

Impact Report

2021



**citizens
advice**

**Nottingham
& District**

Measuring our social value

2021

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. During a year that straddled the pandemic (2021), Citizens Advice Nottingham & District consistently focused on meeting the needs of its service users, helping **8,270 people** with over **27,180 problems**. Thanks to our staff, volunteers, and some additional emergency investments, the service proved agile enough to continue operating and provide residents of Nottingham, Gedling and Rushcliffe with the help they needed during the most challenging of times. The number of issues per client reflected the complexity and multiple problems our beneficiaries faced and demonstrated that our service reached those most in need.
- 1.2. Information taken from the problems clients face is used to campaign for improved policies and legislation, both locally and nationally, so that the whole of the community benefits, not just direct service users.

System Change and Client Outcomes

- 1.3. We continue with our commitment to measuring system change and we can report the long-term outcomes for service users in terms of:
 - Knowing when to get help early
 - Ability to manage problems in the future
 - Knowing how to access help if needed
 - Feeling supported and less isolated
 - Increased optimism.

We know from this evaluation that the service is keeping the vast majority of our clients out of crisis and the **social value of the service is significant and measurable**. We can demonstrate that our organisation contributes to the well-being of our beneficiaries. Over **90%** of our clients reported long-term improvements in their well-being and ability to cope with problems.

- 1.4. Operating throughout the pandemic allowed us to reach people who had never turned to Citizens Advice before. Almost **70%** of our clients reported being impacted by COVID-19 and we were able to help them find a way forward. We saw a shift in the age profile of our clients who were mainly of working age and there was a high demand for advice on welfare benefits, housing and debt. We also saw high levels of requests for help with employment issues and problems with relationships. The pandemic has a severe impact on jobs, families, income, and financial resilience according to our data.

Social Return on Investment

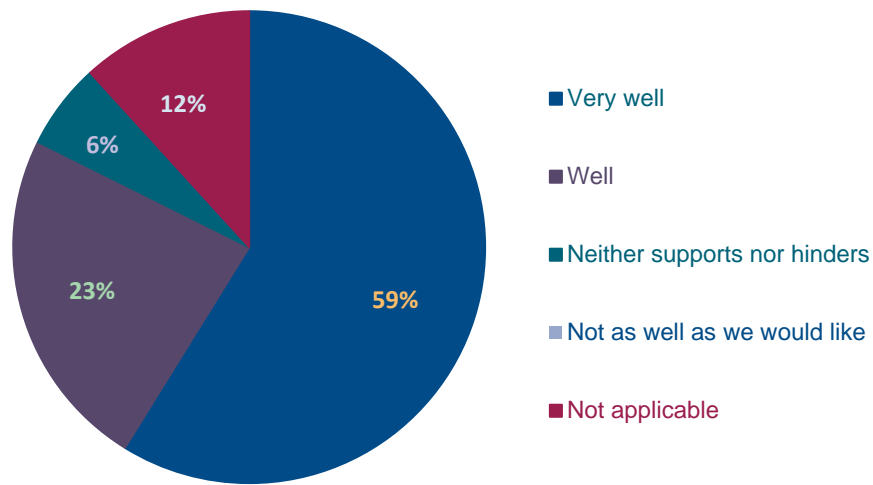
- 1.5. For the first time we have measured our Social Return on Investment (SROI). The calculation contained in this report demonstrates that for every **£1** of core unrestricted investment the charity achieves a SROI of at least **£16.13** in terms of increased income for our clients, additional tax and NI from the jobs we create and savings for our partners on things like homelessness preventions. It also takes into account the value of our volunteers and employment outcomes for those that volunteer with us in order to gain the skills, qualifications and experience to move on into the employment market.

For every £1 of the unrestricted grants we receive, Citizens Advice Nottingham & District achieve a Social Return on Investment of £16.13

Partnership Working

- 1.6 We asked our stakeholders how well we helped them meet their objectives and how efficient we were as a community partner. All the respondents told us that our work is effective. Most importantly we aim to help other not-for-profit agencies deliver their strategic objectives through our commitment to partnership working. In our survey over **82%** of stakeholders felt we supported them well or very well with their strategic objects.

How well do you feel Citizens Advice support you to achieve your organisation's strategic goals?



1.7 What matters to the community now is a sustainable and more equal recovery from COVID-19. We are working with partners towards this goal offering our support, resources and expertise.



Donna Cumberlidge
Chief Officer, Citizens Advice Nottingham & District

Substantive Report

2. What we do

Information and Advice Services



- 2.1. We are an independent local charity and members of the Citizens Advice service. Our objective is to provide free, independent, impartial and confidential advice, serving the people of Nottingham, Gedling and Rushcliffe, and providing the help people need when they need it. We work to the Advice Quality Standard and the terms of the Citizens Advice membership scheme.
- 2.2. During the pandemic we ensured our service was agile to meet changing needs and delivered the majority of our services remotely, in order to remain COVID secure. During 2021 **62%** of our client contacts were by telephone and **21%** by email. We also helped clients using new technology such as webchat, and video meetings, as well as a limited number of appointments in-person for the most vulnerable people of our community.
- 2.3. Thanks to the grants we received we were able to provide services at a general help level on any matter and specialist casework in the areas of debt, money advice, welfare benefits (including Universal Credit) and fuel poverty.

