

Annual Report 2021/2022

April 1st 2021 to March 31st 2022

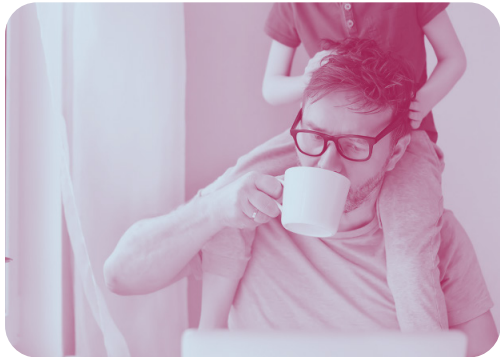
**cyngor ar
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**citizens
advice**

**Sir y Fflint
Flintshire**

Registered Charity Number: 1090010
Registered Company Number: 03985923

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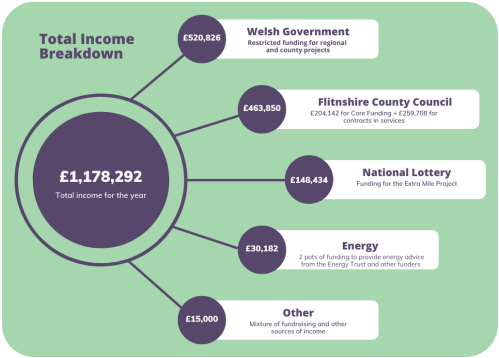


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Citizens Advice Flintshire (CAF)

We are a local charity that provides an advice and information service to the residents of Flintshire. Throughout the years the demands on the service have changed, but the commitment and passion for free advice has not.

We provide impartial, confidential and non-judgmental advice to everyone on a range of subjects, including Welfare Benefits, Debt, Employment, Discrimination, Energy and Consumer. The level of service offered includes signposting and information through to specialist casework and this depends on the individual's need and the complexity of their issue.

We have offices in Mold, Holywell and Connah's Quay, as well as several outreaches throughout the County. We also provide advice and information via telephone, email and other digital channels.

CAF is a voluntary organisation that has been part of Flintshire communities for 60 years. Our service is quality assured through vigorous case checking and Independent File Reviews. Citizens Advice carries out an annual audit which covers our quality of advice and also our business integrity. We are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). We are Standard Owners for the Wales Information Advice Quality Framework

(IAQF). All of our staff and volunteers have extensive training to enable them to give accurate and good quality advice to people.

The period covered by this report has seen the continued impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. We have either been in lockdown or under varying degrees of restrictions, and this has meant we were unable to safely reopen our offices to the public. We, in partnership with a range of other organisations started providing advice at outreaches from November taking our service into communities.

Later in 2022 we planned to resume some face-to-face services for our clients, targeting those in need as we didn't want to lose all of the great benefits brought to our service by developing our digital platforms, which means we are able to help more people and people can get the advice earlier without waiting.

We have continued to offer remote advice services to clients this year. This has been mainly via telephone and email, but we have also developed a number of new digital services this year.

We now offer a 'virtual drop-in' for benefits issues every Tuesday morning using the Attend Anywhere platform. People can access this via our website if they have an internet-enabled device with a camera e.g. smartphone, tablet or laptop. During the next year we want to expand our use of Attend Anywhere to offer additional drop-ins for any advice issues.



We have also established our messaging services during this year. Clients can now access advice via SMS text message, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Feedback from clients using these services has been really positive with clients commenting that they had a quick response, found the advice very helpful and the service was easy to use.

Aims and Objectives

Like many other organisations, our work continued to be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

We had been forced to change our methods in advice delivery and as a result, we focussed on digital.

Our aims to help more people in Flintshire did not change and the move to new advice channels via social media platforms, the introduction of new text and What's App services meant we could actually help more people as this report demonstrates.

We also increased the of capacity of staff members to answer our phones.

We launched a new Business Plan for 2021-26.

We launched a new Business Plan for 2021-2026. The twin aims of the Citizens Advice service remain the same, to provide the advice people need for the problems they face and to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

We worked collaboratively to create meaningful objectives that will really improve our services and meet the needs of the people of Flintshire.



Our advice goal: We will improve the experience people have when they come to us for help, so everyone leaves with the knowledge and confidence they need to find a way forward.



Our advocacy goal: We will be a stronger voice on the issues that matter most to the people who come to us for help.



Our technology goal: We will use technology to enable a great experience for the people who come to us for help, while freeing up resources that will allow us to meet more demand.



Our sustainability goal: We will secure our future as a service through a more collaborative, proactive and competitive approach to fundraising.



Our culture goal: We will be a collaborative, innovative and high performing service that promotes equality, diversity and inclusion and challenges discrimination.

Message from the Chair



I think the last year has taught us just how fragile the world we live in now is. From the pandemic to the war in Ukraine, we are experiencing huge challenges which have an impact on individuals and how they live their lives.

I'm proud of the staff and volunteers at Citizens Advice who continue to provide advice to those most impacted. As the cost living crisis increases, the demand for our service rises and I think the next 12 months could be the most difficult period the organisation has faced in years. However, I am confident that we will do what we can to ensure those most in need of our support get the advice they need.

I want to say a huge thank you to the people that fund our services, for their continued confidence in us being able to support people. And another thank you to our passionate staff and volunteers, who without, we wouldn't be able to deliver the services that have such an impact on the quality of people's lives.

