



Doncaster  
Borough

# ANNUAL REPORT

2025/2026

**We know that  
good advice  
changes lives**



# CHAIR OF TRUSTEES FOREWORD



**ANDREW WIGNALL**

**Chair of trustees  
Citizens Advice Doncaster**

2025/26 was a year of continued demand and changing client needs for Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough. We supported around 7989 clients, a similar number to the previous year, while the complexity of the issues people faced continued to increase.

On average, clients required support with multiple interconnected problems, reflecting the ongoing financial and social pressures facing many households across Doncaster. The income generated for clients totalled £11.9 Million during the year.

Our service continues to be supported by a range of funding streams. In particular, the ongoing support provided by Doncaster Council remains vital in helping us maintain our offices and continue offering generalist advice services across the borough — something many local Citizens Advice services are no longer able to provide at the same scale. Alongside this, we receive targeted funding for specialist areas of advice and support.

During the year we invested further in improving our community presence and accessibility. Significant improvements were made to our Stainforth premises, while development work at Mexborough commenced and is expected to complete during 2026. We now deliver face-to-face support from approximately 30 community locations across Doncaster, helping ensure residents can access advice closer to where they live.

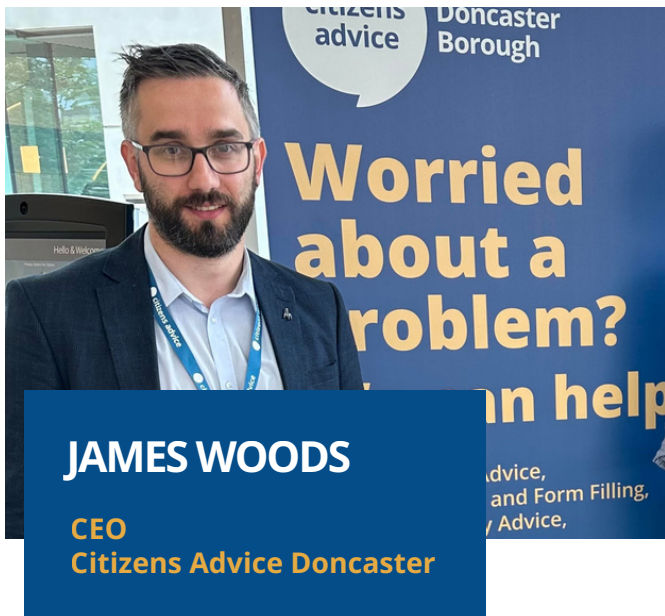
Our relationship with Citizens Advice continues to evolve through the national membership agreement, with a revised contract introduced in April 2026. This framework helps ensure that clients receive consistent, high-quality advice wherever they access the Citizens Advice service, while also allowing local flexibility to respond to community need.

The scale of demand means it now takes a significant team effort to deliver our services. My sincere thanks go to our staff, volunteers and trustees for their continued dedication, professionalism and support throughout the year.

Finally, this will be the last annual report I present as Chair. After 15 years involved with Citizens Advice nationally, in Scunthorpe and in Doncaster, I step down with great pride in what has been achieved and every confidence in the future leadership of Adrian Hunt and the organisation.

*Andrew Wignall*

# CHIEF EXECUTIVE FOREWORD



**“The best music is essentially there to provide you something to face the world with.”**

— Bruce Springsteen

At Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough, that is what we aim to do, not create music, but provide people with something solid to face the world with. Not simply to resolve a problem in a moment of crisis, but to offer clarity, knowledge, confidence and a renewed sense of control.

This year has been one of increased demand and careful reflection.

Our client numbers have remained broadly consistent with last year. However, the complexity of the issues people bring to us has deepened, and demand for advice remains higher than ever.

While volumes have stabilised, the financial gains secured for clients have increased significantly. This reflects both the severity of hardship in our communities and the skill and persistence of our advisers in navigating increasingly complex systems.

Behind every figure is someone regaining stability, better able to plan, to cope and to move forward.

This has not been a year defined by growth in scale, but by growth in understanding.

We have reassessed our service, our offer to communities, how people access us and where we must improve. We have strengthened triage and first contact processes and are launching a new digital triage and booking system to streamline access and enable staff to focus their time where it is most needed, particularly supporting those who are vulnerable or digitally excluded. We have adapted not because we must react, but because we are committed to improving.

At the same time, we have renewed our emphasis on quality. As demand rises, standards must remain uncompromised. Through strengthened supervision, case review and training, we continue to protect the integrity and trust that underpin our work.