Partnership Working



- 2.4. Whilst we remain an independent advocate for our clients, partnership working is essential if we are to achieve the best outcomes for our beneficiaries. This includes statutory partners, such as Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Primary Care Networks and of course partners from the VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise), such as Mind Nottinghamshire.

We are part of Advice Nottingham delivering a coordinated free advice network in the city. We recognise we are stronger working together and therefore strategic partnerships have been developed to support things like social prescribing and victims of crime.

We also work in close partnership with other Citizens Advice services in Nottinghamshire which benefits local residents by increasing overall capacity and making us more cost-effective. More details of the impact of our partnership working can be found in section 5.

Community Communications



- 2.5. As well as keeping our web content under review, we remained active on social media with over **1,600** followers across Facebook and Twitter.

We actively engage with stakeholders and potential clients, disseminating information and directing people away from false information and scams. We participate in local and national campaigns and communicate with the more traditional media to draw attention to the problems our clients face and service developments.

Research and Campaigns

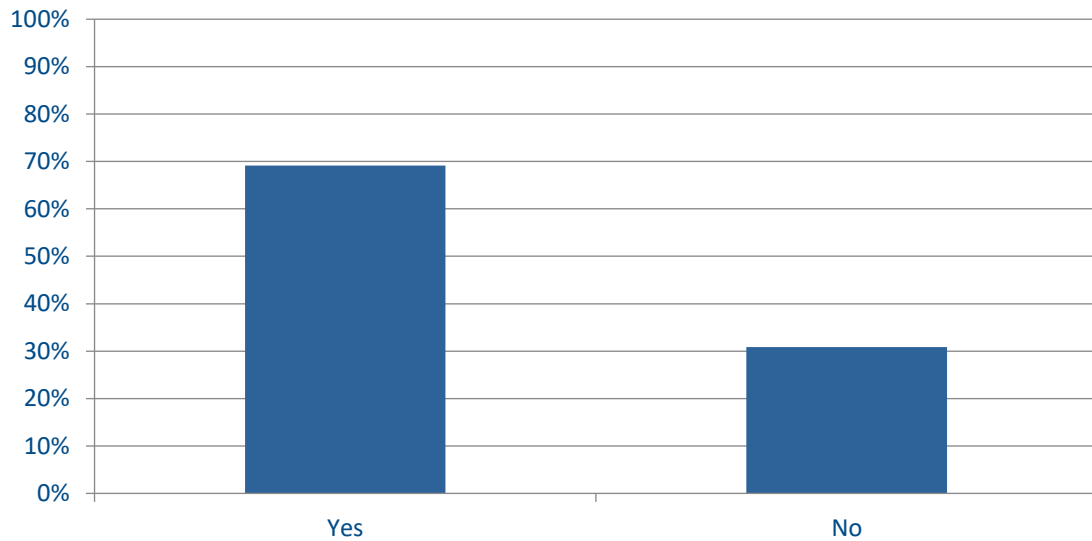


- 2.6. Our twin aim is to use the information and data we collect on the problems our clients face to exercise changes in policy and practice, improving the lives of our services users and residents of Nottingham & District. We call this Research and Campaigns work. We carry out the work in a non-political and impartial way.

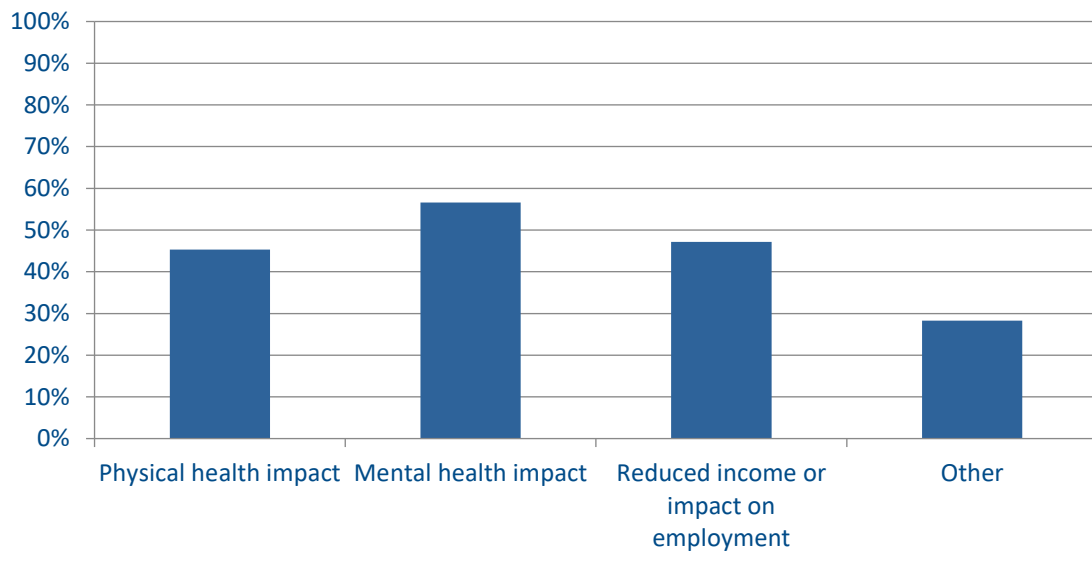
We seek to provide advice, information and campaigns that improve the lives of the people of Nottingham and help our most vulnerable citizens.”
- Donna Cumberlidge, Chief Officer