Laura Clays
Chair of Trustee Board

Message from the Chief Executive Officer

2021-2022 was a year of hard work and growth for CAF. The number of people advised was back to pre-pandemic levels and we continued to advise people via telephone and digital channels until we were able to resume some outreaches. We had hoped to open our office but the varying degrees of restrictions meant that this could not happen.

Our staff, trustees and later in the year volunteers continued to provide information, advice, casework and support to people facing significant problems - working hard to ensure that the service is as effective and efficient as possible, as we continue to grow to meet the increasing need. They also joined a campaign using real client's examples to ask the Government not to remove the £20 additional payment on Universal Credit made during the pandemic. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful.

Our Trustees are passionate too about the impact of poverty and the need to provide the best quality services for the people we advise. An increasing theme this year was one of financial

insecurity and, in fact, poverty. Our staff provided both fuel and food vouchers at a rate we have never done so before. They made applications to trusts and foundations as well as the Discretionary Assistance Fund to help people that literally had no alternative sources of funding for essential items.

When Princess Anne visited to see the work of CAF we combined this with a picnic in our car park – so that staff who had started with us during the pandemic could actually meet each other. We have a great team of people doing sometimes difficult work and need more than ever to rebuild a team and culture where we can support people in need as well as each other.

The cost of living crisis started to become apparent towards Christmas and was a major concern by January and has led to our continued determination to deliver the best service we can at a time of increased poverty.

Salli Edwards
Chief Executive Officer



Our trustees

Our trustee board sets the vision and provides the strategic direction for Citizens Advice Flintshire. They are trustees under charity and company law. They are ultimately responsible for all aspects of the Charity.

There are six trustee board meetings each year as well as additional meetings for the board's two sub groups; Personnel Sub Group (PSG) and Monitoring and Review Group (MARG). These meetings together with various events enable the trustees to develop as a team and to shape our organisation's strategic direction.

Our Chief Executive, working with the management team, is responsible for delivering the strategy and for day to day operations. The trustee board is committed to high standards of corporate governance and complies with the principles and practices set out in the Charity Governance Code.

Many of the trustees lead on specialist areas which provide much needed skills and experience.

Laura Clays

Chair of Trustee Board - Governance Lead (PSG & MARG)

Sara Tyson

Vice Chair – People & Equality Diversity and Inclusion Lead (PSG)

Lucie Mulvaney

Treasurer - Finance Lead (PSG & MARG)

Paul Bevan

Director - Strategic Planning & Risk Management Lead (MARG)

Bryan Grew

Director – Research and Campaigns & Welsh Language Lead (PSG)

Sally Griffiths-Parry

Director – Strategic Planning & Operations Performance Lead (MARG)

Klaus Armstrong-Braun

Director – Partnership Working Lead (MARG)

Michelle Perfect

Director

Our People

Our staff are key to delivering our service. They carry out the day to day work to ensure that our clients receive the best advice possible.

There are a mixture of paid staff who do various roles within the organisation and this grew to 49 staff in total which includes full and part time. Our full time equivalent this year was 24 staff.

Our staff have a thorough induction and ongoing training for their individual roles. We also hold staff meetings and have sub-groups that work on specific issues such as Research & Campaigns and client feedback.

Managers - As well as our CEO, we have a team of managers who oversee the core operations, quality of advice, project management, communications, and fundraising.

Advisers - Our advisers have a range of skills and knowledge to ensure that we can help people with as many issues as possible. Some of our advisers cover all aspects of advice (Generalist advisers) and some specialise in particular areas such as employment, benefits, debt, discrimination and energy (Specialist advisers).

They come from a range of different backgrounds and some of our staff are multilingual and cover a number of different languages including Welsh, Czech, Russian, and Portuguese.

Support Staff - These are the staff who ensure that things are running smoothly behind the scenes. They include administration, IT, finance, HR, and cleaners. Without our support team our advisers would not be able to do their roles effectively.

Volunteers - In total eighteen volunteers were on rota this year, some who adapted to undertake their role remotely, and some who returned to the Deeside office. By the end of March 2022 plans were underway for the admin volunteers to return to the Mold office. The strategy of bringing back small groups of volunteers at a time, based on the knowledge that there was sufficient capacity for support and supervision continued to work well. Training in preparation for returning to volunteering included compliance training for data protection, Senior Managers Certification Regime (SMCR), cyber security and remote working and in addition for assessors and advisers practice in dealing with client enquiries.

Who do we help?

In 2021/22 we helped **6,275** people compared with **4,167** the previous year. This is back up to pre-Covid levels.

Our data shows that the biggest change since the start of the pandemic has been the reduction in clients aged 65 and over. Prior to Covid they made up 20% of our clients. This dropped to just 11% of clients in 2020/21 and was 14% in 2021/22.

During 2021/2022 our advisors gained **£3,802,135** for clients, including **£709,623** of written off debts.

Client Feedback

- **95%** of clients would recommend us
- **84%** found it easy to access our service
- **84%** found a way forward with our help
- **86%** said they would not have been able to sort out their problem without the help of Citizens Advice

We supported **6,275** people with free advice tackling a total of **21,050** issues. This means our clients are often helped with more than one problem.



