face from our two offices in Farnborough and Aldershot, as well as at outreach locations across our area, to ensure anyone can access them. All services are available five days per week, with generalist drop-in support from 9:30am to 12:30pm across our two offices. our Adviceline helpline open 9am-4pm Monday to Friday. A specialist Nepali drop-in service is also available at our Aldershot office every Wednesday 9:30am-12:30pm.</i></p> <p><i>Support ranges from signposting and brief one-off interventions to in-depth casework, with services always tailored to meet individual needs. A team of approx. 50 volunteers deliver the vast majority of our services, from reception and administration through to advisers and caseworkers. They are supported by a small team of supervisors and senior managers.</i></p>



	<p>See case studies at Appendix 4.</p>
<p>2. Provide focused partnership activity targeting the most vulnerable residents.</p>	<p><i>As a constant presence in the face of change, we have a unique insight into the challenges our community face and work in partnership with councils like RBC and other key agencies to make sure we meet key local needs. CAR recognises the significant diversity of our local population, as well as the key areas of deprivation.</i></p> <p><i>Our Cost of Living in Rushmoor report, launched in early 2023, set out an action plan that we used across the year to focus our efforts with partners to reach the needs of the most marginalised and underrepresented in our community.</i></p> <p><i>As part of these efforts during 2023/24, we have:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>• Nepali Language drop-in re-started at Aldershot offices on 21st February (Wednesdays 10am-12:30pm). 10-12 clients dealt with each week so far, with lots of interest from partners to join us in accessing to this hard-to-reach group. Manned by both paid staff and volunteers. Great feedback so far from clients that this has re-started.</i><i>• As part of Government's Household Support Fund, worked with other CA offices and HCC to distribute £33,810 in energy vouchers to c230 Rushmoor households in or at risk of fuel poverty between October 2023 and March 2024. This is in addition to several thousand pounds of support to purchase white goods (via our local British Heart Foundation) and undertake boiler repairs, as well as provide emergency food and fuel vouchers. Again, these were successful proactive applications by us to the HSF. This additional funding has supported c100 further households.</i><i>• Increased efforts to engage local housing associations - with meetings and data sharing agreements secured with VIVID, SSJ, and Mears Group to support their tenants, often with complex issues. £9,000 secured from HSF to support Clayton Court residents who, due to energy supply arrangements, were unable to access existing energy grants. 45 households also supported with an electric heater, voucher for bedding, and £150 food voucher (c£200 support per household).</i>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Partnership with the national Fuel Bank Foundation, providing energy vouchers to those on pre-payment meters and in fuel crisis (i.e. about to run out, or have already run out of credit).</i>• <i>Continued weekly outreach at the Grub Hub. Have used success of this model in reaching more marginalised clients to secure additional funding from The Trussell Trust for a part-time foodbank adviser based across the Farnborough Foodbank sites at Christ Church, Farnborough and Kite Family Hub, Mytchett. This is due to start imminently.</i>• <i>Data showed Cherrywood Ward to have the highest prevalence of debt issues of all wards in Rushmoor. Funding secured from PEBL to undertake focused debt advice work with Prospect Estate residents between March 2024 and January 2025.</i> <p><i>See case studies at Appendix 4.</i></p>
<p>3. Improve the sustainability of services for clients.</p>	<p><i>Delivery of our strategy is supported by sound governance, risk and compliance principles. Benchmarking of best practice and quality standards is undertaken against the external Charity Governance Code and the internal Citizens Advice Leadership Self Assessment process. Risks are identified and managed via a Risk Register which is managed by our Finance & Risk Committee and reviewed regularly by the full Trustee Board. Trustees have received training in risk management principles. Compliance is monitored against legal and regulatory requirements, including the Charity Commission, Companies House, FCA, Data Protection regulations; and against the internal Citizens Advice membership agreement and policies.</i></p> <p><i>As a result of significant increases in costs, as well as reductions and freezes in income, we forecasted a sizeable deficit at the beginning of the 2023/24 financial year, well in excess of £100,000; a large proportion of our overall budget. However, through a programme of cost savings, redundancy, and further income generation efforts, we have been able to almost eliminate the deficit and set a balanced budget for the forthcoming year 2024/25. These changes have enhanced our sustainability, whilst improving our operational efficiency.</i></p> <p><i>Given the continued fragility of much of our funding, including the RBC grant, we are building further cost savings and income</i></p>



