



ANNUAL REVIEW

2023/2024



South
Lincolnshire

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

Looking back, we have faced our busiest year as Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire so far. We have helped over 13,000 people with increasingly complex issues find a way forward with the problems that they face. This has been achieved against a backdrop of increased pressure on scarce resources.

We offer advice in a variety of ways, most importantly through our core service, which is available to anyone and everyone. Support is at hand through face-to-face, telephone and digital channels. This vital service is funded by South Holland and South Kesteven District Councils and Lincolnshire County Council. Without them, our core service would not be possible.

We have worked hard as an organisation to adapt to these challenges and have been able to make a substantial difference to our clients.

As you will read, we have secured remarkable financial outcomes for our clients, who are some of the most vulnerable within our communities. The empowerment of clients has meant that we have prevented residents from falling into hardship and helped them access vital emergency support.

Our campaign work has also gone from strength to strength. We have engaged with prospective parliamentary candidates and regularly engaged with MPs, county and district councillors and partner organisations with the mission of raising awareness of issues and the support available to help people find a way forward.

We have also been able to diversify our services thanks to funding from trusts and foundations. This year, we have added an additional service to help people aged 65+. Without this funding, these clients would not have been able to access much needed help and support.

We couldn't have done this without the support of our volunteers and staff, who are the heart and soul of CASL and are committed to making a positive difference to the lives of our clients.

Finally, I would like to thank Monica and the Board of Trustees for their robust leadership and support during my time at CASL, which has helped us to thrive and develop as a strong and influential organisation.

Simon Richards
Chief Officer, Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire

In order to develop the new Strategic Plan for 2025-2030, CASL's Board, held an Away Day in February to consider our future priorities.

Amongst many priorities, the key theme focussed on our services going forward. There is a dichotomy here as we want to help as many clients as possible, but with diminishing resources in real terms, and ever-increasing demand, something has to change. We felt that:

- Any client who needs us should be able to access the service in the way that works for them
- We need to shift away from helping ever more people towards making a bigger difference to the people who need our help the most
- We want to help people where they are, in partnership with other agencies
- We are committed to maintaining the high quality of our advice
- We want to utilise new technologies to increase access to advice and improve our efficiency
- We want to involve our clients in service design and improvements

When one considers the implications of each of these aspirations, it is clear that these are ambitious. These are only one part of the wider five-year plan that we are consulting on. I feel that they are all achievable given the strength of leadership shown by Simon Richards, CO, the excellent Senior Management Team and all the staff and volunteers who achieve so much with so little resource.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we thank all of our dedicated team and the kind funders, without whom, we could not deliver our services.

Monica Stark
Chair of Trustees, Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire



Left: Monica Stark, Right: Simon Richards
Photo courtesy of Stamford Mercury

MAKING A DIFFERENCE LOCALLY



13,204

The number of clients we helped with issues such as benefits, debt and employment



15%

of our clients were aged over 65



Over £5million

The amount of additional income that we have helped clients gain



5,347

Debt issues dealt with



Over £1.5million

The amount of debt that we have helped clients deal with



1,734

Employment issues dealt with



£5.54

is saved in public costs for every £1 that we receive



48%

of our clients were disabled or had a long-term health condition



6,512

charitable support and foodbank issues dealt with



16%

of our clients were from ethnic minority backgrounds

OUR PEOPLE

At CASL, we are fortunate to be supported by three vital groups whose dedication and expertise ensure we deliver the best possible service to our clients: Volunteers, Staff, and Trustees.

- **Volunteers:** Over the past year, 96 volunteers have generously contributed their time and effort to support our clients. Their commitment is essential to the reach and impact of our services.
- **Staff:** Our volunteers are backed by a skilled team of more than 40 staff members who provide essential operational support, guidance, and leadership to ensure smooth and efficient service delivery.
- **Trustees:** We are also supported by 10 trustees who bring a wealth of experience and expertise. Their strategic oversight helps us navigate challenges and continue advancing towards our goals.

Together, our team offers a diverse range of skills and experience in areas such as management, direct client support (both in person and by phone), administration, quality assurance, research and campaigns, marketing, fundraising, finance, training, and human resources. This combination of talent enables CASL to operate effectively and sustainably, while continually improving the services we provide to our community.