Recruitment challenges, staff sickness and funding pressures have made this a demanding year. Yet our staff, volunteers and trustees have remained steadfast.

High-quality advice is not a “nice to have”. It is an essential part of the social and economic infrastructure of our city, preventing crisis, protecting public services and strengthening communities.

That is the role we will continue to play.

*James Woods*



# OUR PURPOSE

We exist to support a fairer Doncaster - one where everyone has the **knowledge, confidence** and **support** they need to move forward in life.

We believe that access to high-quality, independent advice is fundamental to **reducing poverty**, improving wellbeing and strengthening communities. When people understand their rights and options, they are better able to make informed decisions, challenge injustice and **regain control of their lives**.

Our mission is to provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to anyone who needs it, whoever they are and whatever the problem. We support people across a wide range of issues, including debt, welfare benefits, housing, employment, energy and digital access. By helping individuals navigate complex systems and secure their entitlements, **we work to prevent problems from escalating into crisis**.

We aspire to be more than a service provider. As a trusted anchor organisation, we are embedded within local systems - strengthening partnerships and contributing to a resilient voluntary and community sector. Alongside our one-to-one advice, we use insight from our casework to influence local and national decision-makers, helping to improve policies and systems for the wider community.

We are committed to delivering advice that is accessible, high quality and rooted in compassion and professionalism. Through collaboration with partners across health, local government and the voluntary sector, we aim not only to respond to need, but to build resilience and shape a stronger future for Doncaster.

In a changing and uncertain environment, our vision remains steady: no one in Doncaster should face crisis alone.

Doncaster is a city of opportunity and ambition but also one facing sustained structural pressures.

Population: **312,800 residents**

Households: **148,291**

**35%** of children live in poverty

Over **126,000** residents live in areas ranked within the 20% most deprived nationally

**41%** of households are in arrears with at least one bill or debt

**18%** of households experience fuel poverty

**65,000+** residents live with long-term health conditions

**10%** of residents claim Personal Independence Payment

**33,000** people provide unpaid care

**22%** of residents report high levels of anxiety

**29,000** adults are long-term unemployed or economically inactive

Demand for welfare and income maximisation support continues to rise

**17%** of South Yorkshire residents lack the digital access or skills needed to fully participate in modern life

# DONCASTER IN CONTEXT



The pressures facing Doncaster are not isolated. Financial insecurity, health inequality, housing instability and digital exclusion are deeply interconnected. As public services face constraint and systems grow more complex, demand for independent, trusted advice remains high. The challenges are structural and increasingly long-term.

Our work is shaped by evidence, informed by lived experience, and positioned where it can prevent crisis, protect public services and strengthen community resilience. High-quality advice is not peripheral support. It is essential infrastructure in a city navigating economic and social change.

# IMPACT & OUTCOMES



**7,989**

Clients supported



**856**

Debt relief order appointments



**1000**

Issues relating to digital exclusion



**2306**

Personal Independence Payment appointments



**476**

Energy Debts Handled



**£9.8 M**

Debts Handled



**945**

Charitable & food bank support issues

**citizens  
advice**

**Doncaster  
Borough**

# IMPACT & OUTCOMES



**31,005**

Separate issues  
dealt with



**30**

Volunteer  
opportunities created



**£11.9m**

Financial gains  
for clients



**84%**

Problems solved



**93%**

Of clients would  
recommend the service



**90%**

Of clients found a way  
forward



**50%**

Increase in wellbeing  
after our intervention

**citizens  
advice**

**Doncaster  
Borough**



# KEY CLIENT TRENDS 2025 - 2026

**£11,350**

Average debt per  
person we support

**71%**

Of our clients aged  
between 30-44 are in  
a negative budget

**129 %**

Increase in Debt Relief  
order enquiries





**Doncaster  
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# Quality Governance Standards

Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough is committed to delivering advice that people can trust. Our service holds the nationally recognised Advice Quality Standard (AQS), demonstrating that our advice meets robust, independently assessed standards for quality, accessibility and case management. In addition, we are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to provide debt advice and relevant credit activities. These accreditations are not simply badges of compliance — they provide assurance to clients, partners and funders that our advice is accurate, impartial and delivered by trained professionals operating within clear ethical and regulatory frameworks. In a landscape where unregulated or informal advice can sometimes lead to poor outcomes, these standards set us apart. They ensure that when someone comes to Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough, they receive advice that is safe, reliable and focused on achieving the best possible outcome for their situation.