30,000

visits to our website



2,777

phone calls answered



530

foodbank vouchers issued



153

fuel vouchers issued



216

informative social media posts



25

email campaigns sent out

Who do we help?

Top 5 issues people wanted advice on were:

Benefits 9,720

Debt 4,239

Employment 1,558

Financial Services and capability 899

Energy 727



Ethel's story

We advised Ethel, a retired widowed pensioner who lives alone in a mortgaged property. Her only income derived from State Pension, Pension Credit and Council Tax Reduction Support. She has a number of physical and mental health conditions. She wanted help in finding out if there was support available for a new boiler as her current one was very old and needed replacing. We referred Ethel to NEST Wales and she received a new boiler and radiators. We also helped her to sign up for her energy suppliers Priority Services Register. We assisted with a claim for Attendance Allowance because she was struggling with her personal care and often needed help during the day. She was awarded the lowest rate of Attendance Allowance and as a result of the award she then became entitled to an extra amount in her Pension Credit award. Ethel was very thankful for the help she received because she did not know what help was available to her. Ethel's new Boiler and radiators saved her around £4000. Her income also increased by £131 per week. She also received a lump sum of just under £800 backdated benefit.



A Royal visit

Not everybody's first day back at the office is marked with a royal visit, but that's exactly what happened for our staff, trustees and volunteers on June 29th 2021 when HRH Princess Anne - The Princess Royal, the Patron of Citizens Advice, likes to visit bureaus to see their work and the needs of local communities. She arrived by helicopter and chatted with invited guests at an informal picnic held at our Mold office. Her Royal Highness was joined by Mr Henry Fetherstonhaugh, Lord-Lieutenant of Clwyd and had a tour of the offices, chatted to staff and Trustees before unveiling a plaque to mark her visit. The outdoor event, held in the car park due to continued restrictions, had been organised to give new staff the opportunity to meet with their colleagues for the first time. Although we had all met via Zoom calls, some staff had been with us for almost a year and had yet to speak face to face with fellow advisors!



A photograph of three people, two women and one man, smiling and looking at documents in a meeting. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal filter. The man is on the left, wearing a checkered shirt. The woman in the center has curly hair and is wearing a dark patterned shirt. The woman on the right has long dark hair and is wearing a light-colored shirt. They are all looking down at papers on a table.

Volunteers Return

In early 2021 we worked to bring back more of our existing volunteers. We started with refresher training and updating GDPR etc. That particular cohort had dealt with digital advice (in the form of emails and Advicelink) from the office, so had previous experience. They just needed to refresh their knowledge and learn some new ways of working due to working remotely themselves and offering the advice to clients remotely. This meant, for example, that client appointments would be carried out by telephone or video call, so the assessors needed to understand how this worked so that they could explain the options to the clients.

The remote supervision is done via a hybrid of morning Zoom meetings and in session WhatsApp and telephone support. This has proved very successful with volunteers reporting faster access to the supervisor than when in the office! The next wave of volunteers we brought back proved more challenging and took more support. They not

only needed refresher advice training but also had to be introduced to giving digital advice for the first time. Whilst they were cautious / anxious at first they all settled into this new way of working and acquired many new skills.

The majority of the volunteers who have returned to date would now not wish to return to office working. A couple would still prefer to be office based and we are looking to accommodate this as soon as possible. We are excited to explore opportunities for a new generation of volunteers, once we have ensured that all of the existing volunteer base have had the opportunity to return to a role that would suit them. To this end, in January 2022 we gave an online presentation to students at the University of Wales, including Wrexham Glyndwr, Bangor, Aberystwyth and the Open University.

We explained the benefits of volunteering, with a number of our staff having initially started as volunteers and making the most of any employment opportunities that came up.

The changes to training delivery

All staff and volunteer training this year was delivered remotely via zoom or Microsoft Teams. There were many changes in legislation and new funds made available to help to protect people during the pandemic. We therefore held sessions like the Discretionary Assistance Fund delivered by Helen Richards and 'Homelessness law in Wales' by Shelter for staff and volunteers whilst they were working from home. Employment advice was a significant enquiry area this year and we were funded as part of our national Advicelink grant to help to build capacity for employment advice. We commissioned a specialist employment adviser to deliver further employment training - Level 4 'Completing ET1 forms for clients' and Level 5 'Helping clients with employment tribunals' as well as repeating Levels 1 and 2 for new staff. Despite the new challenges of training remotely, the feedback we received from staff and volunteers was very positive. Features such as sharing screens and joining break out rooms meant it was possible to replicate all face-to-face training including facilitating interactive learning and