	<p><i>generation into our strategic priorities. This remains a continued focus for the organisation moving forward to ensure the future sustainability of our services for clients.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, we have also:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>• Implemented a new cohort model of volunteer recruitment and training, with the first group having just completed their training at the end of March 2024. Two further cohorts are planned for later this year.</i><i>• 'Advice First Aid' is being further rolled out to local partners and other community organisations, including council officers. A dedicated session for councillors is currently under discussion for after the elections. This training further bolsters the skills of non-CA community champions, as well as helping us to manage the increasing need for advice services locally.</i><i>• Increased efforts to enable clients to 'self-serve', including additional training for our 'Welcome Team' in each office, as well as the introduction of public access computers in both offices for use during opening hours.</i><i>• A preventative advice workstream, focused on financial capability, is also being developed.</i> <p><i>See Appendix 5 for a selection of client/partner feedback.</i></p>
<p>4. Increased impact through collaboration across the sector and with public sector partners, including health.</p>	<p><i>Identifying opportunities to work more closely with partners, and with colleagues across the Citizens Advice network, we are continually striving to improve our services to clients.</i></p> <p><i>This work during 2023/24 includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>• Continued helping lead the cost of living/economic hardship stream of work as part of the Rushmoor Supporting Communities Group, and as an active partner within the Aldershot Health Inequalities Group.</i><i>• Data-led pilot project, 'Safe & Warm', developed in collaboration with NHS Frimley to target fuel poverty advice and financial support at Rushmoor residents with severe respiratory ill-health, in poorly insulated homes, and living in areas of deprivation.</i>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>PEBL Energy Project, funded by SGN, supported over 320 households in and around the Prospect Estate with energy and energy efficiency advice between Q2-Q4. This has been extended for a year with the aim of supporting a further 500 households during 2024/25.</i>• <i>CAR's specialist Nepali Domestic & Sexual Abuse Support Service – the only one of its kind in the UK – continues to be funded by the OPCC for Hampshire & IOW and the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. It is regarded as an example of best practice, featured in the Ministry of Defence's Domestic Abuse Action Plan 2024-29.</i>• <i>Working with VIVD Homes' Tenancy Sustainment team to support tenants with complex debt issues, such as with Debt Relief Order and bankruptcy solutions.</i>• <i>Entering our 10th year providing the national Pension Wise service, supporting people across the South East region with free and impartial guidance on their pension choices – one of only 16 centres nationally doing so on behalf of the Money and Pensions Service.</i>• <i>CAR will shortly be supporting delivery of the Government's DWP new initiative, 'Work Wise'. This project is expected to start in May and its aim is to ensure adults with mental or physical health conditions and/or disabilities, including learning disabilities and neurodivergence, receive the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing and maintaining competitive employment for the longer term. As part of the project, we will be delivering benefits, financial and holistic advice, whilst other partners will be providing work support.</i>• <i>Existing work with local charity, The Brain Tumour Charity, continues. This project involves us delivering a national telephone clinic on behalf of the charity to individual and families affected by brain tumours.</i>• <i>Funding from NHS Frimley and Broadhurst continues to support our longstanding specialist advice service for residents with severe mental ill-health, unable to access our generalist advice service. This project continues to grow, supporting 500 clients during 2023/24. Moving forward, we are exploring opportunities to expand the</i>
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	<p><i>project with money from the NHS Frimley Innovation Fund to support TalkPlus clients on a pilot basis.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>A vast array of community activities organised by partners attended, including RBC events such as Victoria Day, Eco Fair, Independence Day of Ukraine, Rushmoor Youth Influence and Faith Leaders' Forum, local libraries' 'Warm & Welcome' events, peer support groups from RHL, Mind, and The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, and the Shots Foundation's Veterans' Hub.</i> <p><i>See case studies at Appendix 4.</i></p>
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Calum Stewart
Interim Chief Officer

May 2024

APPENDIX 1 – VALUE AND IMPACT

Value

For every £1 invested in Citizens Advice Rushmoor we generated at least:



£1.67

in fiscal benefits
Savings to government
Reduction in health service demand, local authority homeless services, and out of work benefits for our clients and volunteers; £1,835,029 in total.

£24.22

in public value
Wider economic and social benefits
Improvements in participation and productivity for clients and volunteers; equalling £26,583,170.

£7.10

in benefits to individuals
Value to our clients
Income gained through benefits gained, debts written off and consumer problems resolved; amounting to £7,791,672.

Impact



756 clients gain a new award or an increase to their benefit worth a total of **£5,187,645** an average of **£6,865** per client



535 clients with debt issues 73% of which were resolved including **£1,089,718** written off, an average of **£13,217** per client



303 clients successfully claim one-off awards, or other outcomes, worth **£459,293**, an average of **£1,516** per client



£572,519 reduction in health service demand, by increasing well-being and people in-work saved the DWP **£648,006** in benefits



706 clients with **1722** housing issues Including **127** relating to possession, **83** clients actually homeless (up 124%) & **128** threatened by it



£388,196 was saved by housing providers by preventing homelessness and **93** people helped solve Council Tax arrears

APPENDIX 2 – KEY STATISTICS 2023/24

Key Statistics Rushmoor LA Residents

01/04/2023 31/03/2024



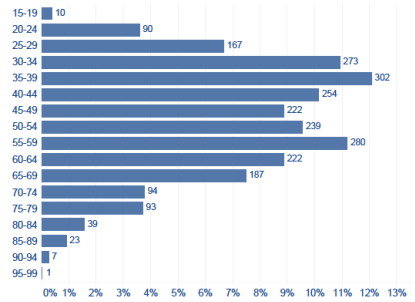
Summary

Clients	2,650
Quick client contacts	2,431
Issues	15,975
Activities	15,670
Cases	3,299
Outcomes	
Income gain	£1,765,011
Re-imbursments, services, loans	£11,248
Debts written off	£313,993
Repayments rescheduled	£17,692
Other	£102,471

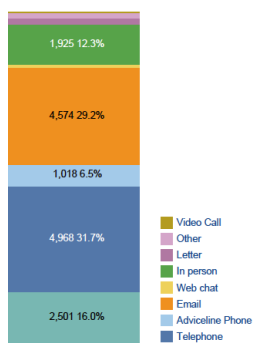
Issues

Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	1,160
Benefits Universal Credit	579
Charitable Support & Food Ban..	301
Consumer goods & services	290
Debt	524
Education	31
Employment	222
Financial services & capability	298
GVA & Hate Crime	61
Health & community care	84
Housing	499
Immigration & asylum	120
Legal	196
Other	83
Relationships & family	250
Tax	51
Travel & transport	102
Utilities & communications	477
Grand Total	15,975

