

A photograph of an elderly woman with short, curly hair, looking out of a window. Her hand is resting on the window frame. The image has a blue tint.

Annual report 2021-22

**citizens
advice**

New Forest

**Supporting people
across the New Forest
through the
Cost of Living Crisis**

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Introduction from the Chief Officer

I write at a time of great uncertainty and the background conversations of the Citizens Advice New Forest team sound increasingly worried, as they grapple with the wide range of enquiries and questions posed by local residents from across the Forest, who are struggling with the Cost of Living crisis. I wonder if the usual tools in our tool box of help and support will really be enough to provide meaningful help to people who are really struggling to make ends meet. Our service is more needed than ever before and I thank the brilliant team here at CANF who use their skills, expertise and training to help others. And help they do.

Between 1st April 2021 to the 31st March 2022 Citizens Advice New Forest helped **6,539 local people with over 17,961 issues**. This is up 19% on the

previous year. For the first time ever we had 100 calls come through on our New Forest Adviceline in one day, and the number of people needing help and support just continues to rise.

Coming out of Covid straight into a Cost of Living Crisis has been a challenge but it never ceases to impress me the difference our team can make, the patience they have to listen and really understand people's problems and the tenacity they show in helping a client through a difficult situation.

I must thank everyone in our New Forest team for going the extra mile for our clients across the New Forest. In 2021 we opened up our offices as soon as we possibly could only to have to close them all again in January 2022. We have expanded our outreach

work, opened up new offices, got some brilliant outcomes for clients and organised a Royal Visit!

This year has continued to stretch us but we are resilient, forward looking and determined to continue to develop our free, confidential and impartial advice service to be able to keep on helping people in the New Forest find a way forward with their problems.

Alison Talbot

October 2022

Chair's Report

As life returned a bit more to normal post pandemic and we were able to return to offering our multi channel advice service, life also took a turn for the worse with the cost of living crisis putting a greater emphasis on what we do. Not only has demand increased but also the complexity and variety of the problems. As always our team of paid staff and volunteers have stepped up but there is no doubt they and CANF are under considerable strain and there was a 19% increase in the number of clients helped between 2021 and 2022.

At the beginning of the year, the trustees held a strategy session where they agreed to go "Back to Basics". This has proved to be a wise decision since we have been at the front line of delivering food and fuel to New Forest residents. Indeed, CANF are the best performing CA across Hampshire when

it comes to getting energy vouchers to local residents. I personally visited one of the food larders this year and saw at first-hand what tremendous support it provides as well as the enthusiasm and commitment of the volunteers who help.

Highlights this year include the visit from HRH the Princess Royal, the CA patron, who came to open our New Milton office. The Princess Royal met our team alongwith partners from Fareshare, The Basics Bank and Mencap, all captured on the centre pages of this report. We also passed our "audit" from head office with flying colours with our assessor saying our meeting minutes were the best she had seen. A very reassuring endorsement of how we operate.

Thanks must go as ever to the New

Forest District Council for their funding and also the local councils who support us too. Huge thanks too to Alison our Chief Officer and her team of paid staff and volunteers who deliver the service day in day out and go above and beyond and always with a smile. Finally, thanks to my fellow trustees who give up their time and support and provide wise counsel.

It is going to be a very tough twelve months ahead as the cost of living in all its guises meets us head on. CANF however is here to provide information and advice and is not going away; our offices, phone lines and web chat are very much open to help.

Jeremy Ogden

Chair, October 2022

Our year at Citizens Advice New Forest

Our Impact in 2021/22

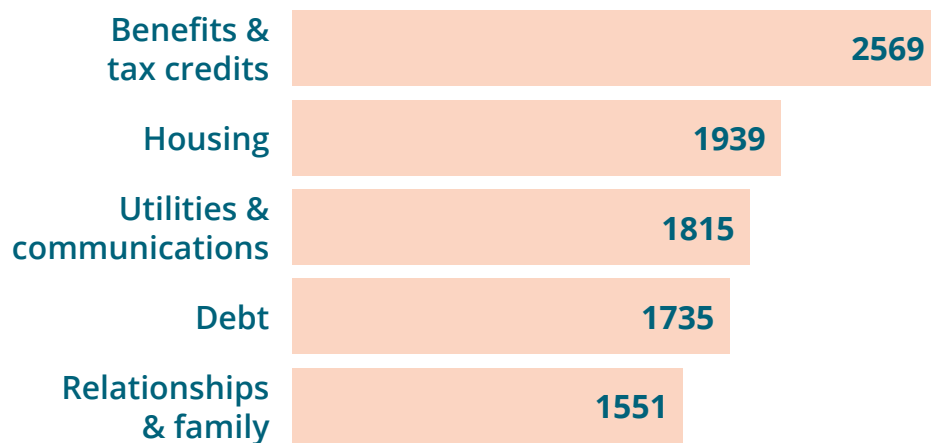


We helped **6,539** people, a 19% increase on last year.