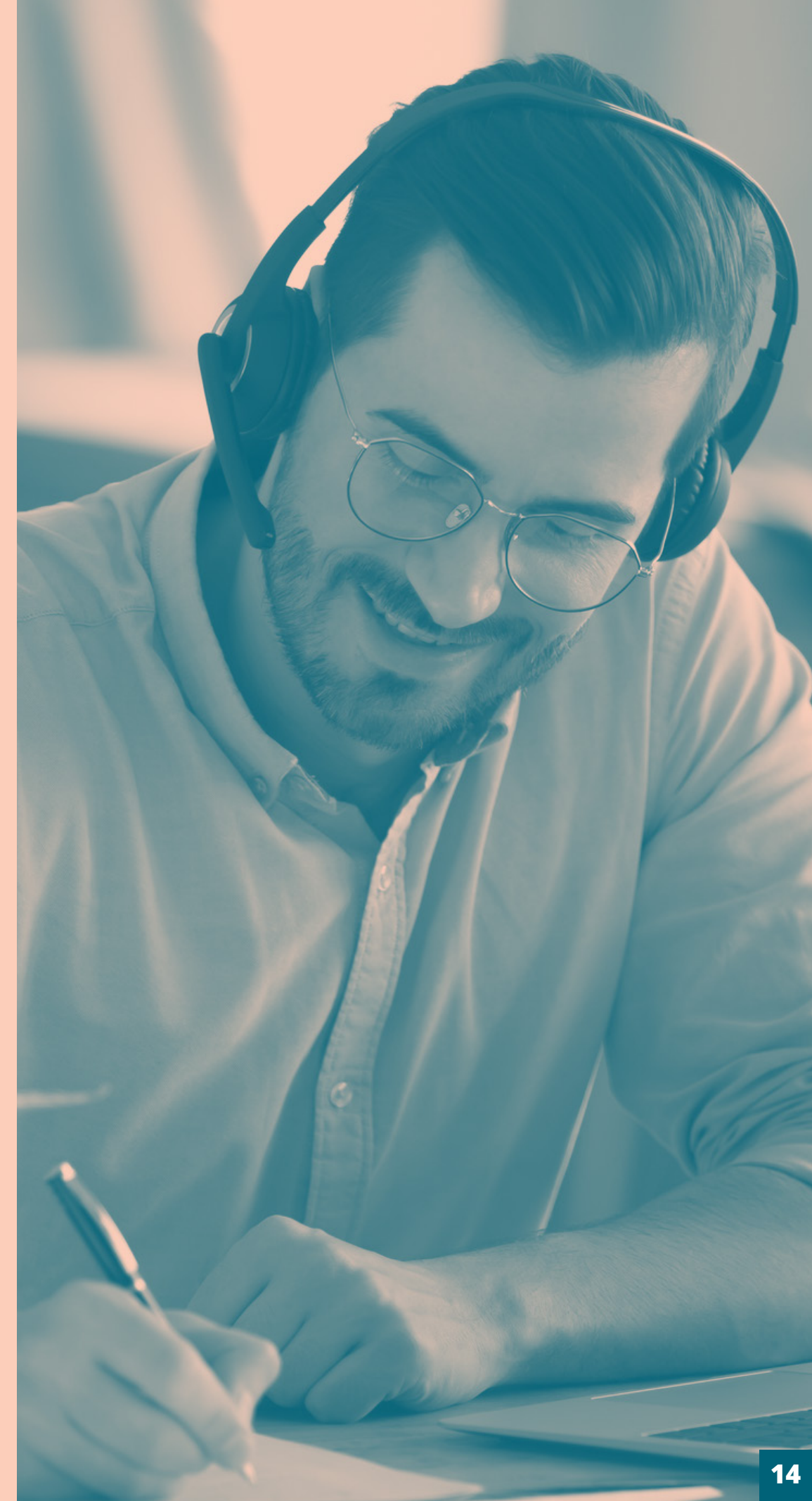
group discussions etc. All new staff completed an induction programme and some felt being based at home was less stressful than coming into the office, yet still gave them the opportunity to meet other new staff starting at the same time as well as the CEO and line managers.

"It's nerve wracking when you start a new job, being based at home and joining remotely. I didn't find it stressful at all and we still got to meet everyone and talk to each other".

"I don't feel there was anything we have missed out on... the sessions still worked really well, and still had the conversation element and interaction".

"I found the remote way of working just as beneficial as in person as it still felt like face to face support". "I feel that when making calls, home working is probably an optimum environment for me to do this".

Remote training continued to deliver the added bonus of going paperless and savings on printing of training and learning materials as well as savings on staff time. This is a big saving on the charity's resources.



Flintshire Local Advice Gateway (FLAG)

The Flintshire Local Advice Gateway (FLAG) service is a referral project for advice referrals into Citizens Advice Flintshire. Referrals are received from a wide range of organisations both statutory and non-statutory and it is funded by the Housing Support Grant project at Flintshire County Council. This project has been funded since 2014.

Once a referral is received into the project, an initial telephone assessment is carried out between the gateway assessor and the client. Sometimes, we will liaise with the referrer directly – if instructed to do so by the referrer. This may be because the client struggles to engage with services without support.

Once we have ascertained what the client's advice needs are, we can either give some information to the client during the initial call and/or we can book a suitable appointment for the client to receive full advice.

The aim of the project is to ensure that clients receive early intervention with their advice needs and to avoid these issues escalating further - such as homelessness. It also helps avoid duplication of advice services and if another service is best placed to support the client, they are referred on or signposted to another organisation. For example, if a client has a complex consumer issue - we would refer on to the national Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline.

However, over 85% of the referrals received into the referral project are ultimately assisted by a Citizens Advice Flintshire advice project.

In 2021-2022 the FLAG project dealt with 941 referrals. Over 80% of those advice referrals were received from a statutory service such as Flintshire County Council or an NHS funded project and 20% were received from third sector referrers such as ASNEW and NEWCIS. From these 941 referrals, we dealt with 2,487 issues – which identifies the fact that clients often have multiple advice issues and it was found that our highest advice area is benefits, followed by debt.