- 2.7. During the last 12 months we have made constructive contributions towards improving the services available to residents. This includes responding to the ‘Shaping Future Support’ report that informed the Parliamentary Health and Disability Green Paper and Select Committee inquiry into health-related benefits.
- 2.8. We are also members of the County Research and Campaigns Cluster Group and participate in campaigns jointly with our colleagues across the county. These campaigns include housing security, fuel poverty and the Universal Credit £20 uplift campaign, ‘Don’t Wait Until October.’
- 2.9. Thanks to innovation and additional emergency grants, we were able to reach those impacted by COVID-19. Our client survey demonstrated that almost **70%** of enquiries were COVID-19 related either due to mental, physical or economic impact. The survey was completed on 19th April 2022 and what stands out in comparison to earlier surveys is an increase in the number of people feeling they have been economically impacted.

Has the coronavirus pandemic impacted you or your family?



If you answered Yes to the previous question please tell us how the pandemic has impacted you or your family.



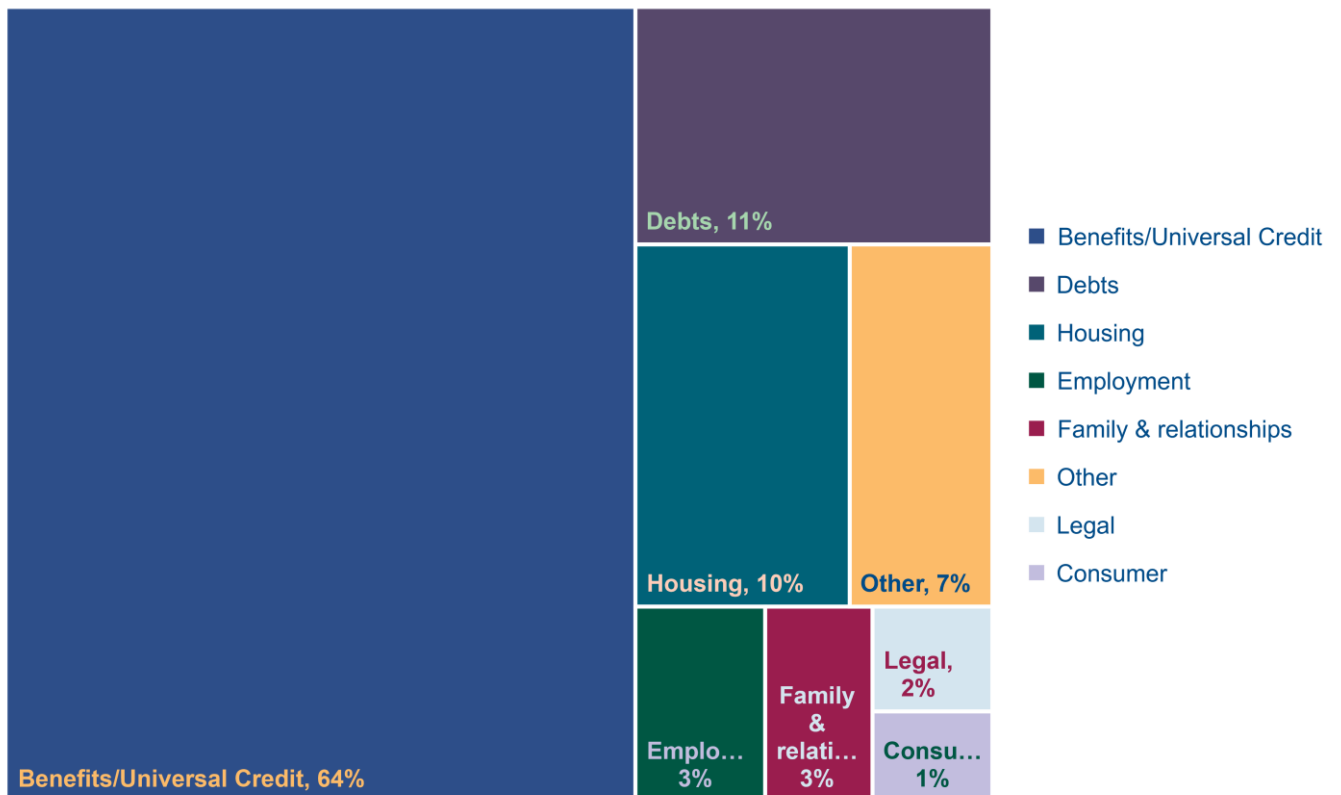
3. The National Network

3.1. Citizens Advice Nottingham & District are proud to be part of a national network that directly helps **3 million people** each year. In addition, the national website receives **29 million visits** annually. The Citizens Advice network is by far the largest advice