

# Making a difference in challenging times

cyngor ar  
bopeth

citizens  
advice

Impact report  
2021-2022

# We are Citizens Advice Cymru

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

The Citizens Advice Cymru service offers free, confidential advice online, over the phone and in person.

When we say we're for everyone, we mean it. People rely on us because we're independent and totally impartial.

No one else sees so many people with so many different kinds of problems, and that gives us a

unique insight into the challenges people are facing today. With the right evidence, we can show big organisations—from companies right up to the government—how they can make things better for people.

That's why we're here: to give people the knowledge and the confidence they need to find their way forward—whatever they are, and whatever their problem.

**When we say we're for everyone, we mean it. People rely on us because we're independent and totally impartial.**

# Helping people through uncertain times

Our services have never been more needed. Through the pandemic, and a cost-of-living crisis, Citizens Advice Cymru is here to help.

As we started the 2021-2022 financial year, Wales was still in the third national lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic. People's health, education, work and social lives had been affected in ways we could never have imagined 12 months before. As we slowly worked our way through various alert levels, the year proved another extremely challenging one, for our service and for the people we help. Covid support measures largely came to an end in autumn 2021, including the weekly £20 Universal Credit uplift that had been a lifeline for people. Energy prices began soaring and quickly sparked a cost-of-living crisis with generationally high inflation and dozens of energy suppliers failing. The war in Ukraine pushed energy and food prices even higher, and created a new wave of

refugees attempting to navigate the UK system, and to make their homes in Wales through the Welsh Government's role as a super sponsor. We've experienced a huge rise in demand, particularly for energy advice, which has continued through 2022's ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

Our volunteers and staff have remained resilient, working tirelessly to provide support to people across Wales. We helped 134,000 people directly in 2021-2022 compared to 126,000 people the year before, a 6% increase. Our advice website had over **1.3 million** visits and **2 million** pageviews. This report highlights some examples of the powerful impact our work has had, and some of the stories behind the big numbers.

We helped **134,000** people directly in 2021-2022 compared to **126,000** people the year before, a **6% increase**.

## Our impact in numbers

In another year of uncertainty, we were there to help millions find a way forward.



**1.3 million**

visits to our website



**1.96 million**

people using our phone services



**40,839**

people helped by email



**7,266**

people helped face to face  
(when Covid restrictions allowed)



**10,405**

people helped via webchat



**4,876**

witnesses helped through  
the Witness Service



We increased people's income through debts written off, solving consumer problems and advising on benefits, totalling an estimated **£224 million**



We estimate we saved government and public services **£53 million**



We estimate our total social and economic value to society to be **£347 million**

For more information on how we estimate our value to society, see our [technical annex](#)