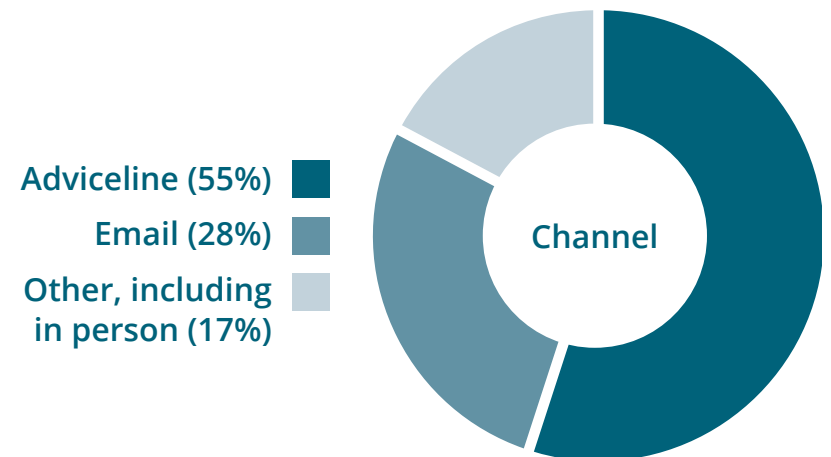


We helped clients with **17,961** issues. Clients are coming to us with an increasingly complex range of problems.