brand in the UK. Having access to the resources of Citizens Advice helps us achieve local outcomes and increases our social value. We raise awareness locally of the national services like Consumer Direct and the Scams Action Service.

4. Outputs

4.1. There were clear trends in specific areas of social welfare law and information that presented as topics during the pandemic. They are welfare benefits (64%) including help with Universal Credit, debt (11%), housing problems (10%), employment (3.2%) and relationships (2.6%). The increase in welfare benefits advice as a proportion of our workload is reflected in total **financial gains for clients of £2 million** reported, mainly due to new claims, especially Universal Credit.

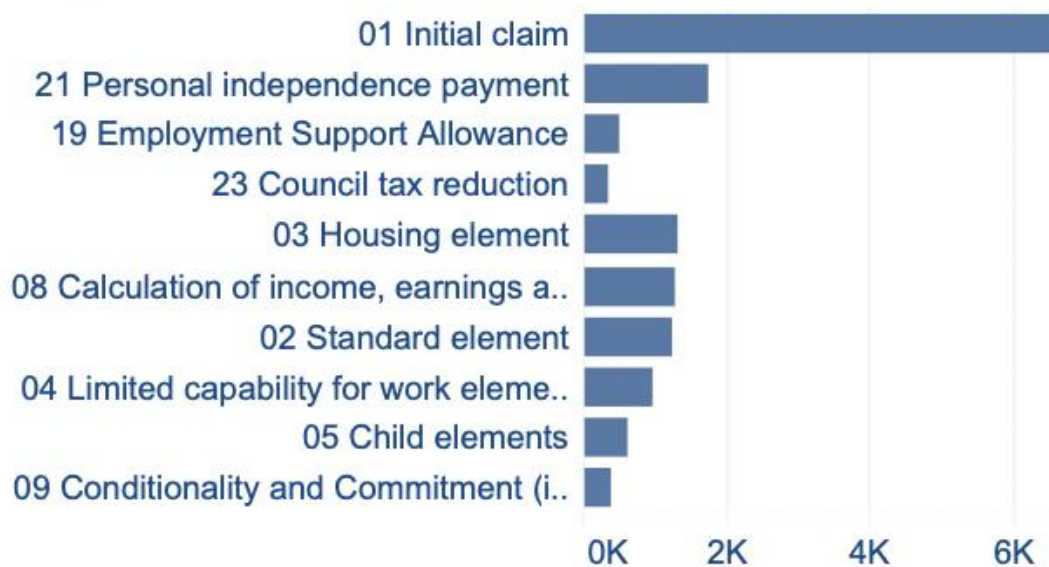
4.2. Issues by percentage of workload (2021)



Issues Breakdown (2021)

Benefits/Universal Credit	17,349
Debts	2,937
Housing	2,689
Employment	878
Family and relationships	727
Other	517
Legal	435
Consumer	376
Immigration	356
Utilities	253
Financial services	173
Health	171
Transport	131
Tax	94
Education	70
Hate crime and GBA	24
Total	27,180

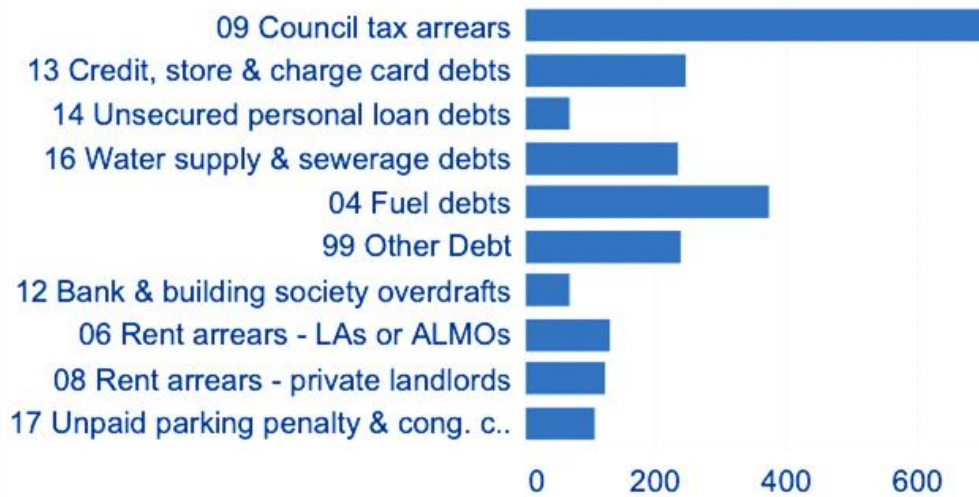
Top benefit issues



High levels of priority debts

- 4.3. What is of greatest concern is the dominance of priority debts that include council tax arrears (the largest), fuel debts (second) and water supply debts. This is of most concern as it impacts both on the financial resilience of clients and stakeholders. These trends are reflected nationally and are not unique to Nottingham.