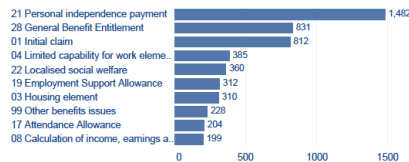
Age



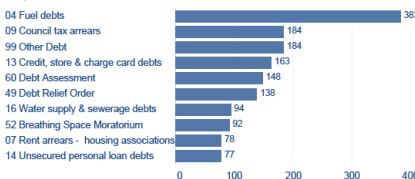
Channel



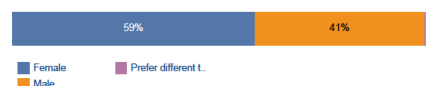
Top benefit issues



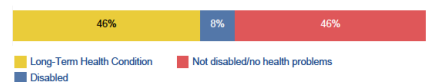
Top debt issues



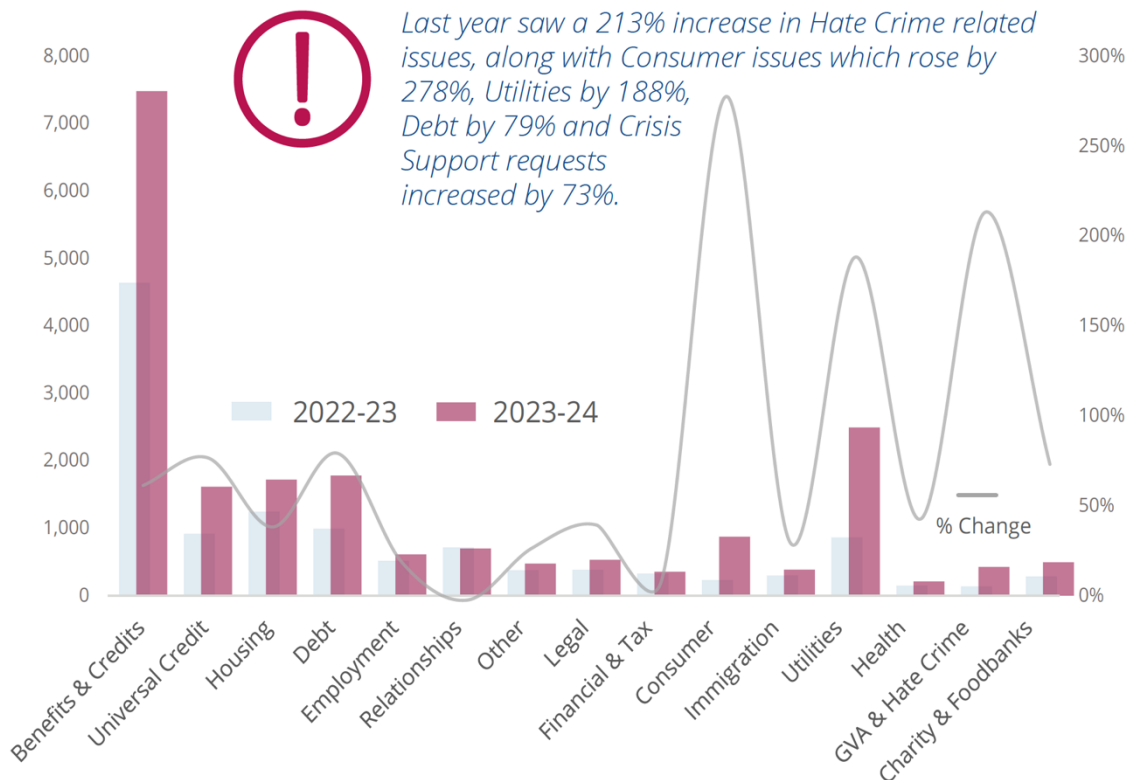
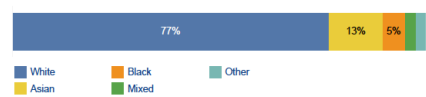
Gender