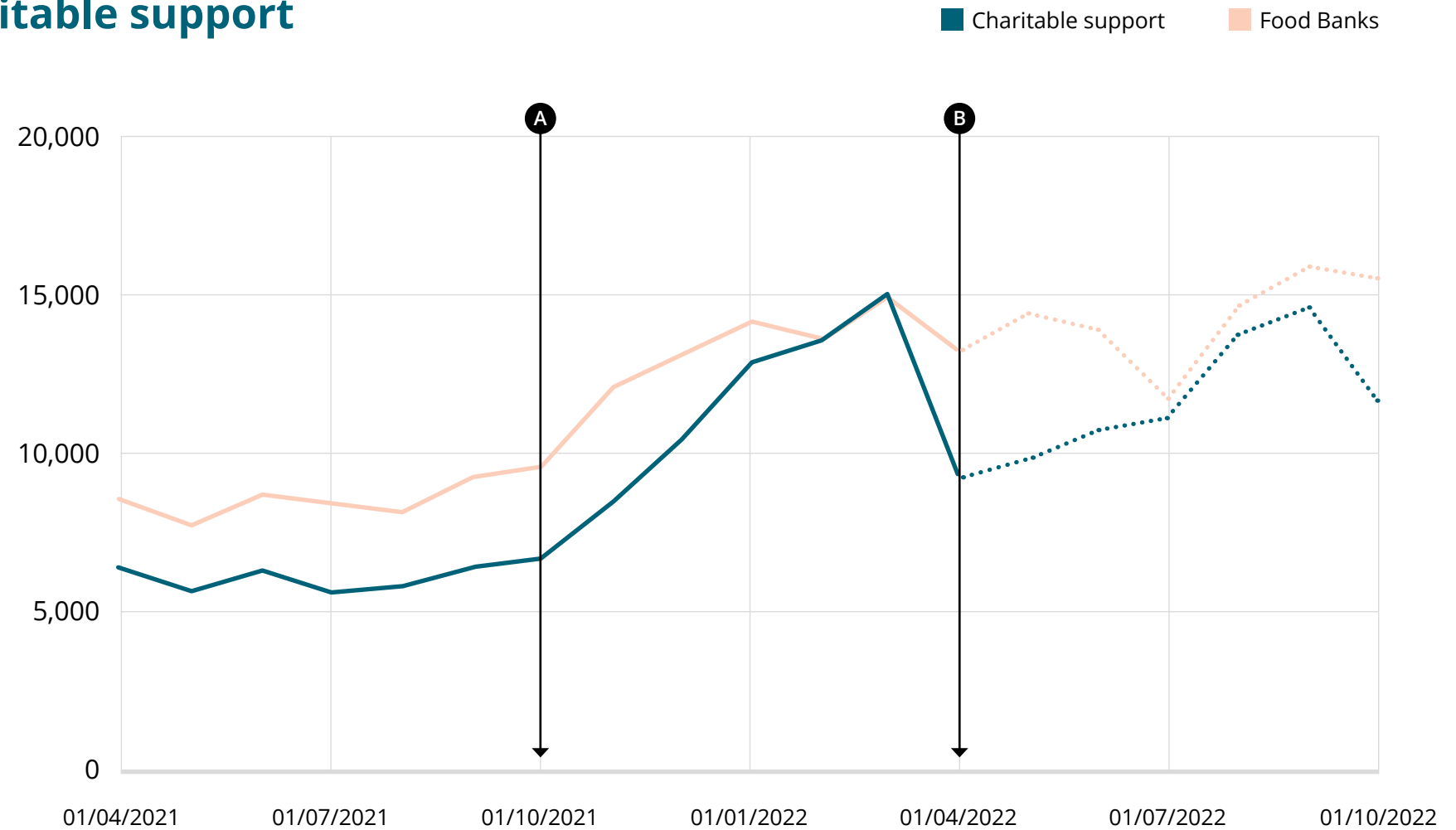


# Our response as the year unfolded: Data snapshots

## Snapshot 1: Food banks and charitable support

A 54% increase in people coming to us for crisis support, such as food bank referrals and charitable support.

Our recorded issues across all advice channels (phone, in person, webchat and email) shows a 54% increase year on year in people coming to us for charitable support, rising steeply from October 2021 when the £20 universal credit weekly uplift ended. Our figures show this number is continuing to rise going into winter 2022. There is a significant dip at point B, where the first part of the government's cost-of-living payments went out—clearly showing that these payments directly helped people in crisis, who are otherwise needing charitable support. These numbers are still climbing.



