

ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

citizens

advice

Doncaster

Borough

We give people the knowledge and the confidence they need to find their way forward, whoever they are, whatever their problem.















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Foreword from Mayor Ros Jones



I am pleased to introduce the annual report for Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough. This fantastic charity dedicates itself to the well-being of millions of people across the country every year. We all have times in our lives where we need a little bit of help and advice. Citizens Advice services are there for anyone who requests it, free of judgement and discrimination. Their goal is to give people the knowledge and the confidence needed to find their way forward, which is certainly admirable.

This past year has been a particularly challenging environment for care service providers, the cost of living crisis has led to a record level in demand for Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough. I know how tirelessly all the incredible staff and volunteers are working to support residents here in Doncaster.

Despite the pressure they are under, Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough have implemented a new 'community centred approach', which has increased levels of access for communities and widened the scope of their support. This is in addition to partnership working with various organisations such as, Voluntary Action Doncaster, the Trussell Trust and Mind.

I'd like to thank all the staff and volunteers at Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough for the invaluable work that they do. The data in this report shows the huge impact that they have on Doncaster's residents and communities, but the full impact of what they do cannot be easily measured. By giving people the support and confidence needed to go forward, they are helping to improve lives.

Ros Jones



Introduction



We all face problems that can seem complicated or intimidating. At Citizens Advice, we believe that no one should have to tackle these issues without high-quality, independent advice.

Citizens Advice offers free, confidential advice online, over the phone, and in person. When we say we're here for everyone, we mean it. People trust us because we're independent and completely impartial. We help people with a wide range of problems, giving us a unique understanding of the challenges people face today. With solid evidence, we can show big organizations—from companies to the government—how they can improve things for everyone.

In a world full of uncertainty and change, our mission to serve our community remains our guiding star. Over the past year, we've helped **9,658 clients with 35,497 issues**. Our efforts led to **£12.8 million in income gains for our clients,** reaffirming our commitment to their well-being and financial stability.

We're proud to announce that we scored higher in our Annual Quality and Governance audit. This achievement highlights our dedication to maintaining the highest standards and our commitment to transparency and accountability.

But our work doesn't stop there. We believe in the power of collaboration. This year, we partnered with five other community organizations. Together, we've become a beacon of support, guiding people toward a brighter, more resilient future.

At the heart of our achievements is a sense of community. Our principle of "whoever you are, whatever the problems" defines our work, uniting us in purpose and driving us toward our goals. This spirit energises our organization, making it a great place to work and collaborate with.

As we look forward to the coming year, our annual report is a testament to our resolve, achievements, and vision. Together, we embark on another year of unwavering dedication to our community, driven by the positive impact we have on the lives of the people we support.

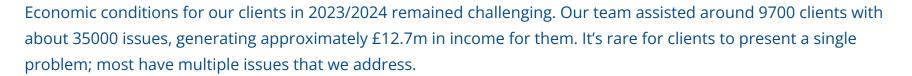
WE ARE CITIZENS ADVICE DONCASTER BOROUGH

Message From Our Chair - Andrew Wignall



This is my first year as Chair of Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough. I have 13 years of service as a volunteer in various parts of the CA organisation and three years as the treasurer of Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough.

I would like to thank our staff, volunteers, and trustees, and extend special thanks to Colin Smith (previous chair) and Malcolm Jevons (previous vice chair), who retired in December 2023 after completing the maximum service allowed. I wish them success in their future endeavours.



We have expanded our outreach to 26 centres in addition to our main offices in Doncaster, Mexborough, and Stainforth. The pandemic led us to develop non-face-to-face advice methods, allowing us to serve more clients without increasing resources.

Our funding comes from various sources, but Doncaster Council provides long-term funding for general advice, unlike some other councils. We appreciate their support, which is crucial for our services.

This year, Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough participated in national pilot projects, including exploring how AI databases can help identify all available benefits for clients. The complex UK benefit systems require better data access and understanding to ensure comprehensive client support.

The demand for our services will continue to grow. I am deeply grateful to our staff, volunteers, and trustees for their loyalty and efforts in serving the citizens of Doncaster.



Andrew Wignall
Chair of Trustees

Message From Our CEO



Our core mission has been and remains to uplift and empower the residents of Doncaster through advice. This report lays out the great results we have achieved through the utterly invaluable advice and support we provide in our work with our communities. Here are some highlights from our team in the past year.

- An increase in funding from £650,000 to £1.6 million
- The BSL Team is in place and working with our community in the most welcomed way. This is a service of which I am truly proud. It fills a gap that we had and evidences that we are an inclusive service.
- National Team of the Year nomination, which was recognized at Citizens Advice National level.
- Gained recognition as an Armed Forces Covenant Bronze member
- Established the advice on prescription project, delivering advice in GP surgery settings which positively impacts the health and wellbeing of those accessing it
- Increased the size of the Doncaster Advice Network to 45 organisations, we hosted impressive events and ran a joint campaign on improving access to pension credit, which resulted in a 5% increase in enquiries
- Increased our team's size to extend our ability to deliver services, as numbers of people requesting those services increase
- •Set the foundations for a region-wide project on digital inclusion working together with citizens advice from across the region
- Became a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board, further integrating our services with broader health initiatives

All these successes mean that we are more in demand than ever. The cost-of-living crisis wears down the resilience of our community, and it shows no sign of abating. We are committed to delivering an ever-more responsive and effective service, working with the widest range of funders to face these challenges head-on. These are achievements of your hard work and dedication, by each and every individual in the organisation. Together, we continue to do great things that make a real difference to the lives of people in Doncaster

Thank you for your unswerving support.

"Our commitment to Doncaster's residents endures, meeting unprecedented demands with impactful, responsive services amid the ongoing cost-of-living crisis."



James Woods Chief Executive

Our Local Setting: City of Doncaster in 2023/24



- Doncaster has a population of around 312,800,
- 148,291 households of 2023
- 191,880 working age population 60,324 aged 65+

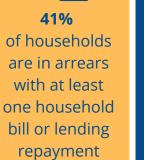
The indices of multiple deprivation place Doncaster as an area experiences significant overall levels of deprivation, with over **126,000** Doncaster residents living in the 20% most deprived areas in England (IMD 1&2)

In the wider region of South Yorkshire Doncaster performs worse than the national average. The Sheffield City Region is the **4th** most deprived region in the country.













of the population of South Yorkshire lack internet access, digital skills or confidence to use digital technology effectively



140,001
People living in health deprivation 'hotspots'
(IMD2015)
(higher national average)





33,150people provide
regular unpaid
care.