**Advice Quality Standard (AQS)** is a nationally recognised quality mark awarded to organisations that provide legal advice in areas of social welfare law. It is independently assessed and confirms that an organisation meets rigorous standards in areas such as advice quality, staff competence, supervision, case management, and client care. Holding the AQS demonstrates that our service delivers advice that is accurate, reliable, and provided by trained advisers within a well-governed and professionally managed organisation.



**Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)** Regulation ensures that organisations providing debt advice and credit-related services operate to strict legal and ethical standards. Being authorised and regulated by the FCA means our advice is delivered by trained advisers working within a robust regulatory framework designed to protect consumers. It provides assurance that our guidance on debt and financial matters is impartial, responsible and in the best interests of the people we support.

# STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE



Earlier this year, Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough achieved the Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation, marking a significant milestone in strengthening our commitment to safeguarding client information and delivering a secure, high-quality service. This nationally recognised certification demonstrates that our systems, processes and practices have been independently tested and verified to meet rigorous standards for cyber security.

Achieving Cyber Essentials Plus required substantial organisational effort, including enhancing our technical infrastructure, reviewing internal policies, and embedding best practice across all areas of the service. This has ensured that we are well protected against the most common cyber threats, such as phishing, malware and unauthorised access to sensitive data. As a result, our clients can be confident that the personal and financial information they share with us is handled safely and securely at all times.

This accreditation sets Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough apart within the local voluntary and community sector, where such advanced certification is not yet widespread. It underlines our position as a trusted, professional service provider and reflects our proactive approach to risk management and continuous improvement. Importantly, it also strengthens our ability to work in partnership with public sector organisations, including the NHS and local authorities, where high standards of data security are essential.

In addition, Cyber Essentials Plus positions us strongly for future funding opportunities. Increasingly, commissioners and funders require robust evidence of cyber resilience as part of their due diligence processes. By meeting and exceeding these expectations, we are better placed to sustain and grow our services, ensuring we can continue to support those most in need.

Ultimately, this achievement enhances the quality and reliability of the advice we provide. By investing in secure systems and practices, we are protecting not only our organisation, but also the individuals and communities we serve. Cyber Essentials Plus is therefore not just a technical accreditation- it is a reflection of our commitment to delivering safe, trusted and resilient services now and into the future.



# INCLUSIVE SERVICE - NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

**At Citizens Advice Doncaster, inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. We design our services to ensure everyone can access the support they need, in ways that work for them.**

## **Accessible, community-based delivery**

- Advice provided in local community venues, bringing support closer to residents
- Home visits and face-to-face appointments for those who need personalised support
- Strong partnerships with GPs and health settings to reach people at the point of need

## **Flexible and responsive access**

- Multiple channels: in person, phone, digital and out-of-hours self-referral
- Dedicated professional referral routes for faster, coordinated support
- Streamlined pathways to prioritise vulnerable clients



**Doncaster  
Borough**

## **Removing barriers to access**

- BSL advice service supporting Deaf clients with specialist provision
- Translation services to support diverse communities
- Digital support to build confidence and reduce exclusion

## **Advocating for our community**

- Dedicated advocacy services, empowering people to understand their rights and navigate complex systems
- An evidence-based approach, using real client experiences to influence change

## **An inclusive organisation**

- Proud to be a Disability Confident employer
- Committed Real Living Wage employer
- Investing in a diverse, skilled workforce to reflect and support our community



## **Our commitment**

**We are here for everyone - removing barriers, improving access, and ensuring that no one in Doncaster is left without the advice and support they need**

# CONTRIBUTING TO SYSTEM CHANGE



We will continue to play a leading role across Doncaster, championing fairness, influencing change, and ensuring that the voices of our communities shape the services they rely on.

Citizens Advice Doncaster plays a key leadership role across local and national partnerships, ensuring that the real experiences of our clients shape decisions at every level. Through our involvement in strategic boards across health, wellbeing, equality, and community development, we influence the design of services, challenge inequalities, and promote fairer outcomes for all. This system-wide approach enables us to address the root causes of the issues people face, strengthen collaboration across organisations, and ensure that services are more joined-up, accessible, and responsive. By bringing the voice of our communities into these spaces, we not only improve individual outcomes but also help create lasting change that benefits the whole of Doncaster.