Above: Our volunteers, Florence (left) and Wendy (right)

A word from one of our volunteers...

" I have been a CASL volunteer since 2022 and the experience has been highly rewarding and enjoyable. I have met some amazing people who have encouraged me to try new things and share my skillset with the charity. I feel grateful for the opportunity to lead Research and Campaigns as I have a passion for social change and I am so proud of all the work the team has achieved. I look forward to what the next year will bring!"

- Mary

OUR PROJECTS

Money Advice: Our team helped 531 clients deal with 3,491 issues and over £1million of debt. They also help clients prepare financial statements, deal with creditors and maximise their income.

Help For Ukraine: We have been providing advice and support for guests and host families. We have supported over 90 clients across our diverse range of enquiry areas.

Energy Advice Project: We were able to support 485 clients in fuel poverty with 1,597 issues around energy advice. This included offering them energy savings tips, dealing with energy debt, information about charitable support and more.

MindSpace Partnership: Through our partnership with MindSpace in Stamford, we provided holistic support to 201 clients, helping improve their mental health by addressing underlying causes through our advice.

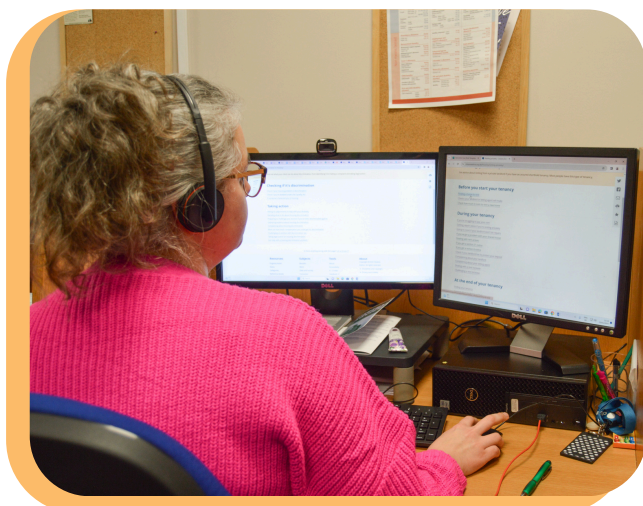
Tackling Hardship For Older People: This service was launched in November 2023 and provides additional support for people aged 65+

Help Through Hardship: 3,986 clients were helped with over 22,000 issues. This support enabled clients in severe hardship to acquire emergency food provisions through food bank vouchers.

Winter Pressures: We were able to offer advice and support for vulnerable clients in warm hubs from December to March to deal with the added pressures that winter brings. We have supported over 200 clients gain a combined total income of over £90,000 across our diverse range of different enquiry areas.

FLEX: We were one of three organisations that worked on this research project about making recruitment fairer for migrant workers. It is a fantastic example of the collaborative work that we undertake with partner organisations.

Stamford Foodbank Outreach: Thanks to funding from the Trussell Trust, we have been able to place an adviser within Stamford Foodbank to help people who use the Foodbank services. We supported 83 clients with 225 issues and helped them gain over £31,000 of additional income.



CLIENT STORIES



***Maria came to us having moved into new accommodation with her new baby. She had some debt meaning that she was unable to afford a desperately needed new cooker so that she could make meals and remain healthy for her baby.** We helped Maria fill in a Spalding Town Husbands charitable application for a cooker so she was able to get the essential utility without falling further into debt.