22% suffer high anxiety (higher than national average)



18%
households
living in fuel
poverty



29,000
Doncaster
residents age
16+ have never
worked or are
long term
unemployed

Our Strategic Aims





Strengthen and expand our one-on-one advice services organisation-wide. This will enable a wider clientele to access the vital support they need. Concurrently, we are dedicated to infusing our services with a heightened sense of fairness and justice. Through these efforts, we aspire to empower individuals and promote equity, fostering positive change within our community.



Amplify the efficacy and efficiency of our Advice services. By embracing new technologies and refining processes, we seek to optimize our availability and productivity without compromising on the calibre of our service. Our commitment lies in striking the right balance—enabling us to deliver a service of exceptional quality while enhancing our impact through modern approaches.



Expanding Research and Campaigns across our organisation. Collaborating with strategic partners, we aim to boost campaign impact on local and national levels. Leveraging our digital progress, we'll maximise social media and PR to elevate our brand and mission. This approach cements our commitment to driving impactful change and broader outreach.



Enhancing our support for colleagues and volunteers to elevate attraction, satisfaction, and retention. Our strategy involves broadening the spectrum of engaging and innovative volunteer opportunities across the city. By providing comprehensive training, unwavering support, and chances to immerse themselves in different work environments, we empower volunteers to actively contribute to their local communities and our organization at large. This approach embodies our commitment to nurturing a thriving and motivated team.



Combating health inequalities with precision. We acknowledge that the issues we advise on—debt, welfare, housing, and discrimination—significantly influence health determinants. Our aim is to provide a targeted and responsive service, empowering individuals to navigate these challenges. Through this, we not only improve health outcomes but also alleviate strain on healthcare resources. By enhancing quality of life, we contribute to individual wellbeing while also generating public savings.



Dedicated to diversity and inclusion. Our strong commitment to Equity, Equality, and Diversity. We are resolute in our pursuit of improving accessibility for marginalized clients, giving them a prominent voice in shaping our endeavours. By fostering this inclusivity, we not only amplify our ability to meet their unique needs but also create a platform where their perspectives contribute to our ongoing progress.



Our Impact















24% clients had debts written off



Debt relief orders applied for



in 2023/24









supported with ongoing benefits entitlement claim



of clients said it was easier to get on with their day to day life after coming to us for help.



842 Personal Independence Payment appointments



£12.8 million

financial gains for clients

Data led approach to services



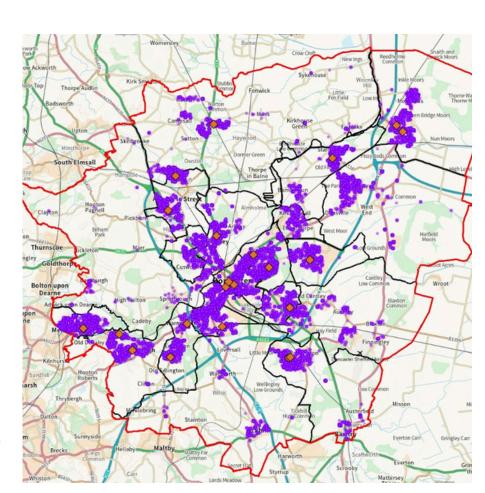
Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough have been collaborating with Doncaster Council to utilise geospatial mapping for monitoring trends across various communities in Doncaster.

This data-driven approach to service provision allows us to be responsive and tailor services to meet the unique challenges different communities face. By analysing geospatial data, we can identify specific needs and allocate resources more effectively, ensuring that no community is overlooked.

This data-led approach offers several additional benefits. It enhances our ability to forecast future needs and trends, enabling proactive rather than reactive responses. With precise data, we can identify emerging issues early and address them before they escalate. Moreover, this approach fosters transparency and accountability, as decisions are based on clear, objective data.

Furthermore, data-driven strategies improve collaboration between different departments and organisations. By sharing data insights, we can coordinate efforts, avoid duplication of services, and create more comprehensive support networks. This integration of data fosters a more holistic understanding of community needs, leading to more effective and sustainable solutions.

In conclusion, the use of geospatial data in service provision allows us to be flexible, responsive, and efficient. It empowers us to address the diverse challenges faced by Doncaster's communities with precision and foresight, ultimately enhancing the overall well-being of our residents.



Projects - Doncaster Council



Core Funding

As a service we rely on core funding from City of Doncaster Council to ensure we have a foundation from which to build our service and offer to other funders this core funding is vital to the organisation and gives us the ability to retain and attract other sources of income. We thank CDC for trusting us with the provision of this along with other project funded programmes we have with them. Without this support our wider work away from CDC funded projects would not be possible.

City of Doncaster Council

Advice in communities project

This funding bases advisers in community locations across the city. This project plays a vital role in building strong and healthy communities through the provision of free advice and support to people on a range of issues, including work, debt, benefits, immigration, and housing. The organization has 18 locations across Doncaster, making it easy for people to access the help they need.

Community locations are important for a number of reasons. They can help to:

- Reduce poverty and inequality
- Improve mental health and well-being
- Promote social justice and equality
- Build stronger communities

Overall, community locations are essential for building strong and healthy communities. They provide a place where people can come together, learn, and access essential services.

Immigration Project

This funding allows us to offer OISC Level 1 Immigration advice and support to people across the city, through 1 to 1 advice appointments and workshops. We want to reduce barriers to work for people looking to make the UK their home. Ensure these communities have access to the free help support and guidance our service offers and by having a tailored service for them, builds trust and awareness of rights within these groups. We want to ensure these communities know what services are available locally to support with problems they face. Through this we aim to offer volunteering / employment opportunities to communities to help them assimilate to their new homes.



I feel like a weight has been lifted, feels so much better, and can see a bright future, I know what I need to do and have direction

Projects - Advice on Prescription(AOP)



Addressing health inequalities requires accessibility, data-driven insights, and tailored support. This project provides early intervention advice to clients in primary care settings citywide, enhancing communication between health teams and improving knowledge sharing. Clinicians become better at identifying social welfare needs. In the first three months, the project achieved significant income gains for clients.