Disability / Long-term health



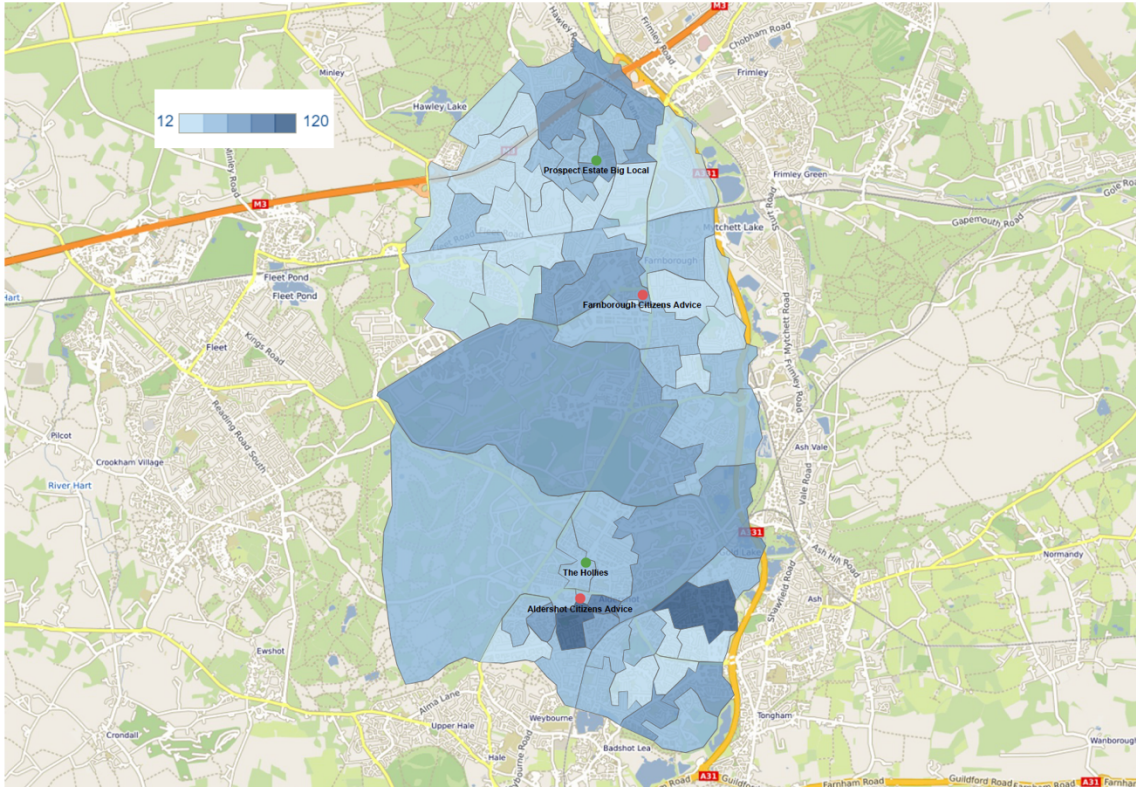
Ethnicity





APPENDIX 3 - WARD BREAKDOWN

Rushmoor: Clients with an issue by LSOA



Local Authority & IMD Dashboard Rushmoor

Start date
03/04/20: 28/03/21



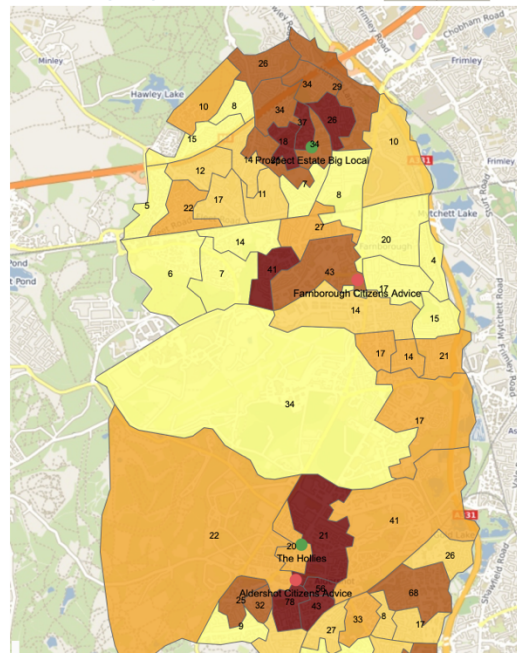
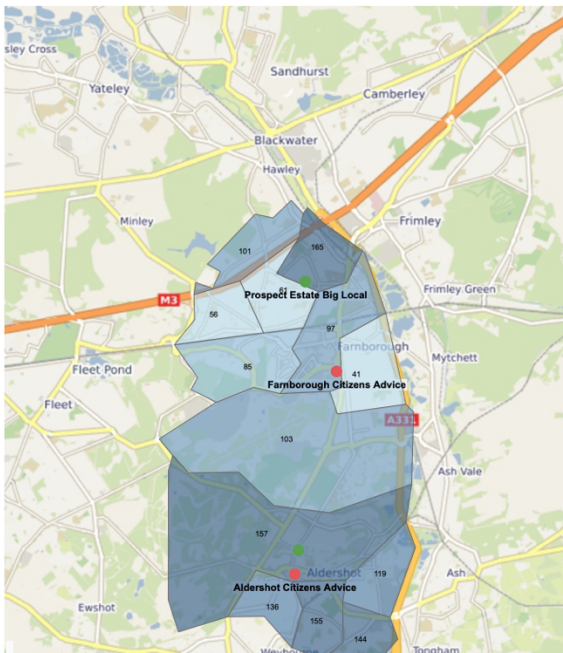
Issue part 1 (All) Issue part 2 (All) Age Group (All) Gender (All)

Ethnicity (All) Disability (All) Type of disability (All)

Select Clients/Issues Clients

Clients seen 41 166 Office Outreach

Index of multiple deprivation 3,699 32,833



Clients	1,420
Issues	10,138
Top wards	
Local Authority	Clients Issues
Cherrywood	165 1,272
Wellington	157 1,305
Manor Park	155 932
Aldershot Park	144 1,045
Rowhill	136 765
North Town	119 772
St Mark's	103 634
Fernhill	101 807
Empress	97 746
Cove and South	85 609
West Heath	61 573
St John's	56 375
Knellwood	41 303

The darker colours on the IMD map show higher levels of deprivation

APPENDIX 4 – CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1 – Community Grub Hub

As part of our significant partnership with one of our largest local community pantries, the Community Grub Hub, we've supporting their ambition for a wider "wraparound" service for their 200 or more weekly customers by having one of our advisers stationed there every week to provide advice and information to some of the most marginalised in our community.