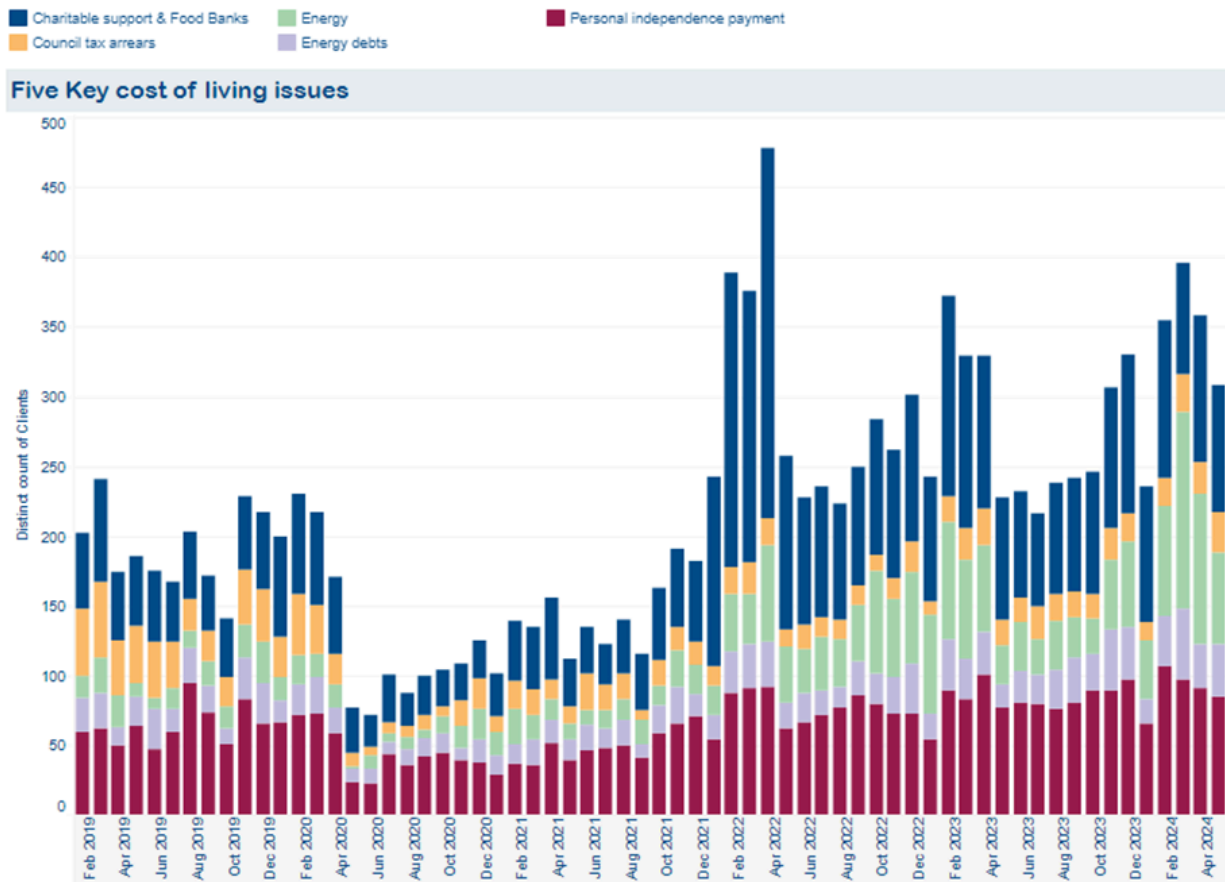
***Elsie came to us for help after splitting from her partner. They shared a mortgage and she wanted help understanding the complex issue of mortgage liability.** Our adviser took Elsie through the numerous considerations relating to this and also advised that she talk to her mortgage provider to make them aware of the situation. While there were no urgent issues, our advice eased some of the nervousness and uncertainty that Elsie was feeling and provided her with clarity and a path forward. She knows that if she needs further help, she will be able to come back, cementing CASL as a place she can turn to if she needs support.



***Maisie is 30 years old client with mental health problems. Maisie was not getting the Housing Element of Universal Credit despite having a tenancy agreement.** Maisie was unable to understand what the Job Centre were telling her about her claim and was therefore having tremendous difficulty resolving the problem, which was exacerbating her poor mental health. Our adviser visited the Job Centre with Maisie and was able to assist in helping her provide the information required. Maisie is now getting her benefit; our help enabled her to overcome a barrier to accessing support and alleviated a cause of stress that she was facing. Our support also enabled Maisie to gain income of £5000 over the year.

*names have been changed

COST OF LIVING



Rising Demand For Our Services

Over the past few years, demand for our services has surged, driven largely by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis—one of the most significant challenges facing our communities.

Nationally, Citizens Advice is seeing record numbers of people seeking help, and this is mirrored locally, where we've assisted more clients with issues such as energy costs, emergency crisis support, and priority debts like council tax arrears.