Benefits of integrated advice within health services include:

- Cost Savings: Helps patients overcome issues causing delayed discharge.
- Building Patient Resilience: Physical and mental health improve by addressing issues early.
- Alleviating Pressure on Medical Appointments: Frees up practices to focus on medical care.

We work with Primary Care Doncaster, **8 GP surgeries**, and **2 hospital outreach locations**.

Service User Perspective:

- Improved access to high-quality advice and support.
- Empowered clients financially.
- Enhanced ability to make informed choices.
- Flexibility of face-to-face support in their community.
- Better representation for marginalized people.

Community Perspective:

- Significant income gains benefiting local communities.
- Enhanced local community infrastructure.

Partner Perspective:

- Reduced pressure on NHS services.
- Improved outcomes for individuals and their networks.
- Greater access to harder-to-reach communities.



58 %

condition



just knowing the right avenues to ring and having that knowledge has almost resolved the nightmare we've had in 2+ years in just over a month, we're no longer being fobbed off.

Thank you so much,



Projects - British Gas Energy Trust- Energy for Everyone



The mission of the project is to alleviate the detrimental impact of poverty. Helping people in, or at risk of, financial hardship meet their energy needs and manage their energy costs through support, education and raising awareness of sound money management and trust fund applications.



The project will continue to:

- provide advice on fuel options, tariffs and energy bills, as well as thermal efficiency advice and energy efficiency advice
- deliver Debt & financial assistance, which may include advice and support for vulnerable customers on financial management and smart meters, energy efficiency and other measures to keep energy bills down; and
- help clients with household money management, including the provision of benefit entitlement checks and/or assistance in claiming benefits.
- A new addition to this project will be a home visiting element to support those people who cannot get out to visit us and a deaf advisor to support the deaf community who often find it difficult to engage with services.
- Run community energy awareness events and workshops across the city.

Our Energy Advice Team was runner up in the National Citizens Advice Team of the year award.











The cost of energy was really worrying me and I was avoiding putting my heating on unless it was really cold, after speaking to CADB,I can now afford my bills and don't feel scared about heating my home.



Projects - Money & Pension Service (MAPS)



The ongoing cost of living crisis has significantly increased the demand for our specialist debt advice service. Our experienced Specialist Debt Advice Team has been instrumental in supporting clients facing a variety of debt-related challenges, providing them with essential guidance and solutions tailored to their unique financial situations.

Our Specialist Debt Advice Team is dedicated to helping clients understand and manage their debt issues. The team offers comprehensive support, including an overview of debt problems, outlining available options, and assisting in finding effective solutions. The types of debt issues we address include:

- Debt Relief Orders
- Insolvency Solutions
- Bankruptcy
- Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs)
- Debt Management Plans
- Administration Orders
- Budgeting Assistance
- Mortgage Problems
- Rent Arrears
- Bailiff Interventions
- Court Proceedings for Debt

In the past year, our team has provided support to 1,676 clients, addressing a total of 9,752 debt-related issues. Some notable achievements include:

- Council Tax Arrears: Handled 838 cases
- Credit Card or Loan Arrears: Managed 973 cases
- Handled over £13.5 Million in Debts, an increase on previous years



I felt like I was
drowning in debt with
nowhere to turn until I
spoke to my CADB
Debt Adviser.
They helped me gain a
fresh start with my
finances.



Projects - Help To Claim (HTC)



In Doncaster, a significant number of residents are increasingly relying on Universal Credit, reflecting broader economic challenges and policy changes. As of early 2024, there are 20,215 people in Doncaster receiving Universal Credit, encompassing both employed and unemployed individuals. Our Help to Claim Team has been pivotal in assisting these residents with the early stages of their Universal Credit claims, providing essential advice, support, and guidance.

Our Help to Claim Team is dedicated to supporting individuals through all aspects of the Universal Credit claim process. The team offers assistance through various channels, including a dedicated phoneline, webchat, and British Sign Language (BSL) service.

Our team helps clients by:

- Determining Eligibility: Assessing if individuals are eligible for Universal Credit and guiding them through the process.
- Application Support: Assisting clients in filling out the Universal Credit application form accurately and efficiently.
- Preparing clients for their first Jobcentre appointment.
- Ensuring the first payment is correct.
- Supporting with a range of Holistic services such as referrals to other specialist advice teams, food vouchers and fuel vouchers.

Over the past year, our team has supported **1,560 Universal Credit claimants**, addressing a total of **5,360 issues** related to their claims.

Some notable achievements include:

• Income Gains for Clients: Secured over £4.4 million in income gains for clients



I didn't know where to start with claiming and struggled with the online claim, without CADB supporting me through the process I would be left with nothing.



Projects - South Yorkshire Digital Inclusion Network



South Yorkshire ICB has contracted Citizens Advice Doncaster to coordinate and deliver a programme of digital inclusion activity in South Yorkshire. It is Citizens Advice Doncaster's role to work collaboratively over the next 24 months to manage resources, establish and maintain a network and deliver a digital inclusion support service that responds to the issues most pertinent to digital exclusion.



It is the ambition of the South Yorkshire Digital Inclusion network to deliver a digital inclusion network to respond to the many and evolving societal challenges associated with fast paced digital transformations and increasing expectations to manage a life on line with out limits.



Milestones

- Programme commenced 1st April
- Doncaster on target for July Launch
- Doncaster recruited all programme delivery staff
- Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield signed service level agreement
- Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield on target for August launch
- Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield appointed their respective project leads
- Partnership with South Yorkshire Community Foundation agreed to administer and manage the Connecting South Yorkshire Grant
- Entire allocation of year 1 device bank equipment received via programme partner Enviro Electronics
- Citizens Advice Digital Inclusion Webpage developed and live
- Partnerships with Flourish Enterprise, Business Doncaster Ambitions,
 Good Work Doncaster and People Focus Group established, providing weekly community based digital support



Quality of Advice



Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough proudly holds the Advice Quality Standard mark for our advice with casework services and our telephone advice services.

This is an organisation quality standard for legal advice services operating in the area of social welfare law.