- Community and Leadership Executive (RDASH)
- Fairness and Wellbeing Commission (CDC)
- Armed Forces Covenant Board (CDC)
- Health and Wellbeing Board (CDC)
- Horizon Policy and Design Group - (CDC)
- Make it Real Board (CDC)
- Minorities Partnership Board (CDC)
- Mission Leadership (Cita)
- National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme (NHS)

## Our own board of trustee's:

We are proud to have maintained a fully quorate Board throughout the year, ensuring effective decision-making and continuity of service. The Board meets at least four times annually, supported by Finance and Operations sub-committees.

This year, we welcomed four new Trustees, bringing valuable experience and fresh perspectives. Strong interest in these roles reflects the community's confidence in our organisation's future.

We remain committed to ensuring our Board reflects and understands the needs of the clients we serve.

# ADVICE AT THE HEART OF HEALTH



The neighbourhood health plan represents a major shift in how health and care services are delivered, bringing together the NHS, local authorities and community organisations to provide more joined-up, preventative support closer to where people live. By focusing on early intervention and the wider causes of ill health, such as housing, employment and financial wellbeing. It aims to help people stay healthier for longer and reduce pressure on hospitals.

For Doncaster, this approach is particularly important. The borough faces significant health inequalities, with over 40% of residents living in some of the most deprived areas nationally and people in poorer communities experiencing shorter lives and worse health outcomes. These challenges are closely linked to social and economic issues such as income, debt, and access to support.

This is why Doncaster Citizens Advice plays a critical role. As a trusted VCSE partner, we help address the root causes of poor health by providing advice on issues like finances, benefits and access to prescriptions—factors that can have a direct impact on wellbeing. Evidence shows that organisations like Citizens Advice are vital in tackling health inequalities, not only by delivering practical support but by representing community voices and shaping better services..

We are proud to be part of this essential partnership, ensuring that residents—particularly those most at risk—can access the right support at the right time, improving both their health and overall quality of life

# PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS



## AOP ADVICE ON PRESCRIPTION



Advice on Prescription is a preventative project delivered by Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough, co-located within GP surgeries to address the non-medical drivers of poor health. It responds to a key challenge in Doncaster: poverty drives health inequality, which in turn increases demand on public services.

- Tackles upstream social factors that impact health outcomes
- Supports equity goals for women, children, families & older residents
- Delivers prevention at community level and reduces inequalities
- Supports access, social determinant intervention, and population health
- Strengthens partnership working, reduces clinical demand, aligns with Core20PLUS5
- Prevents escalation of need and supports keeping people well in the community

**911** Clients

**4480** Issues

**£2.5m** Financial gains

## RDASH - PROMISE 6

In 2025, Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough strengthened its partnership with RDaSH to deliver the Pathways to Financial Stability programme, supporting the Trust's commitment to poverty-proof its services. We helped patients and staff maximise income, reduce debt and manage essential costs, while tackling wider drivers of poverty such as digital exclusion and low financial confidence.

By embedding advice within healthcare settings, we reached people less likely to access support elsewhere and enabled earlier, more effective intervention. This work is essential in addressing inequality, as financial hardship is closely linked to poorer health; by improving financial stability, we help people engage better with care and build longer-term resilience

**201** Clients

**766** Issues

**£220k** Financial gains

Crisis and Resilience Fund



# WELFARE RIGHTS AND TRIBUNALS

Our Welfare Rights team helps people across Doncaster secure the financial support they are entitled to, reducing hardship and improving daily stability.

Through expert, tailored advice, residents are supported at every stage - from understanding their options and completing applications to challenging decisions and navigating appeals.

The service not only ensures people receive the right benefits, but also builds confidence and independence by helping them better understand the system.

As Christina, our Welfare Rights Lead, explains, "Welfare rights work is about more than benefits - ***it's about helping people feel supported, informed, and confident during what can be a very stressful time.***"

By providing clear, free and compassionate support, the team promotes fairness, offers reassurance during difficult periods, and strengthens overall community wellbeing by helping residents access essential support when they need it most.



- Reduces financial hardship by helping people access the benefits they're entitled to
- Promotes fairness by challenging incorrect decisions and supporting appeals
- Builds confidence by improving understanding of rights and the welfare system
- Provides reassurance through compassionate, person-centred support
- Improves access to services with clear, free, impartial advice
- Strengthens community wellbeing by helping residents maintain stability

| Clients | Issues | Financial Gains |
|---------|--------|-----------------|
| 1263    | 4200   | £5.2M           |



# OUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY



Our Advice First Aid programme is strengthening early support across Doncaster by equipping frontline staff and volunteers to recognise when someone needs help and connect them to the right services quickly. By building a network of trusted community contacts, the programme ensures residents can access early guidance on issues like money, housing, employment and wellbeing.

