



CITIZENS ADVICE LEEDS

ANNUAL REVIEW 2021/22

OUR PURPOSE

- Citizens Advice Leeds is working for a fairer society where people are free from the effects of poverty and injustice.
- Through our free and independent advice services we help people to improve their financial circumstances, challenge discrimination and unfair treatment, and lead healthier, happier lives.

We helped over 19,000 people in 2021/22

WHAT WE DO

Citizens Advice Leeds helps people to resolve financial, housing, employment and other legal problems through free and independent advice. Our services include:

- Welfare rights advice and casework
- Universal Credit advice and support
- Debt advice and casework
- Outreach services for people experiencing mental health problems and patients of primary care services
- Energy Affordability Helpline
- We are a Hate Crime Reporting Centre

We helped our clients access £3.7 million in unclaimed benefits and other income in 2021/22

ANNUAL REVIEW 2021/22

Due to the pandemic most of our face to face advice provision was suspended during the year and all our advisers moved to providing telephone and online services.

- We answered over **20,000 calls, emails and webchats**
- We helped clients find answers to over **58,000 enquiries**
- **49%** of all enquiries related to **Benefits & Universal Credit** problems
- **Utility** enquiries increased by **3%** on the previous year, reflecting soaring energy prices and inflation.
- **86%** of our clients would recommend our service.



We helped **19,045** people through our telephone and digital services.



We helped clients find answers to over **58,000** problems.



We helped to increase clients incomes by over **£3.7 million** and helped to write off over **£250,000** worth of debt.

2021/22 KEY STATISTICS

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35% of our clients are families with dependent children.



59% of our clients live in rented accommodation, of which **32%** is social housing.



32% of our clients are from Black, Asian & minority ethnic backgrounds.



57% of our clients are female and **43%** male.



51% of our clients are disabled or have a long term health condition.



43% of our clients are in work and **19%** unemployed.

WHO DO WE HELP?

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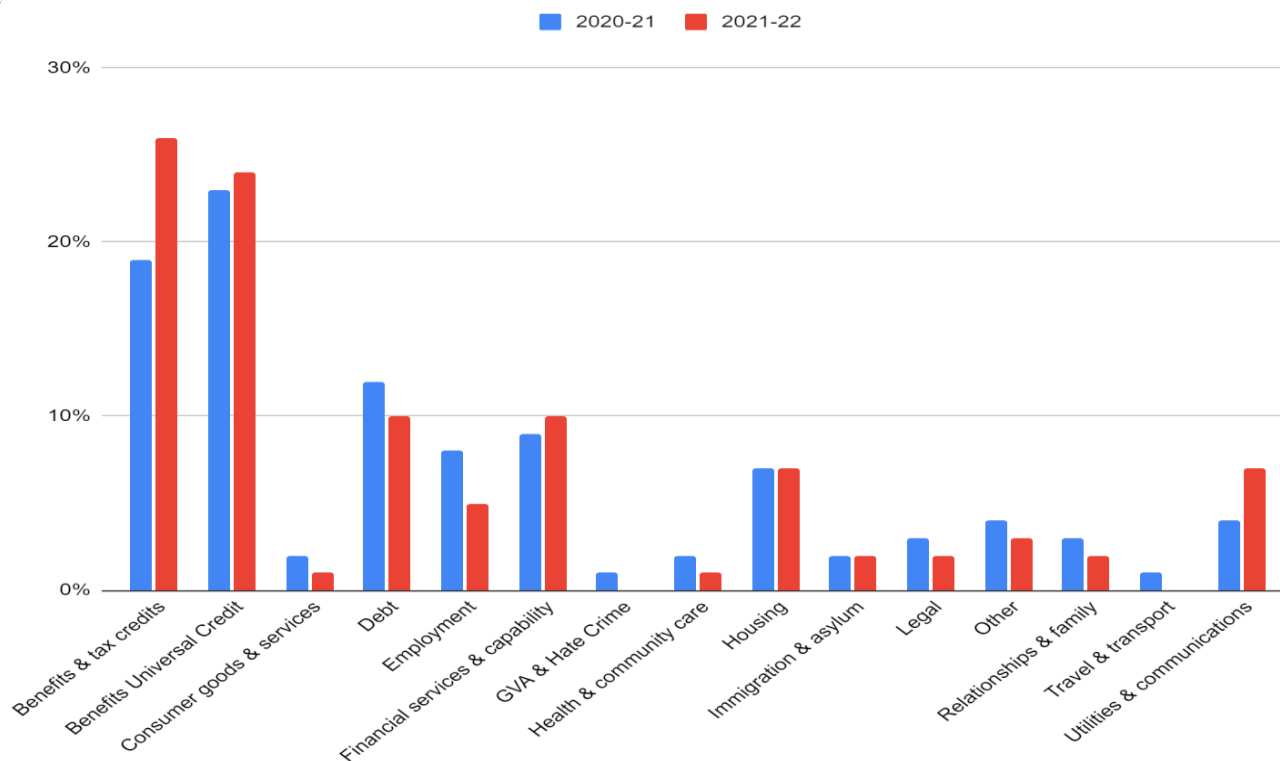
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CLIENT ENQUIRIES

We saw an increase in Benefits & Universal Credit enquiries compared to the previous year.