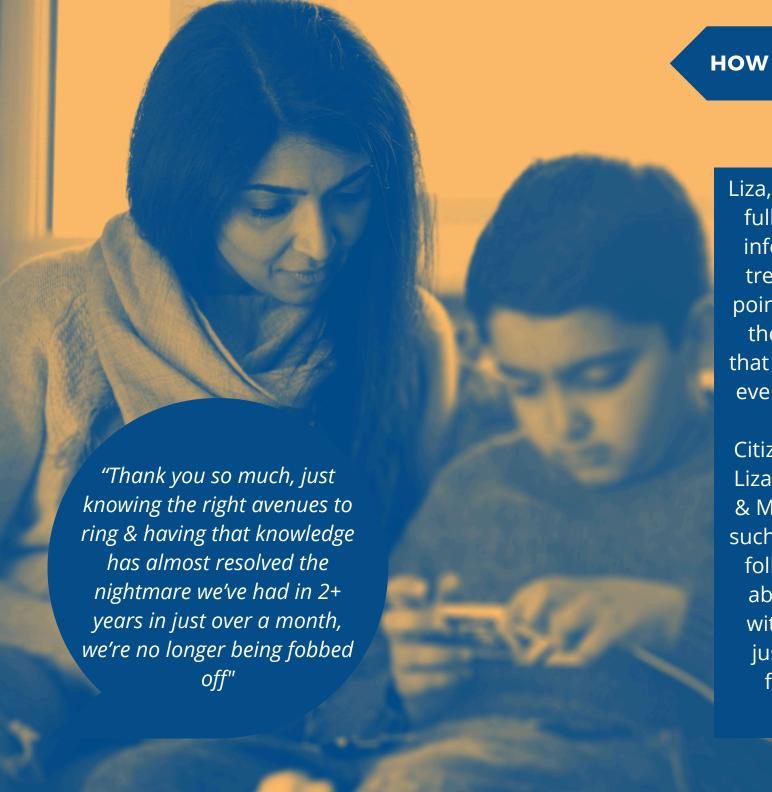
The quality framework includes a set of standards designed to ensure a service is well run. It has its own quality control mechanisms that in doing so, assures the quality of the information and advice services provided as well as promoting social justice. The quality standards and assessment methods used reflect the minimum standards necessary to ensure that clients seeking advice receive accurate, complete and timely advice; that they are able to obtain this advice from an advice provider which is accessible to them and able to act independently and in the sole interest of the client.

We have robust quality procedures in place in order to maintain our high standards in line with this framework. We ensure staff, volunteers and trustees understand the importance of high quality advice and the detrimental consequences of poor advice.

We support our team to achieve this though comprehensive training, mentoring and support.



citizensadvice.org.uk



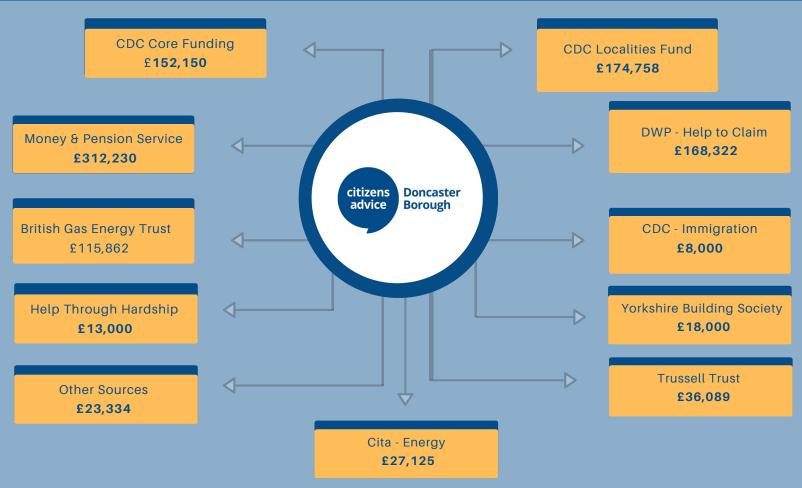
HOW OUR ADVICE HELPED LIZA*

Liza, 40, has 4 dependants & works full time. Liza has a black mould infestation in her home, despite treatment mould returns to the point of affecting Liza's children to the point of lung complications that have been treated twice & has even damaged Liza's food supply.

Citizens Advice Doncaster advised Liza to contact the council's Damp & Mould Team as she didn't know such a thing existed, After having a follow up appointment Liza was able to get the mould removed with a full plastering of her wall just 2 weeks later & received a food voucher to replace the damaged food.

Funding





Future Funding Agreed for 2024/25 and beyond



DONCASTER PRIMARY CARE ADVICE ON PRESCRIPTION

In wider economic and social benefits. Solving problems improves lives - this means better wellbeing, participation and productivity for the people we help. £750,000 over next 2 years **ICB - DIGITAL INCLUSION**

In wider economic and social benefits. Solving problems improves lives - this means better wellbeing, participation and productivity for the people we help. £394,051 over next 2 years

BRITISH GAS ENERGY TRUST

In wider economic and social benefits. Solving problems improves lives - this means better wellbeing, participation and productivity for the people we help. £286,782 Over next 3 years NATIONAL LOTTERY -REACHING COMMUNITIES WELFARE RIGHTS PROJECT

In wider economic and social benefits. Solving problems improves lives - this means better wellbeing, partici

£930,356 in projects continuing

Funding - Value to Doncaster



£1.00

For every pound we receive in funding we generate at least:

FISCAL VALUE

£2.94

To the Government and Public Services (fiscal benefits). By helping stop problems occurring or escalating, we reduce pressure on public services like health, housing or out-of-work benefits.

£14.68

PUBLIC VALUE

In wider economic and social benefits. Solving problems improves lives - this means better wellbeing, participation and productivity for the people we help.

Ac par

VALUE TO THE PEOPLE WE HELP

As part of advice, we can increase people's income, through debts written-off, taking up benefits and solving consumer problems.

£21.97

£452,009

SAVINGS TO LOCAL AUTHORITY

BY PREVENTING
HOMELESSNESS AND
HOUSING EVICTIONS &
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

£551,627

SAVINGS TO NHS BY REDUCING USE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND GP SERVICES, AND KEEPING PEOPLE IN WORK £1.2 Million

SAVINGS TO HOUSING PROVIDERS (BY PREVENTING HOUSING EVICTIONS) £916,925

SAVINGS TO DWP (BY KEEPING PEOPLE IN WORK)

£53,093

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM (BY PREVENTING HOUSING EVICTIONS AND HOMELESSNESS)

£35,152,000

PUBLIC VALUE OF IMPROVING CLIENTS' WELLBEING (EMOTIONAL WELLBEING, FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND POSITIVE FUNCTIONING)



Volunteers



Volunteers serve as a powerful force, amplifying our capacity to make a meaningful impact within our community. Their dedication is a priceless asset, greatly benefiting both our esteemed funders and the people we serve. While we navigated certain hurdles in 2023 and 2024, stemming from internal restructuring, our commitment to expanding our volunteer network remained steadfast.