The FLAG project also compiles the 'Advice Provider Handbook' which is circulated amongst Flintshire organisations. The handbook denotes advice projects available in Flintshire and is updated on a 6 monthly basis. This booklet was updated in January 2022.

The EUCR project has continued to offer casework support to clients who are having difficulty applying to the EU Settlement Scheme. Although the deadline for the EU Settlement Scheme has passed, it is still possible for clients in certain circumstances to make new applications.

We have been assisting clients with applications and supporting clients who are facing delays with the processing of their application. One of the main things we have been assisting with is ensuring clients have the relevant evidence to prove their residency in the UK. Many of the clients we assist have language barriers and therefore need assistance with the process.

As a service, we have also supported our clients with any employment and discrimination that they have. Alongside this, we make sure that our clients receive help with any wider issues including welfare benefits and debt.

One of our clients stated to their caseworker “I am really happy with the support I have received to help me remain in the UK”.

Veronika asked for assistance as she was having difficulty getting the Home Office to accept a pre-settled status application for one of her children. She had lived in the UK since 2018.

Her child’s application was not being accepted as the Home Office were saying they needed more evidence of the child’s identity.

The child had a Polish birth certificate and a photocopy of his expired ID card. Veronika could not afford the costs of applying for a Polish passport for her son and the cost of travel to the Embassy. She did not speak English so required translation support and expressed that she found it difficult to contact the Home Office for help.

We supported her by liaising with the Home Office and managed to get them to accept the application with the evidence the client already had so that Veronika did not have to incur costs she couldn’t afford.

Specialist Debt Service

This year was another challenging year financially for many reasons. The pandemic continued beyond anybody's expectations, and household bills rose. The specialist debt service continued to deliver advice and casework via telephone, email and WhatsApp throughout this period.

Single Advice Fund (SAF)

Our SAF service funded via the Welsh Government allowed us to continue providing specialist debt advice to those who are most in need of advice.

During this year, debt continued to be one of our clients' top three issues. The service itself has gone from strength to strength as we now have more digital tools at our disposal, to improve and speed up the best possible outcome for our client's cases.

We successfully recruited a further two specialist debt caseworkers, bringing the team to five members of staff working across three specialist projects.

Flintshire County Council – Housing Support Grant (HSG)

This year we were also contracted by Flintshire County Council (FCC) to deliver two debt services. Whilst both services have different areas of focus, they share the same aim of early intervention to prevent homelessness.

Our HSG debt caseworker supports clients to manage their debt. The debt advice is person centred to ensure that clients stabilise and maintain their housing situation and the casework service ensures that clients have a familiar point of

contact until their debt case has reached a conclusion.

Our FCC debt caseworker supports those clients who may have additional support needs. From the outset of these debt cases - we liaise with HSG support services (via a direct referral pathway straight to the debt caseworker) to target early intervention and to ensure that clients stay engaged at each step of the advice journey - until they have entered a suitable debt solution. Historically, we have seen clients disengage at an early stage and only re-engage at the point of homelessness. The funding we receive from both HSG projects not only makes a tremendous difference to the lives of those clients who need debt advice and the additional support to address the problems they face, but also reduces and prevents

the need for more costly interventions further down the line.

All three of these projects have allowed us to build upon the relationships that we have with various Flintshire County Council departments and other support organisations across North Wales. We hope in turn that this will provide our clients with a more seamless journey and a successful debt outcome.

As well as continuing to support our clients, in June 2021, we also implemented the then-new statutory Breathing Space scheme within our specialist debt advice service – by offering a 60-day hold on most debts. The scheme has been fantastic, as it allows us to almost immediately take the pressure off our clients.

In 2021/22 we helped 6,275 people. Of this total, we helped deal with 4,239 debt issues showing just how important this project has been to our community

Welfare Rights

We are funded by Flintshire County Council to provide specialist benefits advice and casework. Through this funding we support our clients with challenging benefit decisions through advice and representation, helping our clients maximise their income through welfare benefit checks, as well as ensuring current benefit awards are correct and providing advice and assistance with benefit refusals by helping our clients to navigate a confusing benefits system.

The impact of Covid 19 led to an increase in enquiries and casework in relation to benefit issues. There were many benefit changes during this period that had an impact on our clients. One significant change, affecting many of our clients during this period, was the withdrawal of the pandemic Universal Credit uplift of £20 a week despite widespread opposition from the public and poverty campaigners. The £20 uplift was a much needed lifeline to families and individuals during the pandemic; the removal of this lifeline in October 2021 led to increased poverty at a time when people were being hit by soaring fuel bills.

In the winter, rising costs and fallen benefits, meant that households were facing a real cost of living crisis.

The Welsh Government put together a support package to help households who were struggling including a Winter Fuel Support payment, Cost of Living payment and increased funding of the Discretionary Assistance Fund to help people pay for essential costs such as food, gas, electricity, clothing or emergency travel. The funding came at a critical time, to help support families in challenging circumstances in Wales. Highlighting the impact of the cost of living crisis remains a crucial priority for Citizens Advice Flintshire.