Top 5 Issues



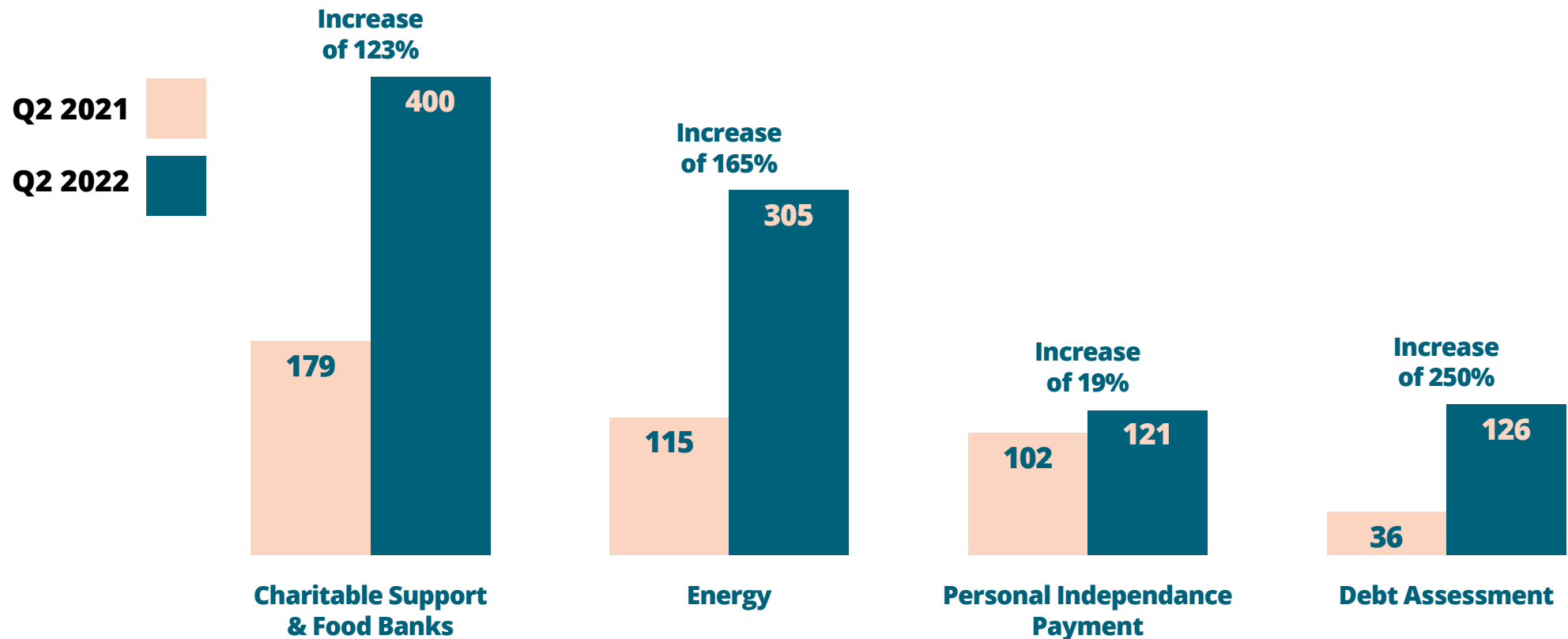
Advice by channel



Our advice to clients is delivered to high standards. We work to AQS standards and achieved green rating in 2021/22. We are a local independent charity. We achieved top audit scores for the way we run our charity and manage our finances.

Cost of living and our service

- For millions of people in the UK, the cost-of-living crisis is putting them through a nightmare they never thought they'd experience.
- Citizens Advice is experiencing unwelcome, record-breaking demand for our services as people grapple with this crisis.
- Our trained staff and volunteers are working flat out to help people.
- The bar chart below shows 4 indicators of the Cost of Living Crisis and how demand has increased in the New Forest in each area between a quarter year period in 2021 and the same period in 2022.



How we are helping people through the Cost of Living Crisis

In July 2021 we began work on an important project to find out how low income households across the New Forest were coping with the Cost of Living in one of the most expensive areas of the Country. We wanted to know what were the challenges facing these households and how we could best help.

We formed a partnership with the 4 New Forest foodbanks, Community First, New Forest District Council and Youth & Family Matters and we all contributed towards a research report commissioned by Southampton University.

The researchers carried out in depth interviews with a wide range of people, they spoke to people providing services and carried out shopping basket

surveys, transport cost analysis and surveyed the local housing rental market.

The results were published in a report which was presented to stakeholders at an event organised in Brockenhurst on the 25th November 2021. <https://newforestcab.org.uk/cost-of-living-in-the-new-forest/>

Our reasoning for commissioning this work was to raise awareness of what we could see over a year ago could be a crisis situation for low income households in the New Forest.

Since this work started, because of spiralling energy costs , the war in Ukraine , supply issues caused by Covid and Brexit the 'Cost of Living' crisis is right at the top of the political agenda.

"I am going into debt, but not on anything extravagant at all, simply on just trying to make ends meet in terms of food"

'Everything is so high: rent, travelling around, council tax, water etc. compared to other areas of the UK'

'I have to budget very carefully to make ends meet'.

“The help Citizens Advice gave me, made a huge difference, they arranged for a food bank referral and also helped with fuel costs in a very worrying ongoing situation. Their help has made things just a little easier for us, we are so very grateful for your service.”

Co-ordinating Cost of Living work

As we identified in the Cost of Living report a co-ordinated effort is required to respond effectively to the crisis. Following the publication of the New Forest report Ringwood foodbank were successful in bidding to the Trussell Trust for a 3 year funded post which CANF agreed to manage and host.

Our project worker started work in June and has been busy developing a Poverty Action Plan and helping to develop projects to help local residents through the Cost of Living Crisis.

A number of projects are ongoing these include:

- A pocket sized guide to help people access support services.
- Developing additional services at the foodbank. Such as school uniform recycling, digital support, and help for vulnerable groups.
- A co-ordinated Cost of Living information campaign to help people know where to go for advice and support.



Our Cost of Living projects

The New Forest Food larders

Alongside Fareshare Southern Central and the New Forest foodbanks we support 10 foodlarder projects across the New Forest each week which help over 1,000 households every month to reduce their food shopping bills.

With funding support from Connect 4 Communities and the Charles Burnett Fund we employ an outreach worker who attends the larders helping people to access additional support

We have organized additional services, such as school uniform recycling and the water companies, to attend the larders.

Energy Support

CANF have been at the forefront of helping New Forest residents get help and support with their energy bills. There have been a number of schemes operating and we have been successful in supporting 970 households to get £134,00 help towards their energy bills.

We have run campaigns to highlight the support available to local residents and linked up with partners to support

schemes such the Warmer Homes initiative and Hitting the Cold Spots.

Helping the Most Vulnerable Clients

Our service is there for everyone but we have been doing lots of work in 2021/22 to make sure that people who need our services the most are able to access them.