Amidst these changes, we want to underscore our profound gratitude for our existing volunteers, whose unwavering support continues to shape the heart of our mission. As we stride forward, we extend a warm invitation to new members who wish to join our ranks, as their contributions are eagerly awaited and wholeheartedly embraced.

At CADB, we've developed a robust training strategy that empowers volunteers with tailored skills and support. We offer a blend of academic resources, interactive e-learning modules, and hands-on experience through shadowing experienced team members. This comprehensive approach ensures our volunteers are well-equipped to make a meaningful impact while fostering their personal growth.

Volunteer roles

At Citizens Advice, we invite volunteers who are eager to contribute their expertise across many various facets of our work. Our range of roles caters to a wide array of skill sets, these roles include:

- General Advice
- Reception
- Social Media
- Research and campaigns
- IT support
- Volunteer administration & recruitment

Each role is an integral piece in our mission puzzle, offering a chance for volunteers to channel their talents and passions most effectively



Motivations for Volunteering



The reasons volunteers choose to join our ranks are as diverse as the roles they embrace. While individual motivations vary, several common themes frequently emerge:

Transferable skills

Our extensive array of dynamic and deeply-engaged roles offers a fertile ground for volunteers to acquire and refine a range of transferable skills. Whether it's in office operations, research, communication, or customer service, Citizens Advice provides a rich learning environment that translates into real-world expertise.

Giving back to the community

The ripple of positive impact we create within our community is widely recognized. Volunteers often resonate with our mission and aspire to be hands-on contributors to the transformative changes we bring about in people's lives.

Embracing Challenges and Staying Active

Certain roles, such as advisory positions, present challenges that beckon those seeking rewarding experiences. Many retirees, driven by the desire to stay engaged and mentally agile, find these roles particularly appealing.

In summation, our volunteer ecosystem thrives on mutual benefit. As we equip our volunteers with skills and experiences that empower them to make a difference, they, in turn, become invaluable pillars of support for us.



Thank You
We couldn't do it without you!

Motivations for Volunteering



Citizens Advice Doncaster is an independent, local charity and a member of the Citizens Advice network. We provide free advice and support to meet the needs of our community. This includes advice on a range of problems, such as with work, debt, benefits, immigration, housing and more. We're here to help everyone who lives, works or studies in the Borough of Doncaster.

Volunteering is the act of freely giving one's time and skills to help others or to support a cause. It is a valuable contribution to society, and it has a wide range of positive impacts, both on the individual volunteer and on the community as a whole.

Volunteering can have a number of positive benefits for the individual volunteer, including:

- Improved physical and mental health
- Increased social connection
- Enhanced skills and knowledge
- Greater sense of purpose and meaning
- Community benefits

Volunteering also has a number of positive impacts on the community, including:

- Strengthening social cohesion
- Improving the quality of life
- Promoting civic engagement

Volunteering is a powerful force for good in the world. It can have a positive impact on the lives of both individuals and communities. If you are looking for a way to make a difference, consider volunteering your time and skills to a cause that you care about.

97%

would recommend volunteering at Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough.

80%

of our unemployed volunteers believe they are overcoming barriers to employment.

54%

of our employed volunteers state that they are using it to change or evaluate their career.

15

Volunteers found work internally and externally in the last year.

£131,000 The monetary value of volunteered hours over the year



Research & Campaigns



We know giving people advice and helping solve their problems can impact their wider lives in positive ways and make them more resilient and prepared for similar problems in the future, but campaigning for policy changes is equally important it looks to change or remove policies which have negative impacts or create hardship in peoples lives.

We have a strong commitment to social policy research and campaigns throughout our work, this allows us to act as a catalyst for change in public policy and services, enabling local people to have a say about local issues and services which affect their lives, one such example was our campaign to local MPs to uprate benefits in line with inflation, we campaigned on this issue and the campaign was successful.

We see Research & Campaigns as a preventative means of supporting clients by raising key issues facing the people of Doncaster to those who have the power to make positive changes, we do this through meeting with local and national decision makers, being a member of influential groups and organisations like the health and well being board and Doncaster Chamber of Commerce.

Our Key Research & Campaigns work over the last 12 months has focused on cost of living related issues, in particular the managed migration of claimants onto Universal Credit in which we met with MP Ed Miliband to discuss the flaws and impacts on clients, he wrote to the Neil Couling Director for change resilience at DWP in support of our campaign.

We also campaigned locally in collaboration with St Leger homes to call for the unfreezing of Local housing allowance rates, highlighting the impact this freeze has on housing affordability and sustainable tenancies. We met with the Mayor of Doncaster and Senior Councillors who supported our calls for change, the chair of the health and well being board wrote to national Government quoting our campaign and calling for action.



Research & Campaigns



Our Aims & What the future holds...

Our Aims are to continually strive to;

- Increase local and national awareness of our campaigns.
- To be involved in Regional and National campaigns challenging discrimination and inequality.
- Share best practice about research and campaigns with other local Citizens Advice.
- Actively develop local campaigns about the issues that are really relevant to our residents.
- Engage with local partners and people of influence, including our MPs, on key national campaigns.



- Joint campaigning with other like minded organisations on issues, increasing scope, voice and audience of our campaigning, this could be done ad hoc or via the Doncaster Advice Network of which we are a founding member
- Launching a Podcast to discuss campaigns, why they are important what they are looking to achieve with special guests discussing how policies impact residents of Doncaster and what could be done to change this
- Increasing and supporting staff and volunteers to be more involved in our Research and campaigns work









Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough participated in this and were happy to share the findings. We tailored our strategic plan to support these goals. The Doncaster Fairness & Well-being Commission was an independent body established to explore fresh ways to involve local people, organisations, and businesses to look at how to improve the lives of Doncaster residents in difficult financial circumstances.