**A** End of universal credit uplift

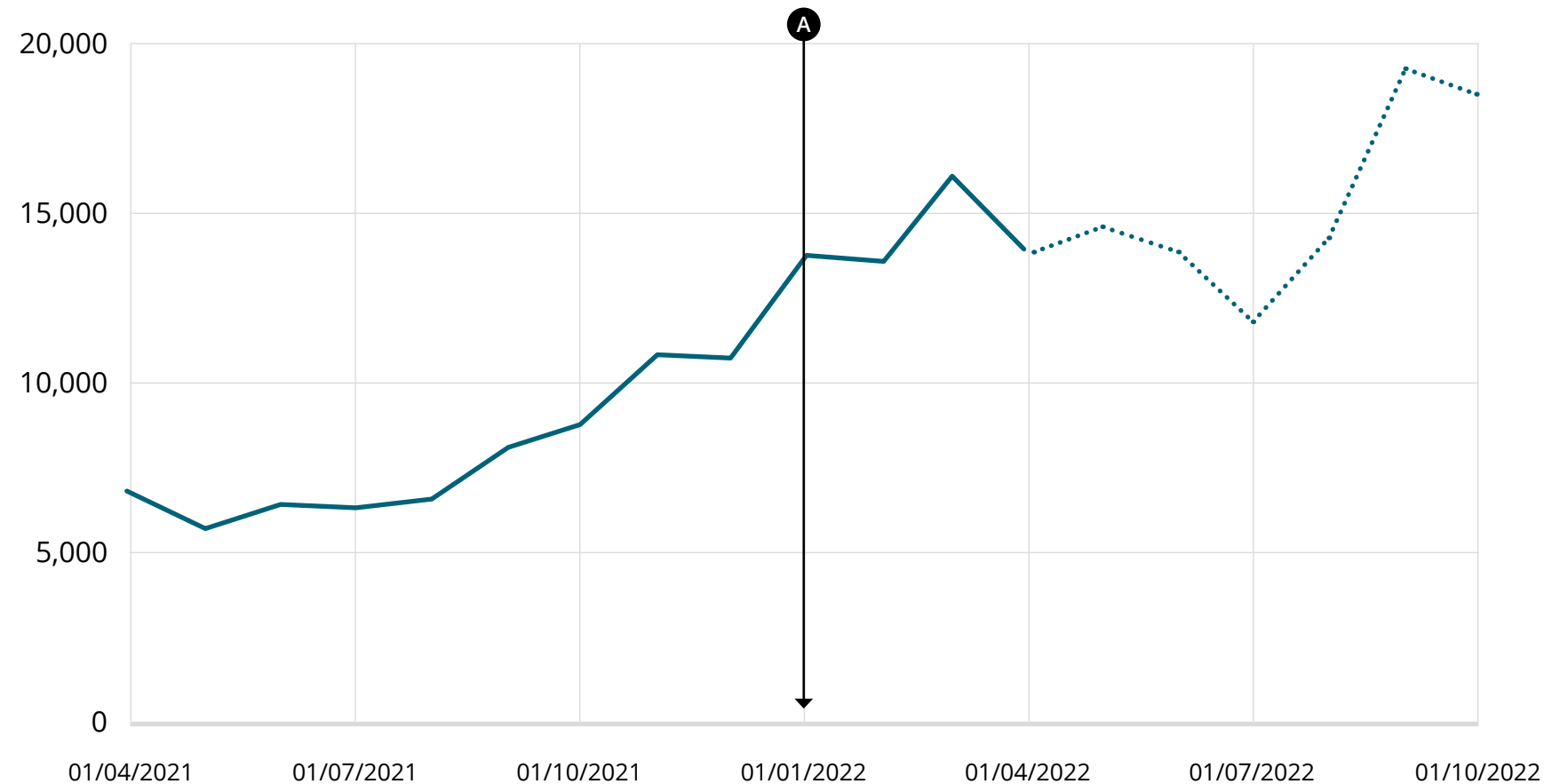
**B** Cost-of-living payment distributed

# Our response as the year unfolded: Data snapshots

## Snapshot 2: Fuel and energy advice

Demand for our services has risen throughout the energy crisis, as suppliers failed, price caps rose and support schemes were implemented.