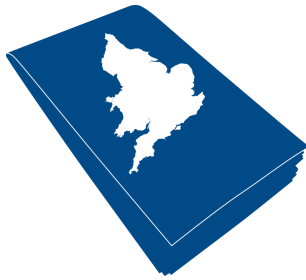
We expect demand to remain high as the effects of rising energy costs, negative budgets (affecting over half of those we support with debt), and the increased cost of essentials continue to impact households. Notably, we've seen a:

- 13% rise in clients needing financial crisis support
- 30% increase in cases of actual homelessness
- 21% increase in those facing the threat of homelessness.

RESEARCH & CAMPAIGNS

National Campaigns: The Cost-of-Living

The Research and Campaigns Team remains highly engaged, contributing to three of the key national Citizens Advice initiatives: Energy Savings, National Consumer Week, and Scams Awareness Fortnight. Throughout these campaigns, we have maintained regular communication with our local MPs, ensuring they are informed about the ongoing cost-of-living challenges. We remain committed to providing valuable local insights on these critical national issues.



Local Campaigns: Access to Justice

We are pleased to report significant progress in our Access to Justice project. In a key development, we have established several partnerships with local firms and university legal clinics, enabling us to refer clients for 30 minutes of free legal advice where needed. As we continue to grow this initiative, we are actively seeking additional partnership opportunities to broaden the range of legal support available to residents, ensuring they can access assistance across various legal areas.

Local Research

Our team has been engaged in impactful research aimed at addressing key issues affecting our communities. In December, we published a comprehensive report on the effects of Universal Credit on residents in South Lincolnshire, shedding light on the local impact of national policies. Additionally, we are preparing to launch a new research survey focused on understanding how emotional responses to gambling may contribute to gambling-related harms.

Newsletters

Our Spotlight newsletter, distributed quarterly to stakeholders, provides a rich mix of articles, case studies, statistics, and more, offering valuable insights into our work and the issues impacting our community.

Meanwhile, our community-focused Insight newsletter highlights a key topic in each edition and includes practical information to support clients. Both newsletters are designed to keep stakeholders and the community informed and engaged with the latest developments and resources.



OUR FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is a fast growing area for CASL. The competition for funds is as intense as it ever has been and the current funding climate means that every penny counts towards the running of our services. We have a variety of ways that we generate funds.

Strengthening Community Engagement Through Fundraising

Over the past year, we've launched community events to raise essential funds, including our successful Dinner and Dance fundraiser, which generated over £6,000.

Our Fundraising Committee, liaises with community partners, local media, and other key stakeholders to drive these initiatives.

We rely on South Kesteven, South Holland District Councils and Lincolnshire County Councils for our key funding, which supports our core service.

Successful Online Fundraising Efforts

Our online fundraising initiatives have seen continued success, raising over £1,000 through easyfundraising. We invite stakeholders to support Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire by signing up to contribute through this platform. Details on how to participate are available on our website and social media channels.

Trusts and Foundations

We are also grateful for support from a range of trusts, foundations and other funders. Without their support, we wouldn't be able to deliver high-quality services.

- Bourne Town Council
- Bourne United Charities
- Citizens Advice
- Deeping St James United Charities
- Evan Cornish
- Holbeach United Charities
- Independent Age
- Lincolnshire County Council
- NHS Lincolnshire
- Shine Lincolnshire
- Spalding Town Husbands Charity
- South Holland District Council
- South Kesteven District Council
- The Energy Redress Trust
- The Trussell Trust
- The Len Pick Trust
- Waynfleet Foundation

We thank them for the contributions that they have made to Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire over the past year.



MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

Our media and communications work plays a vital role in enabling us to reach as many people as possible and highlight the fantastic work that we do. We engage with the local media in a variety of ways including:

- Commenting on policy changes, developments, or social situations that affect our communities
- Volunteer Recruitment
- Regular slots in local publications
- New projects or services we can offer