The Commission:

- Gathered evidence on the experiences of people who live and work in Doncaster to better understand the challenges and opportunities they faced.
- · Made an independent strategic assessment of the nature, extent, and causes of inequalities in Doncaster.
- Made recommendations for tackling inequalities in Doncaster in the medium and long term to improve well-being across the borough.

The Commission's work was based on the recognition that inequalities in Doncaster were a major barrier to improving the well-being of all residents. The Commission was committed to working with people from all walks of life to develop solutions that would make a real difference to the lives of those who were most disadvantaged. Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough was a member of the Doncaster Fairness & Well-being Commission.

We had a deep understanding of the challenges faced by people in Doncaster, and we used our data and client voices to shape the Commission's recommendations to improve Doncaster. For example, we provided the Commission with data on the number of people we helped with debt, benefits, housing, and employment issues. This data helped the Commission understand the scale of the challenges faced by people in Doncaster and identify areas where action was needed.

Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough also shared the stories of our clients with the Commission. These stories helped the Commission understand the human impact of inequalities in Doncaster and develop recommendations that would make a real difference to the lives of those who were most disadvantaged.

We used the recommendations from the Commission to inform our strategic planning process and develop new services and programs to meet the emerging needs of the community. We also used the recommendations to advocate for change at a local and national level and reviewed our progress against these recommendations moving forward.

Theme 1

Creating a Fair and Empowering future

Theme 2

Help to Navigate Life's Tipping Points

Theme 3

Tackling In-Work **Poverty**

Theme 4

Ensuring Equitable Access for All

CHALLENGES

- Elevated rates of child poverty persist in Doncaster
- The prevalence of fixedterm exclusions and suspensions in schools remains high
- on support and advice services in Doncaster
- · There is a high demand
- · Short-term funding for services and voluntary organisations provides challenges
- · Residents struggle to balance long hours and low pay with family commitments.
- Growing numbers of households face negative budgets after covering essential expenses
- · Residents often struggle to reliably access services
- Doncaster faces challenges with an increasingly poor public transport system

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Doncaster's educational settings should play a leading role within the community, encouraging civic pride and providing skills for life.
- 2. Champion inclusive education for all of Doncaster's Young People
- 3. Give Doncaster's children and young people a voice in shaping services and policy
- 4. Bridge the gap between education and employment in Doncaster.

- 1. Develop an evidence-based approach to identifying and supporting residents at vulnerable times in their lives
- 2. Build inclusive support networks and legal awareness for a resilient community
 - 3. Develop trusted. sustainable support in Doncaster communities 4. Ensure safe and healthy
 - living conditions to improve wellbeing in Doncaster

- 1. Tackle in-work poverty and improve job security for Doncaster residents
- 2. Build a socially responsible business community
- 3. Create the conditions for social mobility
- 4. Improve employment opportunities in Doncaster, ensuring everyone has a fair chance to succeed and develop
- accessible Community Support Hubs for enhanced resident health and wellbeing

2. Promote kindness and

1. Create trusted &

- compassion in service delivery
 - Support doncaster residents' transition into the digital age
 - Improve doncaster's public transport to ensure equitable access for all

ENABLERS FOR CHANGE

(Foundational principles that are intended to cut across all theme areas)

Understand intersectionality - the compounding effect of multiple inequalities

Build trust and community participation

Achieve data excellence

Support a Team Doncaster 'Campaign for National Change'



Raising Awareness



At Citizens Advice, our commitment to the people of Doncaster extends far beyond providing vital assistance and support. We recognize the importance of addressing broader societal issues that affect our communities. In our pursuit of greater equity and inclusivity, we actively promote awareness and understanding of various key topics, including Black History Month, LGBTQ+ rights, and disability issues.

We firmly believe that by shining a light on these issues, we can foster a more inclusive and equitable Doncaster. By engaging with and educating the community on these matters, we aim to eliminate discrimination, promote diversity, and create a welcoming environment where everyone can thrive.

Our dedication to raising awareness on these subjects is rooted in our unwavering commitment to achieving social justice and equal opportunities for all in Doncaster."











Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough



@CABDoncaster

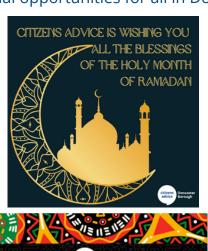


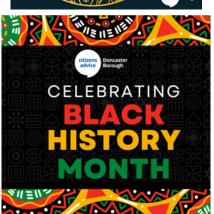
@cadoncasterboro



Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough

















Help Us Raise Awareness



Did you know that every local Citizens Advice branch is not just a place for help, but a registered charity?

Our mission to provide vital advice and support is more critical today than ever, and as we look ahead, the demand for our services continues to rise. Your contribution, no matter how modest, ensures that we'll always be here for the people of Doncaster.

Whether it's a heartfelt donation via cheque, a personal visit to any of our offices, or a quick scan of the QR code below to access our Charities Aid Foundation donation page, you're making a profound difference. Your one-time or recurring donation will be the beacon of hope for those seeking assistance.

Every little bit counts, and together, we can make a world of difference. See our social media for more details on how you can be part of this heartfelt mission.

We want to take a moment to extend our heartfelt gratitude to those who have generously donated over the last 12 months. Your support has been the bedrock of our work, allowing us to reach those in need and make a real impact in our community.







Thank

Case Study: General



The client was 68 years of age and living in a council property. The client's wife had recently passed away and the couple together were in receipt of a joint Universal Credit Claim as they were a mixed aged couple therefore losing the entitlement to Pension Credit because of this.

The client was further in receipt of their state pension and two further private pensions of a small amount. The client was concerned about what would happen with his benefits after their wife's passing and was increasingly concerned about the future in financial regards. The client explained that they would like a benefit check to be able to gauge what entitlement they had to benefits and they could then start to plan for the future and be at more peace of mind.

CLIENT'S WIFE HAD RECENTLY **PASSED WITH** NO ACCESS TO **PENSION CREDIT**

The client's wife had recently passed it was questioned if the client had funds for the funeral or if the client would like help with this, the client explained that they had already applied for help with funeral costs and was waiting to hear back regarding this matter. Bereavement Support Payment was explored ALL YOUR HELP. I but the client had no eligibility for this as they are over State Pension age, A benefit check was completed for the client and new eligibility for the client was found. As the client was going through a difficult and stressful time all information that was given to the client was either written down for the client or given a print out from our website so this information could be retained and could be considered upon the client going home.