Here's an extract from what a typical day looks like for our adviser:

- **10:07am** – Helped get a customer reconnected after his electricity supply had been cut off five days earlier due to failure to pay outstanding bills. Having just been made redundant, we arranged a follow up appointment to provide more detailed advice.
- **10:52am** – Spoke with a customer worried about her son, who is struggling with addition issues, and signposted to services that may be able to support him.
- **11:35am** – Having had their claim for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) rejected, we walked a client through the process to respond; encouraging them to get in touch if they need further support.
- **12:12pm** – Homeless and now sofa surfing with friends, we helped a customer access an urgent advice appointment for help with housing and benefits.
- **1:45pm** – Assessed what support was available for a family of Ukrainian refugees that had recently fled the war, and had been adjusting to life in the UK.
- **2:03pm** – Offered some information to a new Mum unaware of support she was eligible for under the NHS' Healthy Start scheme – and how she could apply.
- **2:42pm** – Applied for a Household Support Fund energy grant on the customer's behalf, having seen them several weeks earlier to assess their eligibility. He said he'd been putting the energy advice into practice and his bill for the last month was significantly lower.
- **3:25pm** – Reassured a customer anxious about her upcoming appointment with us to begin the process of tackling some of her longstanding debts.

CASE STUDY 2 – Amy

Amy came to see us because she was struggling financially due to her debts and her current housing situation. Amy and her 15-year-old son were of no fixed abode. They were sofa surfing with Amy's mum and stepfather in their 2-bed property. Their current living arrangements were also having an effect on her son who would greatly benefit from a settled home.

One of Amy's debts is a Tax Credit overpayment which she is paying out of her wages as an Attachment of Earnings. The amount she is having to repay is affecting her ability to afford food for herself and her son. When Amy first sought support from Citizens Advice Rushmoor she had already approached the Council for help with her housing situation. She had been placed in Band 3, which meant that she was unlikely to be housed quickly. Her and her son were considered low priority. Due to Amy struggling with her financial situation, our adviser began the process of supporting the client with her debts, by reviewing her current repayments and also considering what debt solution would be best suited her needs.

As a result of our help and support, Amy has successfully challenged the housing decision and has now been moved from a Band 3 to a Band 2, with her situation now being considered medium priority. This should mean that Amy and her son will now be matched to a suitable property of their own reasonably quickly. The adviser also negotiated with HMRC on Amy's behalf which resulted in a successful reduction in the repayments for her Tax Credits overpayments by half. Having started the debt advice process with her, hopefully we'll soon be able to identify a suitable option for sorting out her debts.

Citizens Advice Rushmoor's intervention has significantly helped Amy with both her housing and debt issues. As a result of her banding uplift Amy should now be in a far stronger position to secure housing for herself and her son, which will meet her son's needs for a settled home. Once housed, our adviser will also look to support Amy to make any benefit claims she will be entitled to. Amy's current financial pressures have also been significantly alleviated by the reduction in her repayments to HMRC. Longer term with our intervention and support Amy's debts will probably be written off through a Debt Relief Order.

CASE STUDY 3 – Richard

Richard is a single man in his early 70's who has suffered with various health issues for most of his life without medication. Some years ago, Richard had taken out a £20,000 bank loan while under section for a mental health crisis a day before a suicide attempt from within a mental health ward. Richard could just about afford the repayments with significant sacrifices. He had very low mood and continuing suicidal thoughts. He wanted to dispute liability to the debt due to his mental state, but had no idea how to do this given that he had made some payments already. The adviser supported Richard and negotiated with the bank on his behalf, arguing that Richard had reduced mental capacity to enter into the loan due to the circumstances.

As a result of our help, the Bank offered to write off the remaining balance of £17,000. Richard was informed that we could support him to pursue payments made, however Richard wished to move forward and accept the offer. He was overjoyed with the outcome and reports that his health has improved significantly and that he is beginning to enjoy life again.

Richard gave the following feedback, "I found that my issues were dealt with in a very empathetic manner. I really felt that [the adviser] was on my side and his encouragement was empowering. I still cannot believe the results of the success that [they] achieved for me, [they] really knew what to do and I felt that [their] expertise was of a professional standard."

CASE STUDY 4 – Dhanvi

Dhanvi, aged 28, entered UK under spousal visa with her 5-year-old son. They lived with her husband, mother-in-law, and father-in-law. She suffers from schizophrenia and is non-verbal when she feels overstimulated. She used to work as a carer on a part-time basis, but had to stop working as her husband did not want her to continue. Dhanvi disclosed that her husband was physically, financially, and emotionally abusive towards her. He threatened to send her back to Nepal if she did not behave in the way he wanted her to. He also made her beg for money. She disclosed the abuse to her parents who live in Nepal; they encouraged to "make her marriage work" and "give him another chance." Due to lack of support system, Dhanvi felt that she had no

other option but to stay with her abusive husband.

Dhanvi's son's behaviour at school had changed significantly as he had witnessed much of abuse. His teacher had referred him to Children's Services and was referred to our specialist service for emotional and practical support. Our specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) reached out to Dhanvi and helped her explore what options she had. She was not aware that she would be able to receive tailored specialist support in the UK. She said she felt stuck and thought she had to be dependent on her husband as she came to UK under spousal visa. The IDVA provided information on the areas we could assist, including refuge (safe accommodation), benefits, acting as an interpreter, making sure she has access to counselling and mental/physical health support, and applications for indefinite leave to remain.