In 2021/2022 our Welfare Rights team helped **3,333** clients deal with their benefit issues. The project helped our clients achieve **£2,839,188** in income gains which includes additional benefits awarded. We have adapted our benefits advice service to continue to provide the best quality advice and to support our clients at challenging times. We delivered the service via various channels including telephone and video calls. We also set up a weekly benefit check drop in using the Attend Anywhere video platform so that our clients could contact us in the comfort of their own home and check they are getting everything they are entitled to.



Energy Projects

Towards the end of 2021 there was increasing concern that energy prices may rise significantly. We were by that time dealing with many people who found managing their outgoings with their limited income increasingly difficult. We therefore developed our energy advice team to help more clients.

Warmer Wales Project

The Warmer Wales service was funded by the British Gas Energy Trust. It is a national service across Wales and it targets people in fuel poverty by enabling individual advice for people who are most affected by energy costs including older people, those with health conditions and families with young children. The service includes advice on energy efficiency, fuel debt, benefits and income maximisation, as well as ensuring the client is well equipped with knowledge to be able to manage their energy bills and save energy in order to keep their home warm and improve their health and wellbeing. The funding also provided Prepayment fuel vouchers for households at risk of self-disconnection and paid for Debt Relief Order application fees helping individuals to get their debts written off.

Prepayment (PPM) fuel vouchers

We applied for funding from FLVC's Winter Pressure Fund and were awarded £5,000 to provide emergency prepayment vouchers to households at risk of self-disconnection. The project ran from January of 2022 to March 2022, where we distributed over 110 vouchers to households using this fund.

Force for Energy project

In January we introduced a new Regional Service developed during 2021, 'Force for Energy' which targets energy advice for the veteran and armed forces communities. This is a holistic service working in partnership with Woody's Lodge, where we provide advice and support on energy consumption, dealing with energy-related debt, income maximisation generally, and advice on energy efficiency. We can then refer clients to Woody's Lodge for small improvement measures such as bulbs, draught excluders, radiator foils, etc. – including fitting where necessary.

The Gwynt y Môr Energy Project

This service targets people living in off-grid communities in Flintshire Coastal communities. Through the project our energy adviser provides one-to-one advice and support to anyone experiencing difficulties: explaining energy-saving tips; helping access grants to make your home more energy efficient; budgeting and income maximisation, as well as understanding your bills and heating controllers. Delivery of this service started in January 2022. It is still early days but we hope at these challenging times with increasing Energy bills our energy projects can make a difference to people's lives.

Employment & Discrimination

Citizens Advice Flintshire has a dedicated team of Employment and Discrimination advisers. We offer support to our Flintshire clients and work in partnership with local Citizens Advice offices across North Wales to deliver a regional 'Employment and Discrimination' service and Citizens Advice Newport to deliver a Wales-wide 'Employment and Discrimination' telephony service. Our Employment and Discrimination team assist with employment issues, discrimination within the workplace or discrimination within the goods and service sector - such as housing and health. Further, as part of our European Union Citizens Rights project, we offer support to European Economic Area nationals to ensure that they are aware of their settled-status rights and rights within the workplace.

We continue to assist clients with employment issues such as redundancy; non- payment of wages; dismissal, and this year we faced new employment issues including the furlough scheme and Covid 19 health and safety rules. The rules around both of these issues were often complicated and we were able

to help our clients navigate through the guidance and legislation. In terms of discrimination, we continue to support protected groups such as pregnant clients and clients with disabilities - to ensure that their employment rights are respected and they are protected from unfair treatment.

The way our team has delivered advice over the past year has also seen some changes. Whilst we were not able to offer 'in-person' advice during the height of the pandemic and we are now moving back to face-to-face, we utilised the increased usage of video-link communication platforms such as 'Attend Anywhere' to deliver advice for those clients who would benefit from this option. Finally this year we evidenced changes in terms of demand for employment and discrimination advice.

Historically, our main enquiry areas tend to be benefits and debt – employment being our third highest. However, for periods of this year, we experienced an unprecedented level of demand for employment and discrimination advice – therefore, our team has grown, and this places us in good stead to meet future demand.





473

people were helped by this project this financial year



1,911

individual issues that our clients needed help with, meaning it was over 4 per client



£262,315

of income was generated for our clients through our advice



91%

of digital clients reported our help made a difference to their peace of mind and wellbeing

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, the Extra Mile project aims to improve access to advice for people with mental ill health. Practical problems (such as debt, income worries, housing issues, employment etc.) can have a significant impact on mental well-being and these problems will often lead to a worsening of mental ill health if left unresolved.

During the early stages of project planning, we established an ongoing ‘steering group’ made up of healthcare professionals, support agencies and clients with mental ill health – in order to help us stay ‘people’ led and shape the aims

and objectives of the project. From the outset, we understood that key aims included early intervention, to help stop problems from escalating and going that ‘Extra Mile’ for those who need it – all in partnership with key mental health support agencies. Further, we understood the need to expand on our ‘traditional’ access channels – to enable clients to access our service in a way which was comfortable and familiar – in order to help clients engage and stay engaged. Therefore, due to the Covid-19 restrictions hampering our ability to offer in-person advice sessions for the majority of this year – we focused

our efforts on expanding our digital access channels (such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Text message, email, Zoom etc.) – alongside our telephony service. These additional digital channels grew at a steady pace initially and our Extra Mile team assisted 473 clients in this financial year - with growth accelerating in January 2022 onwards.