This early-intervention approach helps prevent problems from escalating and improves outcomes by enabling people to access support sooner. Evidence shows that early help can reduce the risk of issues worsening and improve resilience and wellbeing.

The programme also strengthens the local VCSE sector by building skills, confidence and collaboration across organisations, supporting a more joined-up response to community needs.

By extending the reach of Citizens Advice, trained Advice First Aiders act as trusted intermediaries - reducing stress, improving access to support, and tackling inequality by reaching people who may not seek help otherwise.

Overall, Advice First Aid is creating a more connected, proactive system of support—helping residents find the right help sooner and building stronger, more resilient communities.

- **Your Place North & South**
- **South Yorkshire Housing**
- **Wellbeing Teams**
- **St Leger**
- **DBTH**
- **Alzheimers Society**
- **AGAPE Life Chapel**
- **Stainforth4all**
- **Woodlands, Cantly and Edlington Library**
- **Doncaster Food Banks**



**ADVICE FIRST  
AID GROUPS**

**12**

**COMMUNITY  
CHAMPIONS**

**35**

**Doncaster  
Advice network  
members**

**75**

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND ASSUMPTIONS



We are immensely grateful to the local authorities, trusts, foundations, and national partners who continue to support our work. Their funding enables us to deliver life-changing advice services and stand alongside thousands of people in Doncaster each year who need support through difficult times. Without this vital backing, our reach and impact would simply not be possible.

However, we must also acknowledge the growing challenges we face. The funding landscape has become significantly more competitive, with many charities now bidding for fewer resources. This pressure has been further intensified by wider government funding decisions, which have impacted both the availability and continuity of support across the voluntary sector. Like many, we are operating in an environment where the demand for help is rising, but the means to meet it are stretched thinner than ever.

Despite this, we remain committed to delivering high-quality, independent advice and are actively exploring new partnerships, innovations, and sustainable funding models to ensure that no one in our community is left behind.

- Demand for our services is expected to remain high, with more people turning to charities for support and this trend set to continue.
- While inflation is easing, the overall cost of living remains significantly higher than previous years, meaning many households will continue to struggle.
- Energy costs are likely to remain volatile and above historic levels, driving ongoing need for energy advice and crisis support.
- Housing pressures, including high rents and limited supply, will increase demand for housing advice and homelessness prevention.
- Changes to mortgage rates will place additional strain on household finances, increasing demand for budgeting and debt advice.
- Welfare reforms will create greater complexity, with more people requiring support to understand entitlements and navigate changes.
- We will continue to see more working households needing support as financial pressures affect those in and out of employment.
- Cases are becoming more complex, requiring holistic, multi-issue support for clients facing overlapping challenges.
- Ongoing funding pressures across the sector may limit capacity, increasing the risk of unmet need without sustained investment

# A Special Thank You...



As we reflect on the past year, we also want to take a moment to remember our colleague Emma Burden, whose passing has been deeply felt across our organisation.

Emma was a truly special person kind, compassionate, and completely dedicated to helping others. She made a lasting difference to the lives of so many people across Doncaster through her work, always bringing warmth, care, and understanding to those who needed support.

Emma was a hugely valued member of our team and someone who brought positivity and compassion into every space she was part of. Emma cared deeply about the people she helped and about the work we do as an organisation, and that passion shone through every day.

We remain incredibly grateful for everything Emma gave to Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough, to her colleagues, and to the communities we serve.

Emma will always be remembered and greatly missed

*James Woods*



# A Special Thank You...

We'd like to express our sincere thanks to the many people and organisations who make our work possible.

To our funders, your continued investment has been vital in enabling us to support thousands across Doncaster. Your generosity helps us deliver essential advice, tackle complex issues, and build community resilience.

To our stakeholders and partners, thank you for your collaboration. From shared projects to strategic input, your support has strengthened our delivery and extended our impact.

To our community partners, GPs, housing providers, foodbanks and our VCSE community, thank you for helping us reach people where they are.

And to our volunteers, staff, and trustees, your compassion, skills and commitment change lives every day.

Together, we've made a difference and we'll keep moving forward.

Thank you for being part of the journey.