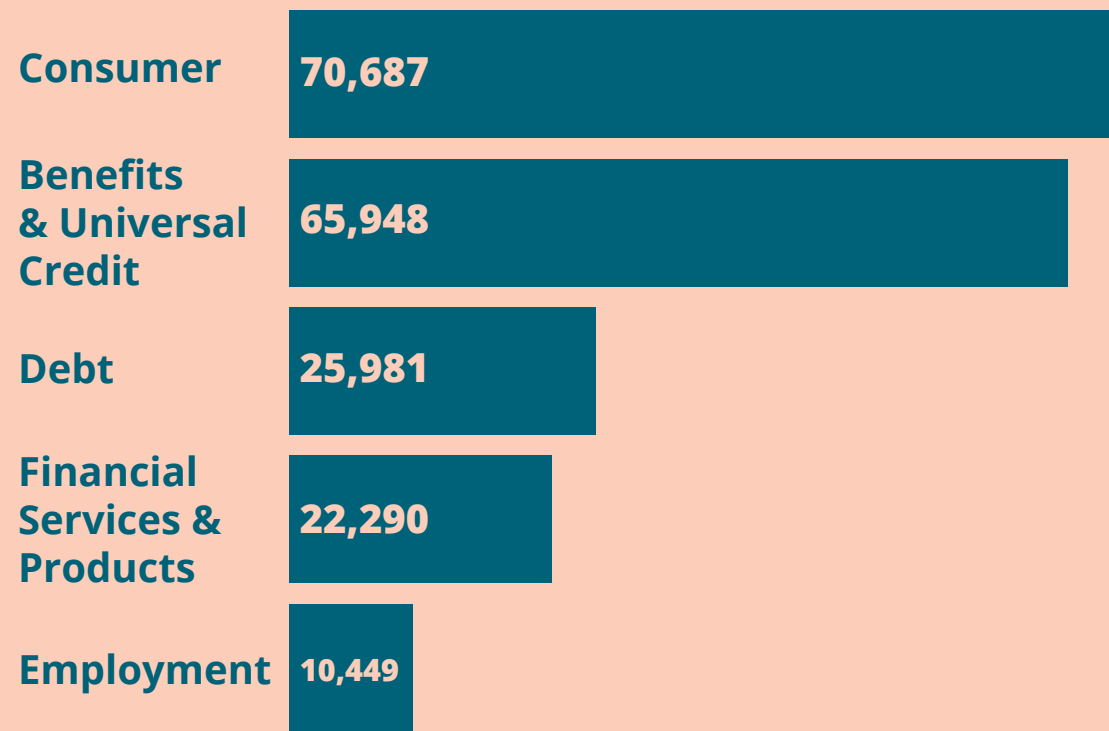
Demand for energy advice tripled across the year. People came to us in confusion as 30 energy suppliers failed in late 2021. People needed advice on how to handle their energy accounts forcibly switching provider, how to make sure they were paying the right amounts as rates changed, for efficiency advice and to make sure they were getting the support they were entitled to. We expanded our advice provision at point A, ahead of a huge spike in demand for advice in early 2022. The dotted line past April 2022 shows demand for advice has continued to grow as the crisis continues.