However, once Covid-19 related restrictions had lifted, we worked in partnership with the likes of NEW MIND, ASNEW and KIM Inspire to offer in-person advice sessions at the Flint Library Wellbeing Hub, Holywell KIM hub and Heddfan at the

Wrexham Maelor Hospital. This ensured that our clients were able to receive emotional support for their mental health, alongside the practical advice that our project can offer.

Finally, with the growth in access channels and the ever-increasing advice needs for those clients with mental ill health, we turned our focus to increasing the capacity of the project - by the way of volunteer recruitment. This recruitment is ongoing and will ensure that the Extra Mile project is in the best position to meet demand, and will aid the longer-term sustainability of the project into 2022-2023.



Jenny's story

Jenny contacted us for help as she's on a very low income, has 3 young children, and her cooker had broken. She couldn't afford to buy a new one and had already received an advanced payment from Universal Credit to pay for her baby's cot.

The baby had also started to crawl and she couldn't afford to buy stair gates, so was worried about his safety.

We helped Jenny with an application to the Discretionary Assistance Fund.

She was successfully awarded a new cooker and 2 stair gates. She was relieved with this outcome.

How we're influencing change

This year we restarted our research and campaigns group after a hiatus due to Covid. The first step was to agree on the key areas for the next 12 months. The group decided the most important issues were as follows:

- Cost of Living
- Benefit Uptake
- Child Poverty

We wrote to MPs to call on Government to reverse the decision to stop the £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit and Tax Credits.

We wrote to MPs in March 2022, highlighting concerns over cost of energy rises for people in Flintshire. We shared constituency-level data about the rising costs of energy. Both MPs were invited to a meeting to discuss this issue further.

We promoted awareness of the Energy crisis via social media helping to raise awareness of the issues our community is facing. Raising awareness of new digital channels and changing our marketing to be open and transparent about the services we are trying to deliver. We're also creating a working group who will be looking at all the feedback we gather from clients.

We took part in Scams awareness week – 14 to 27 June 2021 which involved sharing scam stories with the public and offering advice on how to prevent becoming a scam victim.