One example of this is our work with the New Forest Traveller Community. In October 2021 we started an outreach project at the Bury Brickfields site in the New Forest with an experienced adviser visiting the site each week, getting to know and build trust with the residents and helping with a wide range of issues. There have been a number of good outcomes from this work, helping residents on the site connect better with services, these have included the reinstatement of PIP payments valuing over £7,000 to a client whose inability to read the paper work had led to the payments being ceased, and help with energy costs to 14 households living on the site.

Over 50% of our clients have a disability or long term health condition and we have specific projects such our Macmillan project to support clients with health issues.

Our year at a glance

Quarter 1 – April, May, June 2021

We open the doors at our newly refurbished Totton office.

We take on our first Kickstart placements, young people claiming Universal Credit who train as Assessors.

Quarter 2 – July, August, September 2021

We go on tour with the Holiday Playscheme roadshow, linking with Fareshare to promote the foodlarder project.

We have a Volunteer Thank You event at Beaulieu and the CANF team meets Claire Moriarty the new CEO at National Citizens Advice.

Quarter 3 – October, November, December 2021

We host a Cost of Living conference for partners at Brockenhurst Village Hall.

We have a leaving do and Christmas party just before a new Lockdown.

Quarter 4 – January, February, March 2022

The new Foodlarder is opened at the Nedderman Centre.

Our new New Milton office is opened by HRH The Princess Royal.



The Royal Visit

On 30th March 2022, HRH The Princess Royal proudly opened the new Advice centre in New Milton, which we share with New Forest Mencap.



HRH unveiled a special plaque created by Bear Wood and she signed our visitor book, which she last signed in 1992 on a visit to our Ringwood office

Many of our staff and volunteers had the pleasure of meeting HRH The Princess Royal including Ken Hardy, our oldest volunteer, who celebrated his 90th birthday in the same week.



Working in partnership

Partnership continues to play an important part of our work. CANF chairs and provides the secretariat for the monthly meetings of the New Forest Partnership which after facing the challenges of the pandemic is now focussed on the Cost of Living Crisis.

We have achieved notable successes:

- Expansion of the New Forest larder programme to include a new larder on the North Milton estate.
- Joint promotion of energy help schemes to New Forest residents.
- Developing additional services to operate alongside the larders, such as school uniform recycling projects
- Improved communications around the Cost of Living

- Joint projects with new partners such as the Trussell Trust and Beam to work with vulnerable clients across the New Forest.
- Shared office space with New Forest Mencap and It's Your Choice.

“I found my experience so helpful, I was very worried about my problems, but Citizens Advice helped me all the way, and for that I was very grateful, I would recommend them to anyone who is experiencing problems, they were my breathing space. Now I’m all sorted, many thanks.”



Team outside our Totton office

Our people

Like so many charities, CANF lost many of its volunteers during the pandemic as health concerns and remote ways of working were suddenly thrust upon the organisation.

As these frustrating restrictions eased, CANF looked towards rebuilding the team. More volunteers have been recruited and new opportunities have been sought to bring in a more diverse team of people. This included recruiting five young people through the Kickstart programme and a further five through the student internship programme with Southampton University.

The focus has been on enabling the Service to meet the increasing demand and a number of volunteers have joined this year. They are now training up to become part of the invaluable team of CANF Assessors and Advisers.



Ian (Volunteer Adviser)

Ian is a long-standing volunteer and was able to continue his volunteering as an Adviser throughout the pandemic. Ian originally worked in the City for an international bank and his life experience and personable nature are an invaluable source of support to our clients. 'The team around me and the Citizens Advice resources allow me to genuinely help someone in a difficult circumstance which really is a reward in itself. You truly feel like you are giving something back to your community'.

Amelia (Kickstart Trainee)

Amelia started on the government funded Kickstart programme in June last year. After completing an initial e-learning and induction programme, she joined the Adviceline team and was able to spend several weeks shadowing experienced Assessors to put her newly acquired knowledge into practice. Amelia is now proficient in helping clients both over the telephone and face to face on reception. Within a few years, Amelia hopes to progress into a managerial or Adviser role. 'I feel like I've learnt so much and my confidence has really grown during my time here. I really enjoy it'.

Who we help

Our statistics tell us that we are helping an increasing number of clients and that clients are coming to us with a wide range of interconnected and complex issues.

As we have opened our face to face services up again this is even more apparent. Debby's story shows that how building trust and confidence with a client can lead to better outcomes.

This is Debby

Debby initially contacted us for a food parcel as she was finding it difficult to cope financially. She alluded to the fact that she had debts but was unable to deal with them at that point in time. We got her a food parcel.