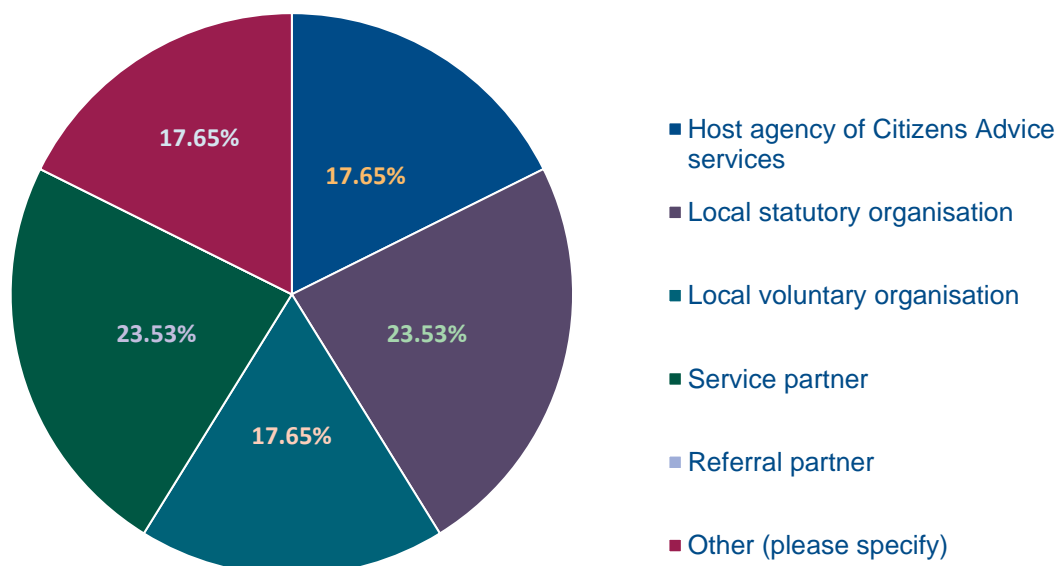
Top debt issues



5. Stakeholder feedback

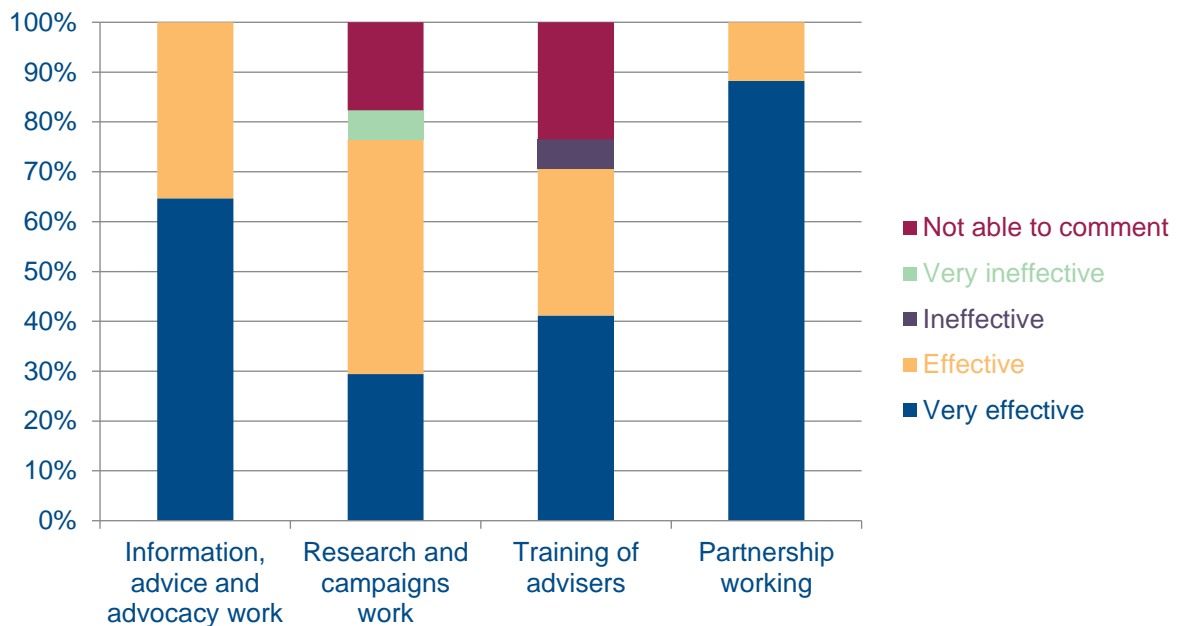
- 5.1. This year we carried out a detailed **Partner Survey**. We included questions on our role as an effective delivery partner, helping our stakeholders achieve their strategic goals and our impact on their services. Seventeen stakeholders from across the not-for-profit sector responded to our survey.