She started to engage with Children's Services after our first appointment. Dhanvi expressed her worry about not wanting to talk to the Council because her husband had instilled the fear in her by saying "the council/Children's Services will take your son away" from you "so remain quiet". Although Dhanvi had no recourse to public funds, after our involvement we were able to file an application called a Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) with the Home Office to make her eligible for public funds and refuge.

Having helped Dhanvi secure a refuge space for her and her son, we could now support her to access benefits so she could financially support herself. Liaising with her refuge worker, we helped her apply for Universal Credit and Child Benefit, as well as an application to the Home Office for Indefinite Leave to Remain Set(DV). This application requires a vast array of supporting documents from all organisations that had supported her, including the refuge, Children's Services, the police, mental health practitioners, her son's school etc. The IDVA coordinated this, as well as her complaints to the police, whilst also securing a school space for her son and ongoing counselling service for both of them. Dhanvi said: "This service has understood my needs and above all they have been patient with me. I am non-verbal and tend to dissociate regularly. I have never felt rushed by them. They have allowed me to take my own decisions, supported me with my mental health, and be able to do everything at my own pace."

CASE STUDY 5 – John

John contacted us after receiving a threatening debt collection letter from his energy company. He lives alone and – as a pensioner with learning difficulties – struggles dealing with letters or making calls by himself. Having reviewed John's letters, it was clear that he was being incorrectly billed – charged for the energy debts of the previous tenant. Our adviser was able to speak to the energy company directly and put a hold on any further action. John was also signed up to the Priority Services Register, owing to his vulnerabilities, helping ensure all utility companies provide extra support to him in future.

After negotiating with the supplier, we were able to secure a write-off of the debt, and successfully applied for an energy voucher of £147 to cover his outstanding balance. He was also unaware of his entitlement to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support, so we helped John make claims for both. Although previously struggling with the increasing cost of living and using the Community Grub Hub every week for his food essentials, our support helped increase John's monthly income by almost £1,000 which significantly improved his financial position.

APPENDIX 5 – FEEDBACK

“Without Citizen Advice Rushmoor, I would have had no help. This service is so important to have at these difficult times.”

“I often find that our patients are overwhelmed, so being able to make a referral and take one thing off their shoulders is great.”

TalkPlus

“I am extremely thankful for the help I received from Citizens Advice Rushmoor. You are all wonderful, caring people.”

“I just wanted to reach out and say a massive thank you from the refuge team in Portsmouth!”

You really have made a difference to women and children fleeing violence and abuse.”

Stop Domestic Abuse

“The support from the Caseworker helping me has really helped to save my life. Thank you so much.”

“Amazing advice – thank you!”

“Now I feel more confident to get on with my life.”

Feedback 2023-24

“I can’t thank the adviser enough. He explained things me in a better way when I didn’t understand the complex information. He gave me hope so I didn’t give up.”

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT BETWEEN
RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL
AND
CITIZENS ADVICE RUSHMOOR (2024/25)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This service agreement is between Rushmoor Borough Council, (the “Council”) and Citizens Advice Rushmoor (“CAR”).
- 1.2. This agreement shall commence on the 1st April 2024 and shall expire on 31st March 2025. Thereafter, the agreement may be renewed at the discretion of the Council, subject to availability of resources, for a period of one year with suitable terms and conditions acceptable to both parties. There is no requirement for CAR to re-apply annually for funding.
- 1.3. The grant allocation for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 will be discussed at the January quarterly monitoring meeting, at which time the Service Delivery Requirements will also be reviewed in line with the new grant offer.
- 1.4. This agreement has been designed to ensure the work is aligned to the strategic priorities of Rushmoor Borough Council and the objectives of the Supporting Communities Strategy – where the vision is to tackle inequality and deprivation.
- 1.5. The purpose of this agreement is to affirm the principles behind the funding and operation of CAR and the Council. It will provide greater continuity and certainty of funding, greater clarity, and a framework for monitoring and evaluation of CAR that is in the interest of both parties.

2. PROFILE AND FUNDING OF CAR

- 2.1. CAR will provide a free, impartial and independent service of generalist advice, information, support and representation in a confidential manner to people in need of advice and support who reside in the Borough of Rushmoor.
- 2.2. The Council will provide £189,960.10 for 2024/25 in the form of a grant exclusive of VAT.
- 2.3. Payment will be made on receipt of an invoice for the above amount and once an authorised representative of CAR has signed and returned a copy of this agreement to the Council.

- 2.4. The use of the funds shall be at CAR discretion so that the profile of the service set out in Appendix 1 is maintained and the quality standards set out in Appendix 2 are met. You shall inform the Council as soon as possible at the end of the Grant Agreement Period if you spend less than the whole Grant on the Service and you will return any unspent part of the Grant to the Council within 90 days from the end of the Grant Agreement Period.
- 2.5. The funding for CAR is based on the profile of the service set out in Appendix 1. It is recognised by all parties that CAR is a dynamic organisation and that changes to this profile may occur over time either to improve the service, to meet newly identified needs or through exceptional circumstances. Significant changes in the profile that are expected to last more than one month must be mutually agreed by all parties to this agreement. Any potential conflicts of interest shall be reviewed on a regular basis
- 2.6. Funding for the service is made available on the understanding that CAR meets the essential management and quality standards set out in Appendix 2 on an implementation timetable agreed by the Council.