Debby called again for a further food parcel and fuel support which we put in place. She was distressed and said she had a number of issues. We booked her an appointment to discuss this. At the meeting it became clear that Debby's outgoings were significantly more than her income, although she had no significant debts. It also became clear that she was not coping at her property with her health problems and it needed some adaptations or alternative accommodation needed to be found.

Debby was unable to get on top of her paperwork and did not use the Internet. We did a benefits calculation and helped

Debby apply for Housing Benefit, Council Tax reduction, and Attendance Allowance, all of which were successful and are now in place. In looking through her paperwork we also found a small employer pension which she is now accessing. We also applied to the Household Support Fund and were able to get a grant to pay for her TV licence. In addition, we rang British Gas and found that Debby was paying far more than she needed and got her credit rebated and lower monthly amounts.

We contacted and spoke with NFDC Housing about repairs needed to the property. Debby is now having the necessary adaptations made to her property under the Disabled Facilities Grant.

Debby is now coping better and there are long term solutions in place.

This is Dave

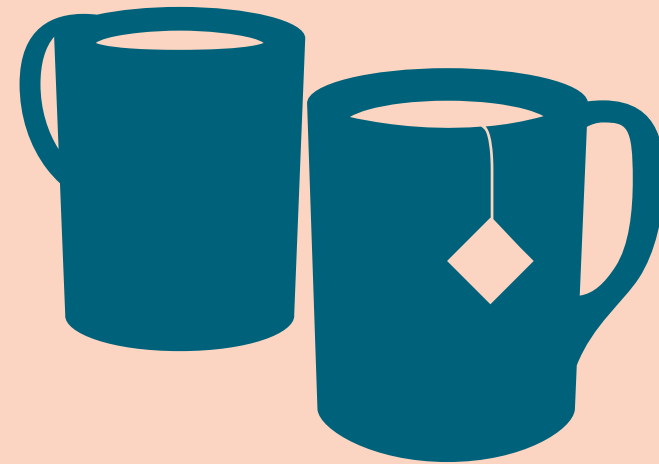
Dave has been a regular user of one of the New Forest food banks for many years. Now in his thirties he has had issues with alcohol and drugs and has not worked for a long time. He had housing issues involving violence from another lodger and he became homeless.

One of our advisers who works with clients who are regularly using the foodbanks helped him to be housed temporarily by New Forest District Council. They are now helping him to find permanent accommodation.

Our adviser made arrangements to meet on several occasions at the food bank and at the Citizens Advice office in the library. We were able to discuss how he could get back into working and looked for possible jobs he could apply for. Our Digital Champion volunteer helped him with a CV.

He was employed by one of the jobs he applied for – a full time post as a specialist roofer – he has completed his two weeks training and is now fully employed.

Dave requested one last food voucher to tide him over until he gets paid at the end of the month. Dave has relied on food banks for many years but is very hopeful that he will be able to manage now without them.



Finance

Financial Performance

CANF continues to work and plan in a challenging context, we have been successful this year in attracting one off project funding to help the organisation adapt to life after the pandemic.

Detailed information of the Charity's financial performance in 2021/22 is available in our Statutory Annual Accounts and Trustees Report.

The summary is as follows:

Incoming resources £446,980 (2021 £429,221) of which £175,690 (2021 £138,044) related to project restricted activities.

Project Income

In 2021/22 CANF delivered a number of successful projects:

Macmillan - a specific project set up between Citizens Advice Hampshire and Macmillan Cancer Support to provide advice to meet the needs of those affected by cancer.

DWP – Funding for Kickstart Placements and Help to Claim Project

MaPSDAP (Money and Pensions Service Debt Advice Project) - Project between National Citizens Advice and the Money and Pensions Service to help clients with debt advice.

Additional funding was awarded by **NFDC** to fund a debt supervisor role and a 12 week outreach programme at Bury Brickfield Traveller site in Marchwood.

UoS cost of living project - CANF administered the funding for a joint project with NFDC, New Forest foodbanks, Community First and Youth and Family Matters who all contributed to the Cost of Living research report carried out on behalf of the steering group by researchers from Southampton University.

Holiday Activity Fund – outreach at Summer Holiday festivals

Ringwood Foodbank – Debt support for foodbank clients

Connect 4 Communities - support New Forest foodlarder

Acknowledgments & Thank You

CANF thanks all funders, volunteers, staff and other supporters without whose support we could not continue. Our thanks go to:

New Forest District Council

who provide an annual grant which allows us to cover the core costs of running 5 offices across the New Forest.