In what capacity are you engaged with Citizens Advice?



5.2. Stakeholders feel they have a good understanding of the work of Citizens Advice Nottingham & District with **88%** of respondents feeling they know the service very well or fairly well and the remainder knowing a little. They also told us that our advice services are either effective or very effective and **100%** felt our partnership working was also effective.

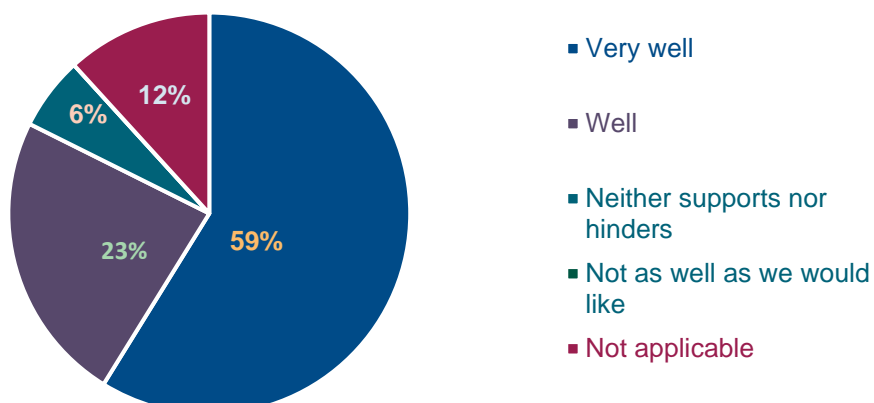
How would you rate the effectiveness of Citizens Advice's work?



5.3. An understanding of our Research and Campaigns work still lags behind along with knowledge of how we train and support volunteers therefore we need to carry out more work explaining the volunteer opportunities that exist within the Citizens Advice service.

5.4. Our communications and support for the communications objectives of our partners is reflected in the survey with **88%** of the respondents feeling satisfied with our communications whilst 12% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied.

How well do you feel Citizens Advice support you to achieve your organisations strategic goals?



- 5.5. It is important that we work with partners for the benefit of the whole community. When asked how well we support them with their strategic objectives we received an **82%** rating (59% very well and 23% well). The remainder felt the question not applicable to them. It is essential that we all work together supporting the community out of the pandemic and through the cost-of-living crisis. We are seeking to increase our partnership working to optimise the use of community resources during these difficult times.
- 5.6. We asked stakeholders to comment on how they valued their partnership with Citizens Advice Nottingham & District. The comments were positive and supportive. Some stakeholders would like to see even more collaboration, especially as a response to the cost-of-living crisis.

Stakeholder comments



“We appreciate the support and partnership to achieve wider goals”

“The support and sharing of ideas”



“The knowledge of the staff and ability to adapt to change”

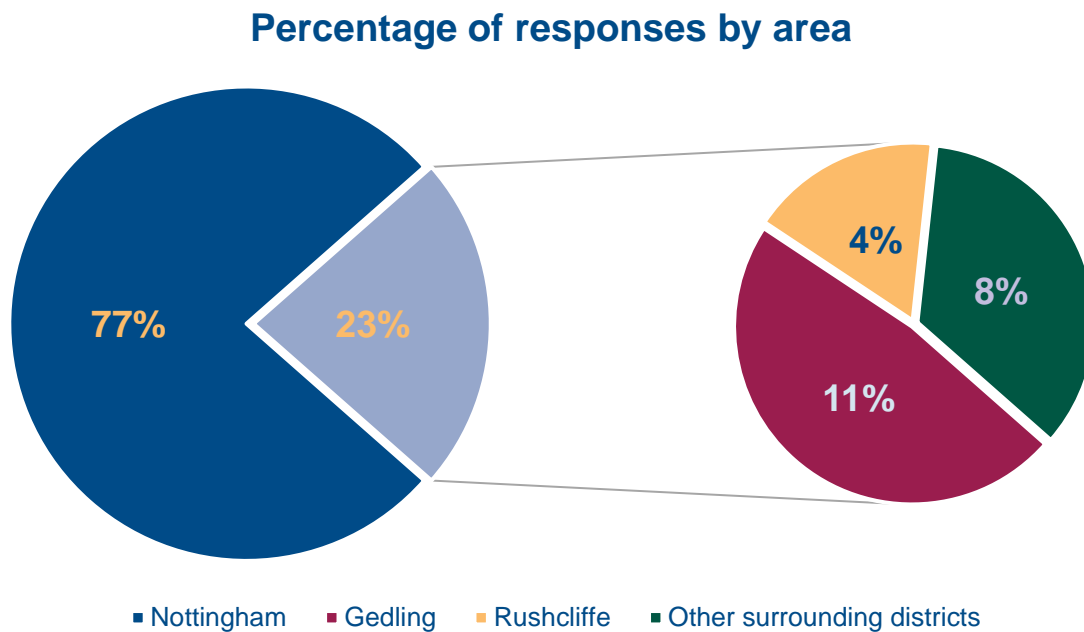
“An essential partner to the delivery of new projects”