Finally a benefit check was done for the client it was found that there was further entitlement in regards to council tax support and housing benefit. As the client was increasingly worried about how they would afford the rent at their current property the housing benefit came as a great relief to them. The client explained that with everything happening at the minute and not being confident in relation to filling forms online or applying for things a follow up appointment was made for the client to help them apply for Housing Benefit online.

The client confirmed that they would be confident in making the call to the council in regards to Council Tax Support although this was also offered to the client that we could apply for this online at the same time as the Housing Benefit.

"THANK YOU FOR WOULD NOT HAVE KNOWNIWAS ENTITLED TO HOUSING BENEFIT WITHOUT THE **APPOINTMENT** TODAY."



Case Study: Debt



The Client is a 32 year old, with 3 children aged 10, 3 and 9 months, in receipt of Universal Credit couple rate. The Client's partner had recently lost their job. The client's rent is covered by Universal Credit (UC).

Client has multiple debts including Council Tax Debt, recent Magistrates Court Fine and ongoing Fuel debt. Client also has nonpriority debts. The client wanted to apply for a Debt Relief Order (DRO). Client had a very small surplus. The Client's oldest child has been diagnosed with diabetes and received mid-rate care Disability Living Allowance (DLA), The Client did not make DWP aware of this and was not receiving the extra elements.

I entered The Client into the Breathing Space Scheme to give them some respite from the creditors. I called the Magistrates Court, as this is not a qualifying debt for the Breathing Space Scheme, and went through the income and expenditure. The court agreed to accept a repayment based on affordability until fully paid off. All other debts will be written off under the DRO. The Client has contacted the DWP and was told that the elements will be added to their UC claim, The Client's income will be £355.00 per month. This will mean that The Client can meet all their essential expenditures and still qualify for a DRO, as not to worry about looking for work and can spend more time caring for their oldest child.

CLIENT'S INCOME
INCREASED TO £355.00
PER MONTH

"THANK YOU SO MUCH, I
WAS AFRAID TO
CONTACT THE
CREDITORS & THE
COURT, NOW I FEEL LIKE
A GREAT WEIGHT HAS
BEEN LIFTED OFF MY
SHOULDERS, I FEEL I
CAN NOW BE A MUM
AGAIN INSTEAD OF
CRYING & SHOUTING
ALL THE TIME"



Case Study: Welfare Rights



The client is a 34-year-old male living alone in shared housing with a private landlord, employed 37 hours per week, with no other form of income. He has a partner, three children & has moved out of the family home due to his health conditions. Recently diagnosed with ADHD & ASD, he also suffers from Depression & Anxiety, for which he is taking medication. His workplace has made adjustments, including Dragon software, noise-cancelling headphones, & 95% remote work to minimize interaction.

The client sought assistance with completing a PIP form & was informed about potential additional benefits if awarded PIP. He was made aware of the next steps, including the likelihood of a telephone HELP. YOU'VE BEEN assessment due to COVID & the process for mandatory reconsideration & appeals if the claim is denied. The client was awarded enhanced payments for both daily living & mobility components, effective from 28/07/2023 to 09/11/2026, with a back payment of £2912.07. He will receive £172.75 per week, broken down into £5291.00 annually for the daily living component & £3692.00 annually for the mobility component.

Additional benefits resulting from the PIP award include a Council Tax Reduction of £800.00, Road Tax Exemption of £250.00, Blue Badge worth £500.00, travel concessions valued at £1460.00, Cost of Living Payments of £150.00, & New Style Employment & Support Allowance (NSESA) of £6734.00, bringing his maximized yearly income to £18,877.00.

The next steps include confirming the 10-day extension for PIP form submission & preparing for the likely telephone assessment by gathering necessary medical documentation & being ready to discuss the impact of his conditions on daily living and mobility. It is crucial to ensure the client understands & accesses all additional benefits tied to the PIP award. Monitoring the PIP decision closely is also important; if the claim is denied, he should be prepared to file for mandatory reconsideration within one month & be ready to appeal if necessary. Advising the client on budgeting, managing the back pay & increased yearly income is recommended, potentially consulting a financial advisor. Ongoing support is encouraged, ensuring the client returns for assistance with any part of the reconsideration or appeals process if needed & continues receiving support that we can give.

INCOME OF £18,877.00 **WITH A BACK** PAY OF £2912.07.

"THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR SO GENUINE AND KIND AND HELPFUL **AND IT'S SUCH A BREATH OF FRESH AIR TO MEET SOMEONE LIKE YOU** THAT GENUINELY **WANTS TO HELP** AND I WON'T **FORGET IT."**



Case Study: Energy



Client is a 60 year old, living alone in their mortgaged property, Client has been unemployed since Nov 2023 & started receiving a Universal Credit in January 2024 of £364, resulting in them falling behind with energy bills. Client has just started employment & is hoping to catch up on their bills. Client was in arrears with their dual fuel British Gas account of £1822.08. The Client was paying £70 per calendar month for both gas & electricity up until July 2023. Client states that British Gas cancelled their direct debit with no warning & they have been paying what they can monthly via their British Gas app. The last payment was made on 12/12/2023 of £225. The Client explained that their meters have not worked for months & they have had them replaced 3 times over the years. The Client would like to contact British Gas to see why their arrears are so high, also to see if they can repair the meters & send accurate readings to British Gas to be billed correctly. The Client would like support applying for the British Gas Trust Fund(BGTF).

The Client gave consent to contact British Gas on their behalf. I spoke with an advisor who confirmed that the arrears on the account were £1822.07. The Advisor explained they have had some actual readings from the client's meters taken by an engineer, the last actual meter reading for electricity was taken on 29/01/24 & was 23420 and the last gas meter reading was taken on 09/11/23 & was 00102. Their Advisor contacted the meter department about the issues with the meter & they stated that the client's meter is on the list to be upgraded, but there is no time frame for this & advised The Client to keep submitting manual readings. I told their Advisor I will be applying for the BGTF for The Client & asked for a 30 day hold to be placed on The Clients account until a decision has been made or the trust fund accepted. Their Advisor asked for The Client to set up a direct debit for their usage, otherwise their debt will just keep increasing, The Client stated that due to only receiving £364pcm they cannot afford to set up a direct debit. The Client was advised to pay contributions with any disposable income they have via the app.