Print-Based Media

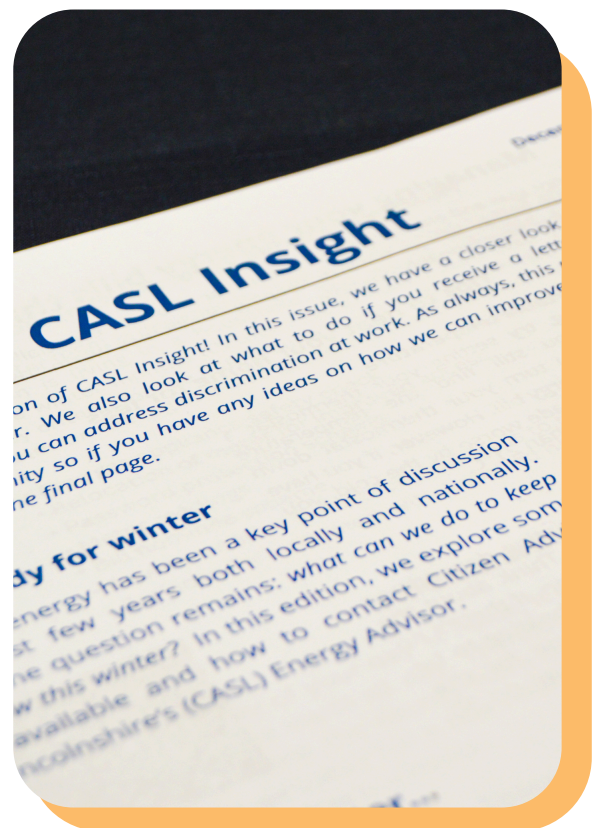
Each month, we actively contribute to publications in Grantham, Stamford, and Spalding, raising awareness on critical issues affecting our communities.

Our press releases have addressed timely topics such as rent increases, the cost-of-living crisis, and debt management. Over the past year, we have submitted 30 articles to local media across South Lincolnshire, ensuring our messages reach a wide audience and provide valuable guidance to residents.

Social Media

Our social media presence continues to grow, with content reaching over 37,500 people. We've extended our reach by sharing posts in community groups on Facebook, helping us engage new audiences. Additionally, LinkedIn is being used to promote vacancies and opportunities.

We regularly share fundraising messages to emphasise that Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire is a charity, highlighting the need for ongoing support to sustain our vital services.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Our plans for the coming year aim to address some of the challenges our clients face and help strengthen us as an organisation.

Our priorities are:

Our People

Volunteer recruitment will remain at the heart of everything we do. We need more volunteers to help increase the help we provide. We will recruit and train more volunteers in the coming year.

We will put processes in place that maximise and enhance the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers.

Research and Campaigns

The Research and Campaigns team will soon be conducting a survey about emotional responses to gambling. Our Access To Justice work will continue in earnest and work will be done around the impact of policy changes.

Our Services

We want to make our services more accessible. We want to increase the number of people we help through Adviceline and we want to ensure the quality of our service remains high.

Our Fundraising

We will diversify our funding streams and fundraising events. Our objectives include setting up community fundraising committees in Spalding, Grantham and Stamford, who will commit to raising funds through local events. We are actively seeking volunteers who have time to give and the energy to make a difference. Please contact julie.lyon2@citizensadvice-southlincs.org.uk if you can help.

Media and Communications

Our media and communications work will evolve. We will post regular columns in local newspapers and make use of local radio when we can.

We will establish more social media channels including TikTok and Instagram so we can reach more people. This will help ensure people know about the help we can provide and how to access our services.



HOW TO ACCESS OUR SERVICES

Face-To-Face

Spalding

Tuesday and Wednesday: Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, PE11 2XE

Stamford

Monday and Thursday: 33 Ryhall Road, Stamford, PE11 1UF

Grantham

Monday and Thursday: 70a Castlegate, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 6SH

Bourne

Monday, Wednesday and Thursday: Wake House, 41 North Street, Bourne, Lincs, PE10 9AE

Holbeach

Tuesday: Coubro Chambers, 11 West End, Holbeach, PE12 7LW

Market Deeping

Wednesday: Deepings Community Centre 2 Douglas Road, Market Deeping, PE6 8PA

Please see www.citizensadviceouthlincs.org.uk for more details including timings and service structure

Telephone Services

Adviceline

Call 0808 278 7996 to speak to an adviser (Monday to Friday 10:00 to 16:00)

Help Through Hardship Food Voucher Helpline

Call 0808 208 2138 to speak to an adviser (Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00)