- 5.7. We also consulted stakeholders on how well we adapted our services to meet clients' needs during the pandemic. Over **82%** rated our performance as effective but of those **41%** told us that whilst they thought our response was effective it is important that we open face to face services up again as soon as it is safe to do so. Just over **17%** were not sure. We take feedback from our stakeholders very seriously and we are in agreement with those comments.

6. Client Outcome's evaluation

- 6.1. We carried out an **outcomes survey** and 68 clients participated. The evaluation seeks to find out how beneficiaries felt they had benefited from receiving help from Citizens Advice Nottingham & District, in terms of how we have helped them to cope better with the problems they face, rather than in financial terms or measured by output (as described in Section 4). We also assess the resulting improvements in wellbeing, what we call our social value. Of the participants 77% were residents of the City of Nottingham, 11% Gedling, 4% Rushcliffe and 8% other surrounding districts.



- 6.2. We asked five questions based on improved or reduced abilities in the following areas:

Q1. Knowing when to ask for help before matters get out of hand?

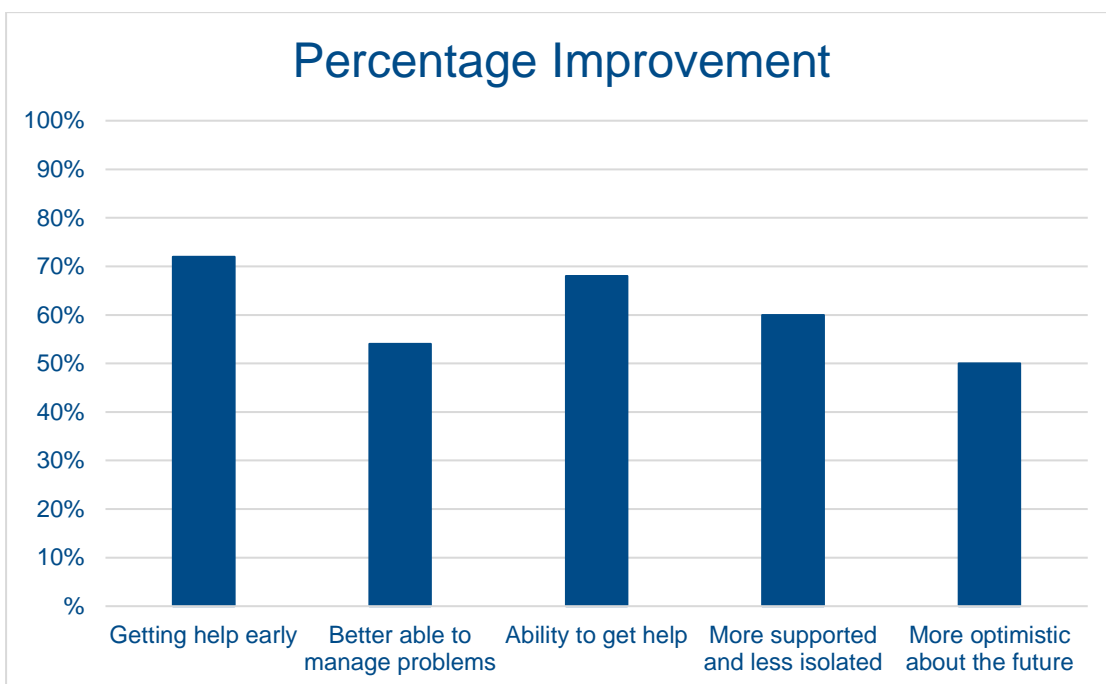
Q2. Are you better able to manage the problems you face?

Q3. If you need help, are you better able to get help?

Q4. Do you feel more supported and less isolated?

Q5. Do you feel more optimistic about the future?

Each question asked the participant to score their response on a sliding scale of -5, the advice made them feel much less capable to +5 the help had significantly improved their abilities. The chart below gives a summary of the average scores for all 68 participants. We then convert that score into an average percentage improvement.



6.3. Summary of client outcomes

In all fields of enquiry, we can see an improvement in the capabilities and well-being of our beneficiaries. This is particularly true of the ‘knowing when to get help before a problem becomes a crisis’ and ‘ability to get help when it is required’. There is also a significant improvement (54%) in beneficiaries’ ability to manage problems in the future. Clients also told us they feel better supported and less isolated. Typical beneficiary quotes are provided below:



“Seeing a person from Citizens Advice was very straight forward. It worked out very well for me.”