3. COMMUNICATION MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 3.1. CAR recognises that it is receiving public funding and accepts the Council's responsibility to account for these monies.
- 3.2. Links with the Council will be maintained through the Service Manager for Community & Partnerships, who will be the first point of contact between the council and CAR.
- 3.3. The services of CAR will be monitored at quarterly meetings using the performance indicators (PI's) and means of assessment outlined in Appendix 3. The aim of these PI's is to provide an accurate and fair view of CAR covering financial performance and quality of service.
- 3.4. The quarterly monitoring meetings shall be attended by the Community & Residents Portfolio Holder, the Service Manager for Community & Partnership and the Chief Executive of CAR. Prior to the meetings, CAR will provide quarterly, statistics detailing the advice issues; including a summary of the number of clients by ward and a summary of clients according to ethnic origin, age, gender and disability.

The quarterly review meetings will consider the following:

- (a) Changes in the profile of operations with reference to Appendix 1;
- (b) Performance against the PI's and the quality standards set out in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3;
- (c) The need or possibility of service enhancements including any issues or concerns with CAR's ability to effectively deliver the agreed service.

- (d) Financial position of CAR
Financial position of the Council.
- (e) Any emerging issues in the relationship between both parties and within the local community.

3.5 On an annual basis, in April alongside the Q4 monitoring, CAR will provide a detailed report for the Council containing the following information:

- a) A summary of the number of advice issues broken down by subject category and age
- b) A summary of clients according to ethnic origin, age, gender, disability, and by ward.
- c) Case studies illustrating the impact of CAR support.
- d) Evidence of the value for money provided to the Council.
- e) Outline of how the CAR has used the Council grant.
- f) A summary of research or campaign issues, trends identified and reported at quarterly review meetings by way of national and regional/local calls for evidence.

3.6 CAR will invite representatives of RBC to its Annual General Meeting and provide the Council with a full copy of its Annual Report and audited accounts each year.

3.7 CAR to attend the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee as required to demonstrate the use of the Council's grant and the impact on local residents.

3.8 RBC may appoint one councillor to attend the Trustee Board Meetings as an observer. In this position, the nominated councillor will act on behalf of RBC and will be permitted to attend and participate in meetings and receive all information provided to members of the board. They can support or offer guidance to the Trustee Board as and when required but they are not permitted to formally vote on any matters(Appendix4)

4. TERMINATION

The Council may end this agreement if there is:

- 4.1. A misuse of payments made by the Council;
- 4.2. A fraudulent contravention of statute by CAR
- 4.3 A failure to provide the service of this agreement, at the level indicated, without notice to and without prior approval of the Council

If one party breaks this agreement, the aggrieved party can give three months' notice in writing to the other party to terminate the agreement. Every effort will be made to resolve

disputes amicably between the parties involved, before recourse to termination, external assistance or arbitration. If recourse to arbitration is necessary, the dispute will, at the option of the aggrieved party, be referred to a single arbitrator acceptable to all parties. The decision will be binding on all parties. The Chairman of the Institute of Arbitration shall appoint the arbitrator on agreement by the parties or in default of agreement.

SIGNED FOR RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

Signature: 

Name of Signatory (Please Print)..... **Rachel Barker**

Position: **Assistant Chief Executive**

Date 26.07/2024

SIGNED FOR CITIZENS ADVICE

Signature:

Name of Signatory  **ANDREW LEVEY**

Position **CHAIR OF TRUSTEES**

Date **24/07/2024**

APPENDIX 1

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT BETWEEN

CITIZENS ADVICE RUSHMOOR

AND

RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

- 5.0 CAR will provide information, advice and advocacy as appropriate to all clients seeking assistance and will utilise the experience gained to further develop the services within the optimum limit of resources.
- 5.1 The service shall be confidential, independent, impartial and free of charge and shall be provided by telephone, personal visits to CAR offices, correspondence or any combination of these.
- 5.2 CAR shall be open for telephone enquiries and appointments from Monday to Friday 9-5 and drop ins from 9.30-12.30 across the offices. This schedule may change during the life of this Service Level Agreement due to the changing needs of the service or due to financial limitations. The opening hours are subject to the availability of staff and volunteers.
- 5.3 CAR works to the agreed aims, principles and policies of National Citizens Advice, which includes:-
- i. Comprehensive equal opportunities policies, ensuring the service is accessible to all sections of the community
 - ii. Access to extensive information, reference materials and specialist support
 - iii. Nationally agreed Performance Quality Framework and training for the effective delivery of advice
- 5.4 The purpose of funding from the SLA is to enable the core service to be delivered to agreed levels, as specified by the Citizens Advice Performance Quality Framework and Membership Scheme. The core service covering the following issues:

Client

- iv. Welfare benefits
- v. Employment
- vi. Housing

- vii. Family and personal
- viii. Taxes
- ix. Immigration and nationality
- x. Health
- xi. Education
- xii. Legal
- xiii. Debt

5.5 CAR shall develop and maintain professional working with local agencies promoting partnership working between community, voluntary and statutory agencies located in Rushmoor and immediately adjoining local authorities and throughout Hampshire to the benefit of all communities in Rushmoor. The CAR will continue attending the Supporting Communities Working group and working with partners to deliver the objectives outlined in the Supporting Communities Strategy.

5.6 CAR shall participate in appropriate forums and meetings with other agencies in line with meeting its research and campaigns objectives, subject to staffing resource

6. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The CAR Budget is reviewed at Board meetings. Accounts are audited annually by Returns are completed annually to The Charity Commission and Companies House. Signed, audited accounts are sent annually to Rushmoor Borough Council.