Other Funders and Supporters

Arnold Clarke Community Fund, Southampton Legal Walk, The Wyndham Charitable Trust, Tesco's, local businesses supporting our Volunteer raffle.

Grants from New Milton Town Councillors for New Milton office

Cllr Alan O'Sullivan, Cllr Keith Craze, Cllr John Ward, Cllr Jill Cleary

The many Town and Parish Councils which continue to support us

Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council, Burley Parish Council, Boldre Parish Council, Bramshaw Parish Council, Bransgore Parish Council, Copythorne Parish Council, Ellingham & Harbridge, Fordingbridge Town Council, Hordle Parish Council, Hythe & Dibden Parish Council, Lymington & Pennington Town Council, Milford Parish Council, New Milton Parish Council, Ringwood Town Council, St Leonards & St Ives Parish Council, Totton & Eling Town Council, Whitsbury Parish Council, Woodgreen Parish Council.

“Citizens Advice have always helped me when I needed help with a problem. I would recommend them to my friends & family. I think they are great people to talk or get advice from.”

Our Volunteers

Below is a list of volunteers who volunteered with the CANF from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022:

Alan Wilson, Andrew Barham, Ann Cox, Ann Norris, Carolyn Bryant, Carol Hampson, Caroline Duffett, Carol Canning, Colin Smedley, Darryl Hindle, David Chapman, Dawn Locke, Deborah Griffiths, Dennis Bates, Elizabeth Ralley, Erica Mallon, Fran Turner, Gill Garney, Gillian Devonshire, Heather Graham, Ian Evans, Ian Kidger, Jeremy Allin, Jerry Weber, Jill Bansback, Jim Madge, Johanne Rogilds, John Penfield, John Purves, Kate Miles, Ken Hardy, Kevin May, Kirsten Marsh, Laura Ivey, Liz Brown, Liz Tuckey, Lynda Chapman, Maria Curle, Maria Santos, Martin Coates, Nicholas Walford, Paul Boynton, Pat Brown, Pat Freeman, Paul Longley, Paul Spargo, Peter Elstob, Peter Vening, Rayner Brammell, Roger Bird,

Rena Fowler, Roy Bunce, Sarah Salisbury, Tina Facey and Tricia Ade. Digital Champions are: Andrew Gilbert, Dafydd Thomas, Robert Devine, Lawrence Knight and Ian Chislett-Bruce and Tony Prince.

We would also like to pay tribute to one of our Digital Champion volunteers who sadly passed away this year, Neville Ord.

Thank you all so much for the immeasurably valuable work you have done for Citizens Advice New Forest. Your dedication is essential to the work that we do. We cannot do it without you. We would not want to do it without you!



Our Staff and Trustees

Our Trustees

Chair: Jeremy Ogden
Vice Chair: Kevin Loosemore
Treasurer: Geoff Newman
Jacque Aiken
Claire Brown
Glynne Miles
Janine Morris
Jessica Baldwin
Phil Jennison

Company Secretary

Frances Marsden

Our Staff

Chief Officer: Alison Talbot

Advice Services Managers:
Justine McMahon, Sandy Negrescu,
Emma Absolom, Kath Fletcher

Training & Volunteer Manager:
Sallie Southam

Macmillan Adviser: Rosie Gannaway

Finance Officer: Karen Smedley

IT Manager: Arild Stensrud

Meetings Secretary: Janine Buchner

Adviceline: Amelia Adams

Debt team: Nicky Edwards, Jess Enos,
Trudi Fanti, Megan Burns

Help to Claim: Aleks Horecka

Outreach: Sophie Stride, Iryana Korolova

Digital Champions: Kevin Message

Advisers: Marilyn Seabrooke, Carol
Hampson, Carolyn Bryant

Kickstart Trainees: Deryn Edwards, Dan
Higgins, Brooke Miller,



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.

If you need Advice please contact our New Forest Advice Line 0808 278 7860.

If you would like to support Citizens Advice New Forest please visit our webpage and click on the donate button.

newforestcab.org.uk twitter.com/cabnewforest



Citizens Advice New Forest is an operating name of New Forest Citizens Advice Bureau, a registered charity No: 1132425. Company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, No: 06983394. Registered office: Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington SO41 9ZG. Chief Officer: Alison Talbot. Email: ceo@newforest.cabnet.org.uk. Tel: 07740 901305.

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