“I truly appreciate the help and support when I needed it most. It is lifesaving work, thank you.”



“Citizens Advice have given me the confidence to face the problems I have and not to hide. There is always help available.”

7. Early Intervention

- 7.1. The **early intervention and mental resilience model** of working was developed as a pilot project at Citizens Advice Broxtowe and this has been so successful that funding has now been secured to roll out this way of working across Nottinghamshire including the City of Nottingham. The investment in Nottinghamshire by the National Lottery Community Fund is an example of the importance of partnership working, in this case with other Citizens Advice services and Nottinghamshire Mind.

- 7.2. The project supports our most vulnerable clients who are not able to sustain the outcomes achieved for them by Citizens Advice. The evidence gathered in previous (Core) outcomes surveys demonstrated that for most of our clients we achieve a measurable and lasting impact. However, it was recognised that our most vulnerable clients (18%) feel that their well-being and capabilities have not improved despite our intervention. That is why the early intervention and mental resilience model was developed, to provide focused support meeting the specific needs of the target group and achieve equality of outcome. This was rolled out in Nottingham during 2021 and we are confident that the project, **Changing Lives – Managing Futures**, will achieve the same system change as experienced in Broxtowe. Evaluation of the first six months of the project is positive and the project is indeed achieving equality of outcome.

8. Volunteering for Citizens Advice Nottingham & District

- 8.1. Citizens Advice Nottingham has 59 volunteers who come from all walks of life and give their time to the community for free. These include 47 trained advisers, 4 receptionists and 1 volunteer administrator. We also have 7 volunteers who act as trustees and help govern the organisation, overseeing its legality and strategic direction. Volunteers significantly increase the number of people we can help but they do require the correct support, training and supervision to be able to perform their tasks to the high standards the service expects. No impact report would be complete without acknowledgement of their contribution and the benefits of volunteering for Citizens Advice. Volunteer advisers all undertake initial and ongoing training specific to their roles.

Employment outcomes for our volunteers

Many of our volunteers use the experience gained to move into employment, both within the service and the wider employment market. The training and experience Citizens Advice Nottingham & District provides is respected and relevant. Last year 7 volunteers moved into paid employment as a direct result of the training, qualifications and experience provided. We also participated in employment programmes like the Kickstart scheme that proved very successful.



9. Measuring Social Return on Investment

Output	Number	Value	Formula
Admin and reception volunteers	5	£17,477.46	Average hours x cost of salary/NI/pen per year
Trustee volunteers	7	£28,204.43	Average hours x number of volunteers x manager salary
Advice volunteers	47	£186,543.21	Average hours x number of volunteers x GH advice salary
Volunteers moving into employment	7	£ 136,500.00	Average EM salary pa
None core investments		£ 1,226,493.00	Restricted income 2019/20
Client gained income		£2,048,706.00	Financial gains for clients
Jobs created	36.9	£ 178,342.42	Tax & NI revenue
Client re- imbursements/debt written- off		£168,439.00	
Homeless preventions	116	£244,992.00	Cost of statutory homeless prevention
Total		£ 4,003,472.42	
Client gains less deadweight		£ 1,434,094.20	70% of client gains
Adjusted value		£3,435,169.27	
Difficult to measure values not included: health improvements reduction in cost to NHS/keeping people out of statutory intervention (debts/courts/crime reduction).			

Total unrestricted core investment 2019/21*	£212,940.00
SROI	£16.13

10. Supporting Nottingham out of the pandemic and building back

10.1. During the pandemic we saw clear trends in the problems our clients were facing and changes to the demographics of our client base. We also know that our service reached those impacted. This has given us a detailed understanding of the advice and support needs of the community and we have developed a set of priorities to help support Nottingham out of COVID-19 in partnership with our stakeholders. The plan includes:

- Provide an advice service that is tailored to a community recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Consult with stakeholders to integrate advice services where possible, strengthen existing partnerships and build new partnerships that improve outcomes.

Within these aims we have set out clear outcomes based on the evidence.

- ✓ **Improved wellbeing outcomes through advice as a social prescribing tool**
- ✓ **Support income maximisation and financial resilience for families economically impacted**
- ✓ **Support people towards sustainable housing**
- ✓ **Helping people returning to the workforce post COVID**
- ✓ **Work with partners to address the issues of priority indebtedness**

Citizens Advice Nottingham & District – May 2022

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Finally, thank you to our funders



Rushcliffe
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(Nottingham Group)

Citizens Advice helps people find a way forward.

We provide free, confidential and independent advice to help people overcome their problems. We are a voice for our clients and consumers on the issues that matter to them.

We value diversity, champion equality, and challenge discrimination and harassment.

We're here for everyone.

citizensadvicenottingham.org.uk



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