Appendix 2

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT BETWEEN

CITIZENS ADVICE RUSHMOOR

AND

RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY STANDARDS

PART 1 - ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

1.0 Communication with Members and Users of Services

There will be communication and consultation with members and users regarding services and in particular any changes to services funded by Rushmoor Borough Council. CAR will develop methods of consultation that may include but are not limited to Questionnaires; Surveys; Personal Interviews; User representation.

1.1. Statistics - Statistics on the operations of CAR will be prepared annually and form an integral part of the Company's Annual Report, quarterly meetings, or more frequently when required. CAR will share key quarterly statistics with ward Councillors for information and present information to the Council as requested.

1.2. Equal Opportunities - CAR has a written Equal Opportunities policy and Procedure.

1.3. Complaints - CAR has an established complaints procedure for use by any person who wishes to comment on the operations of the Charity.

1.4. CAR has systems and policies in place to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Acts 1998, Companies Acts, Charities Acts and other legislation relevant to its operation.

PART 2: DESIRABLE ELEMENTS

- 2.1. That the Council is mentioned as sponsors on publicity material which it has financed in part or whole.

- 2.2. That regular surveys are carried out to ascertain:
 - (i) The views of users of all services provided by CAR
 - 1. CAR will investigate areas where its services may be enhanced. Reports on proposed changes or enhancements will be included in the Annual Report to the Council.

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT BETWEEN

CITIZENS ADVICE RUSHMOOR

AND

RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

CAR will supply RBC with quarterly statistics and data including an update on current trends.

The details of quarterly enquiries will include the following information:

1. Main issues being dealt with
2. Ward breakdown of new advice issues and clients
3. Type of contact (phone, in person, email etc)

Outcome	Outputs & Commitment	Measurement/Supporting evidence provided
<p>1. Provide a free, impartial and independent service of advice, information, support and in a confidential manner to people in need of help and support who reside or work in Rushmoor.</p>	<p>Providing advice and support to those who require it</p>	<p>Data to include number of people and type of support required.</p> <p>Annual Case studies to demonstrate variety, depth and impact of support provided.</p> <p>Ward based data - including a breakdown of clients and issues from deprived areas specifically</p> <p>Value added annual measurement</p> <p>Annual advice line service</p>
<p>Additional commentary:</p>		

Outcome:	Possible Outputs	Supporting evidence provided
<p>2. Provide focused partnership activity targeting the most vulnerable residents</p>	<p>Promote services for the most disadvantaged in the borough</p>	<p>Data to show the number of residents supported who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • live in areas of deprivation • Face language barriers • Face cost of living challenges

	Provide advice to Rushmoor's food banks and community pantry staff and volunteers and/or attend community outreach events	Cost of living report Number of community outreach events attended
Additional commentary:		

Outcome:	Possible Outputs	Supporting evidence provided
3. Improve the sustainability of services for clients	<p>Increase ability to self-service where appropriate</p> <p>Programmes delivered which respond to and adapts to changing local need and demand.</p>	<p>List of training delivered and number of trustees/staff/volunteers attending.</p> <p>Annual report – including Case studies to demonstrate variety depth and impact of support provided.</p> <p>Examples of new information/ training delivered in response to expressed need.</p> <p>Participant feedback.</p> <p>Use of website in local public access terminals in Aldershot & Farnborough</p>
Additional commentary:		

Outcome:	Possible Outputs	Supporting evidence provided
<p>4. Increased impact through collaboration across the sector and with public sector partners including health partners.</p>	<p>Community resilience strengthened through working with local and regional partners in response to issues such as covid and the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>Regular attendance at the Supporting Communities Working Group meetings, Council Member led meetings when required and other relevant partner meetings.</p> <p>CA will continue to seek additional, external funding opportunities for the delivery of other outreach sessions in other parts of the Borough.</p>	<p>Case studies/projects demonstrating the range of collaboration and impact.</p> <p>Specific forums/partnerships facilitated and actions</p> <p>Examples of joint funding bids submitted</p> <p>Level of additional external funding secured in addition to the SLA grant.</p> <p>Number of outreach activities and events attended</p>
<p>Additional commentary:</p>		
<p>Attendance at Supporting Communities Meetings.</p> <p>CAR will also be requested to attend various Council run meetings including PPAB and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>		

Appendix 4

Elected Member Observer Role at CAR

Personal Skills and Qualities

- Willingness and ability to understand and accept the responsibilities of an Observer
- Ability to think creatively and strategically, and to exercise good, independent judgement.
- Effective communication skills and willingness to participate actively in discussions
- A strong personal commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion

Details of appointment

- Two-year minimum term of office, with bi-annual reelection up to a maximum of 4 years in total
- Up to 4x Annual in person board meetings and attendance at the AGM
- A full induction by CAR will be provided

Observer Responsibilities

- Enhance the relationship between RBC and CAR
- Attend and contribute to discussions at Board meetings, including on matters such as service delivery, risk management and governance, and finances
- Keep abreast of changes in CAR's operating environment
- Contribute to the broader promotion of CAR's objectives and reputation by applying your skills, expertise and knowledge.

Observer Duties

- Support CAR activities in relation to matters relating to RBC
- Support CAR to identify and communicate how the RBC grant has benefited Rushmoor residents and tackled local issues
- Provide direct feedback to the CAR Chair on the effectiveness of meetings.