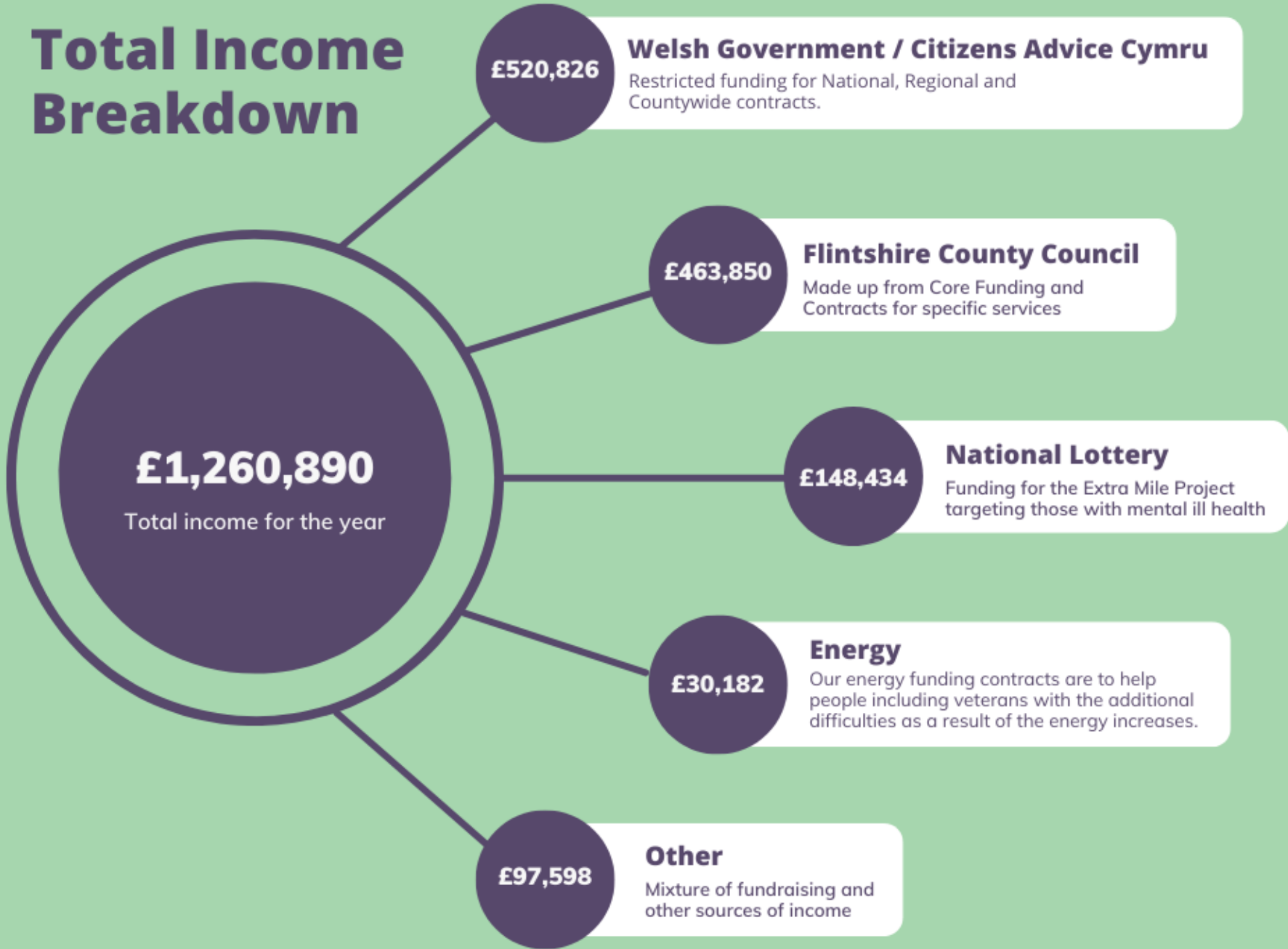
Financial Review

This year the total income for the charity was **£1,260,890** which comes from a combination of contracts, grants and donations. It has enabled us to deliver 17 services and projects with the help of 49 members of staff together with our fantastic volunteers who provide great value to the organisation. A large proportion of our income is generated by a wide range of funders, all of whom helped us to respond to the significant increase in demand for employment, benefits and debt advice following Covid 19 pandemic. We are extremely grateful for the backing and support given.

Flintshire County Council is the foundation for our service. Their funding contributes significantly towards the core service where volunteers deliver advice. For every **£1** of Core Funding, we generated a further **£6.18** in other funding to provide advice services in the County.

We were supported by Town and Community Councils including Buckley Town Council who continued to support an invaluable outreach service for their residents, which was delivered via telephone and digital channels. Mold and Holywell Town Councils supported our work via a donation as did Northop, Penyffordd and Leeswood Community Councils. We thank each and every one of you for your continued support. The Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) supported our work yet again with a grant to help deliver our communications and drive forward digital content that reached and engaged with the people of Flintshire.

Without funders, our work would not be possible.



Our income is split between restricted funding **£977,501** and unrestricted funding **£283,389**. Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives. Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the publicly available financial accounts.

Our total costs equated to **£1,129,291** and total spending on staff salaries was **£1,027,860**, therefore **91% of our expenditure is spent on people.**

Our costs in 2021/22



Staff salaries
£1,028,026



Staff and
volunteer expenses
£17,286



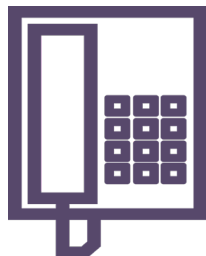
Rates and
water charges
£5,076



Power, light
and heat
£9,347



Maintenance
and repairs
£6,767



Telephone charges
£14,391



Postage
£829



Printing
£1,159



Photocopying
£5,976



Stationery
£235



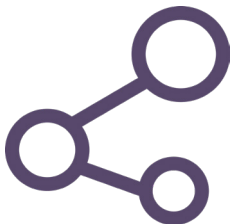
IT support
£17,045



Subscriptions
£10,933



Publicity and
promotions
£1,252



Professional fees
£4,026



Insurance
£3,741



Bank charges
£248



Partnership
payments
£1,320



Share of
governance costs
£1,800

Marketing, Communications & Fundraising

Citizens Advice Flintshire has always seen advice needs change and the service has to adapt to the environment we work in. However, historically this wasn't the case when it came to marketing, communications and fundraising (MCF).

From year to year, the continuous need to generate income is a constant. The MCF team and volunteers carry out a range of events to raise awareness of our service and generate donations to address our budget deficits that we usually set. The lack of community events, people enduring lockdowns and a society that was pushed to keep their distance from one another meant that fundraising was majorly impacted. Our MCF team adapted in order to ensure they were effective in helping to share essential information. By focussing on the communications aspect of their work, they were able to support the wider service.

Information sharing is always a key element in advice and the need to communicate was greater than ever. Our database has been serving us well this year and we've been adding a steady flow of contacts from new clients wanting to be kept informed of our work and to receive updates about regional and national campaign work. We've used this powerful tool to identify groups of clients likely to benefit from specific information

e.g. energy advice and mental health resources. As we grow the number of contacts, we will be able to reach out to more people and keep them up to date with the latest information, encouraging them to utilise us whenever the need arises. During 2021 – 2022 we sent out 22 editions of our electronic newsletter and we've seen an increase in the number of subscribers. Obviously, Covid has been a major focus and the withdrawal of face to face consultations has meant we've been more dependent on digital services to, not only, provide advice but to share resources with our clients and our partner agencies.

As some parts of our lives return to normal, we will continue to reach out, help and engage as many people as possible through our newsletters and social media channels, leaving space for those who depend on face-to-face meetings at our offices. This year we have yet again seen some amazing support from trusts, foundations and community businesses.

A special thank you to all of our brilliant supporters, as they have ensured we have the funds available to provide the people of Flintshire with advice services. Without them, we would not be able to support those who are in most need of our help.



How to get help and support from us

To get advice via text: **07862138271**

Send a WhatsApp message to: **07862138273**

You can get information and help over the phone by calling our free local telephone number: **0808 278 7923**

For a benefits check over the phone please call our Claim What's Yours Helpline: **0808 250 5700**

For specialist Employment and Discrimination help call: **0300 330 2165**

For information on all the ways to contact us including email and Messenger, please visit our website:

www.flintshirecab.org.uk

**cyngor ar
bopeth**

**citizens
advice**

**Sir y Fflint
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Charity Registration Number 1090010
Registered Company Number 03985923