Utilities enquiries increased by 3% on the previous year due to soaring energy prices and inflation.

Enquiries Annual Comparison



COMPLEX NEEDS

Over the past two years we've seen clients facing increasingly desperate situations, even to the point of considering self harm.

Many people are struggling to pay for food and fuel costs and helping them to access food banks, energy vouchers and charitable donations has become a significant part of our work.

Sometimes people need additional support and we can help them to access other services that they may not be aware of, or have the confidence to approach themselves.



Foodbanks & other organisations offering free food.



Advocacy, counselling and support services.



Solicitors and other specialist advice services.

CLIENTS IN CRISIS

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UNIVERSAL CREDIT APPEAL

I had been receiving Universal Credit and the limited capability for work element (LCWRA). When I asked the DWP for the LCWRA to be backdated they were insistent that there should not be a backdate.

I decided to make a call to seek advice and was advised that I was entitled to a backdate. The adviser called the DWP on my behalf and asked for the decision to be reviewed. The adviser also drafted a letter setting out the reasons why I should be entitled to a backdate, which was added to my journal.

This was successful and I received a backdated payment of over £5,000.

I couldn't be happier and I couldn't have done it without your help, so thank you very much.

ENERGY ADVICE

I was recently widowed and am unable to read and write so I had been reliant on husband for managing money etc.

My household income dropped and I was behind with various bills.

Citizens Advice Leeds was able to assist me with an energy trust application and £641 was awarded for my arrears, They also ensured that I was added to the Priority Services Register.

I was also helped by CAL with benefits and debt advice as well as them making me a referral to the Green Doctor for help with energy efficiency measures.

CLIENT EXPERIENCES

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PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENT

I had been Refused Personal Independent Payment (PIP) despite having a visual impairment and mobility issues. I requested a Mandatory Reconsideration but was again found to be ineligible.

A Welfare Rights Caseworker helped me to submit an appeal and to provide additional evidence in support of my case. The Caseworker also prepared me for the hearing (which took place by telephone) and attended the hearing with me.

I was awarded PIP for my daily living and mobility needs of £83.70 per week and a backdated payment of £5,900.

Without this assistance I would not have pursued my claim, which would have left me significantly worse off and facing mounting debts, so I am very grateful.



Excessive delays to dealing with Benefits appeals mean that clients can fall into debt while waiting for a result. Back payments can run to thousands of pounds, which help to pay off those debts.

CLIENT EXPERIENCES

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CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

Of the clients who responded to our survey during the year:

- **74%** said it was easy to access the service.

While our face to services were closed, we introduced a freephone telephone number and local webchat services, and upgraded accessibility functions on our website.

- **82%** said our advice helped them find a way forward in resolving their problem.
- **86%** said they would be likely to recommend our service.
- Causes for dissatisfaction related mainly to call waiting times and having to be referred to other organisations for specialist help.



In my experience there are times in life when without help we can give up or get even worse with our health and life situation. Citizens Advice is like a 'rope for a sinking person' and it literally saves lives in many cases and brings hope I believe...A great big thank you to CAB staff.

I have received excellent positive advice, which has put my mind at ease. I have noticed a complete turnaround with my anxiety. I don't know what I would have done without the fantastic help and advice given by excellent members of the advice team...Fantastic organisation.

I would have been totally lost without their help and guidance, so grateful.

Just would like to thank everyone who helped with various problems, they have all gone above and beyond to help and I will be forever grateful.

CLIENT FEEDBACK

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Based on the evidence of our clients' experiences, we campaign for policy changes to address unfairness and hardship.

BREATHING SPACE

Breathing Space was introduced in 2021 to support people with mental health issues in dealing with debt problems. Our Money Advice Team worked with banks, mental health services and other agencies to help ensure the policy was applied appropriately and clients received the help they needed.

KEEP THE LIFELINE

In 2021 we were part of this national campaign to keep the £20pw increase to Universal Credit, which was extended for 6 months but then withdrawn in October.

With energy and other costs escalating, we're continuing to push for UC and other Benefits to be increased by more than the 3.1% applied in 2022.

With Britain's social security payments among some of the lowest in OECD countries, an uprate is much needed to cover even basic living costs.

FIGHTING FOR FAIRNESS

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Working for a fairer society free from poverty and injustice