It was agreed with The Client that I would be added as a contact to their British Gas account so I could speak to British Gas without the need for the client to be present in the office. I have referred The Client to our debt team for a debt assessment to be carried out, once this is done I can then apply for the BGTF on their behalf. The Client completed the Authority To Act form & emailed me their proof of income. The BGTF awarded The Client £1822.08 to clear their debts. Full energy efficiency advice & tips with potential to save £500 per year.

CLIENT IN ARREARS WITH BRITISH GAS OF UP TO £1822.08

"THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR HELP, I CAN RELAX KNOWING THAT I ONLY HAVE MY USAGE TO PAY FOR"



Case Study: Help To Claim



The Client is currently working full time but will be due to go on maternity leave in June and then is due to give birth to their second child at the end of June.

The Client contacted our service via the webchat route, consents were discussed and agreed, they had not used the Citizens Advice service before and wanted to know their possible options for claiming benefits and when was the best time for them to do so.

I explained that we could go through her circumstances and look into her possible options but she would need to decide on the timing and when she wanted to claim based on the information that we discussed.

The Client currently lives with their partner in a two bed private rented home with one dependent child, Client currently pregnant and due towards the end of June. The Client will be due to go onto maternity leave from the beginning of June where for the first six weeks their employer will pay 90% of their usual income and then this would drop to solely Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP).

Client and I went through two calculations together, one which was based on their actual circumstances during the call and the other based on their circumstances after they had their second child and was only receiving SMP. Both results were discussed and it showed that with The Clients current situation there is likely to be no entitlement but once their second child is born and they are only in receipt of SMP, it was then estimated that the household would be entitled to extra support from Universal Credit.

I attached both of the calculations to Client's case notes and shared a copy of the chat transcript to The Client's email, I then referred back to Help To Claim (HTC) for further support if The Client needed any. The Client was also given details for their local Citizens Advice if they needed any further advice locally.

CLIENT NEEDS
INFORMATION
REGARDING THE
MATERNITY
LEAVE PROCESS
AND RELEVANT
BENEFITS

"THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME WITH ALL THE INFORMATION I NEEDED FOR THIS"



Acknowledgements



We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated funders, committed stakeholders, and invaluable partners for their unwavering support over the past 12 months. Your generous contributions have empowered our charity to make a tangible impact in the lives of those in need. Your belief in our mission has enabled us to effect positive change, create opportunities, and foster hope within our communities. Together, we've transformed aspirations into realities. Your trust and collaboration are the cornerstones of our success, and we look forward to continuing this journey with you, working hand in hand to make the world a better place.





























Live Inclusive



YORKSHIRE

BUILDING SOCIETY































A Special Thank you

citizens advice Doncaster Borough

COLIN SMITH

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Colin Smith for his unwavering commitment and dedication as a trustee. Colin initially served at North East Doncaster Citizens Advice, where he excelled as both a trustee and chair. Later, he became the founding Chair of Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough.

Colin has been a fantastic champion of our service, deeply understanding the transformative impact of advice in changing lives. His leadership and commitment have played a pivotal role in placing our service in a strong position today.

Colin is a well-liked and respected member of our team, held in high regard by staff, colleagues, and stakeholders alike. His good humour and ability to engage with people, making serious points with a touch of humour, drew people to listen to the challenges and impacts our service can address.

We hold Colin's contributions in high esteem and acknowledge with profound appreciation his collective impact on North East Doncaster Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough.

Colin Smith's involvement with Citizens Advice spans from 2007 to 2023:

- 2007-2017: North East Doncaster Citizens Advice Bureau
- 2017-2023: Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough

We sincerely thank Colin for his time, energy, and passion.



Thank You



a Special Thank you



Stuart's time with us has been immensely valuable, and we want to take a moment to express our gratitude for everything he has done. His dedication, kindness, and professionalism have left a lasting impact on everyone he has worked with. Stuart has supported countless individuals, and his efforts have made a significant difference in their lives. His positive influence and the compassion he has shown are truly inspiring.

From joining us as a volunteer to becoming a paid member of the team, Stuart has supported us on numerous projects, including the Trussell Trust and our local general advice teams. However, it was as an energy adviser on the British Gas energy project that he truly found his forte. His enthusiasm and the care he showed each client have been remarkable, and the impact has been incredible.

Stuart has advised 792 clients, positively impacting their lives with his help, support, and guidance. His efforts have resulted in income gains of £632,342 for these clients! The impact on their lives, futures, health, and well-being is immeasurable, and he should be very proud of the difference he has made to their lives, the wider communities, and Doncaster as a whole.

We are proud to have Stuart as a member of our team!



Thank You

Contact Us



- Civic Office, Waterdale, Doncaster DN1 3BU
- Adwick Road Mexborough S64 0DB
- The Hope Centre Church Road DN7 5NS
- Thorne The Bridge Centre Bridgestreet, Thorne, Doncaster DN8 5QH Thursday - 10am - 2pm
- Carcroft Bullcroft Memorial Hall Chestnut Avenue DN6 8AP -Friday- 10am - 2pm
- Edlington -Helping Hands Community centre Edlington Ln, DN12 1PL Wednesday - 10am - 2pm
- Armthorpe- Community Centre Church Street DN3 3AG Tuesdays - 10am to 2pm
- Rossington The Family Hub Rossington, Grantham St, New Rossington, Doncaster DN11 0TA - Monday - 10am - 2pm
- Warmsworth Stapleton center 77 Stapleton Rd, Warmsworth, Doncaster DN4 9LJ
- Askern community Library Station Rd, Askern, Doncaster DN6 0LA
- Denaby The Old Library Church Road Denaby Main DN12 4AB
- Balby flourish Flourish Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd., Balby, Doncaster DN4 8QP
- Yorkshire Building Society 20-26 Printing Office Street Doncaster DN1 1TR
- Woodlands Woodlands Community Library and Hub, Windmill Balk Lane, Woodlands, Doncaster, DN6 7SB

For all other Community Locations see https://www.cadoncasterborough.org/get-advice/community-locations/



www.cadoncasterborough.org



01302 243057 - General enquiries / Appointments 01302 499330 - Local Debt Advice



advice@citizensadvice-doncasterborough.org deaf@citizensadvice-doncasterborough.org



https://attenduk.vc/CADB-waiting-room



https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk