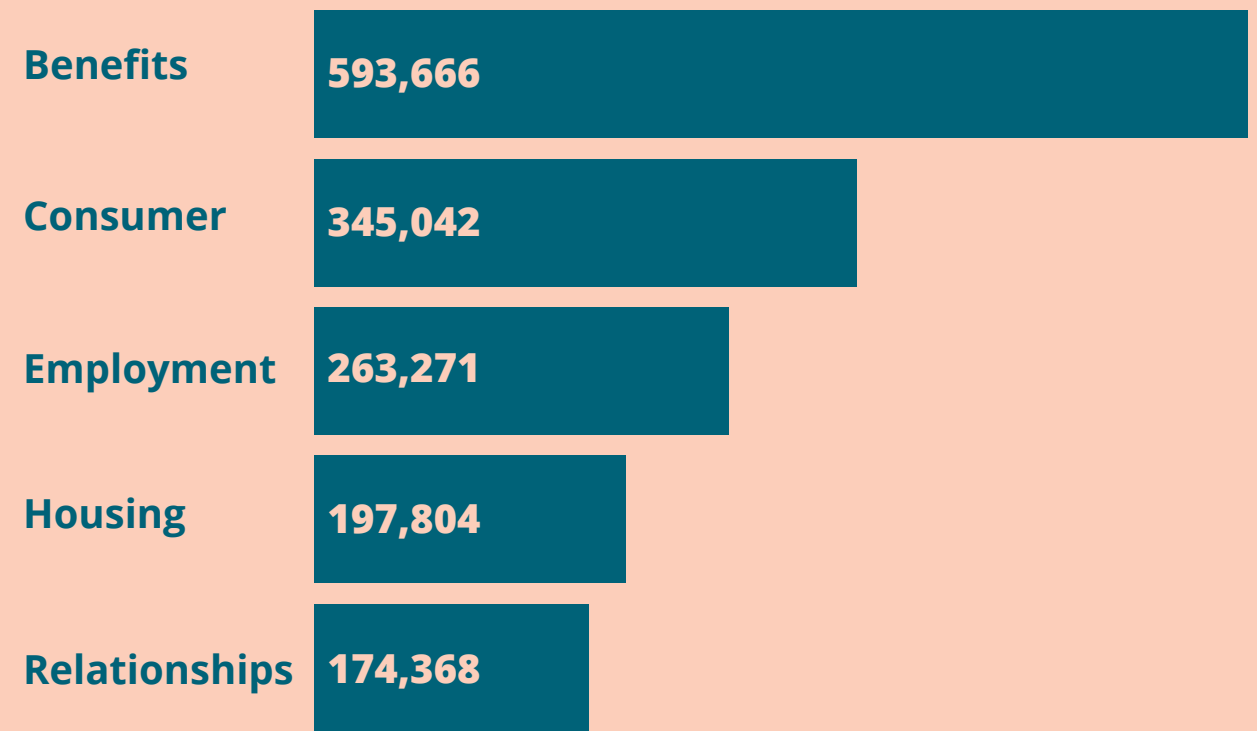
# The problems we helped people with

Every year, thousands of people come to us with a range of different problems from benefits to housing, utilities to debt. This means our data (information on the problems people come to us for help with) provides us with a unique insight into the challenges people face across Wales.

In 2021-2022, the main issues our advisers helped people with directly were:



The top areas of advice people came to our website for were:





## How our advice helped Dylan\*

Dylan is single and lives with their brothers in a property owned outright. Dylan has poor mental health, experiencing depression and anxiety, and the family's only income is 1 monthly universal credit payment. Dylan called us for help with energy costs, as they had arrears of nearly £4,000 and had been put on a prepayment meter for ongoing payment and to start contributing towards the arrears. Our adviser was able to help in several ways. Firstly, they offered Dylan a fuel voucher of £49 to ensure immediate energy supply. Secondly they gave advice on the source of carbon monoxide, symptoms of CO, smoke alarms and what to do in the event of an emergency situation. Dylan was offered a carbon monoxide safety pack and alarm, and given further advice on the warm home discount, priority services register, winter fuel support scheme and Welsh Water HelpU tariff. Our adviser also made referrals to specialist support including housing advice and the local food bank. Finally, Dylan was advised to make an application for Personal Independence Payments. Dylan's total income maximisation (actual and expected) as a result of the call was over £7,000.



\* Names and some details have been changed or omitted to preserve anonymity.

# Our commitment to the Welsh Language

At Citizens Advice we give people the information and confidence to find their way forward. As an organisation that works across England and Wales, we believe that having an **active Welsh language offer** (Cynnig Cymraeg) helps us provide a better service to the public and give support to our staff and volunteers. It means that we offer our service in Welsh without someone having to ask for it.

People come to us with a range of questions and problems—and getting that help in their first language, particularly when discussing personal issues, is extremely important.

Our 'Cynnig Cymraeg' has been in operation at Citizens Advice for 2 years. We're at the start of the journey, not the end of the process. Through our Welsh language scheme we've identified areas for progress and improvement, with short and long term goals which will challenge us to aim higher. By working across Citizens Advice with our

network of local charities and the commissioner's promotion team, our offer is appropriate, consistent and inclusive.

We're always looking for opportunities to improve people's experiences when using our services and having a specific focus on the Welsh language is really important to us. Our dedicated Welsh language officer works to make sure that our Welsh language offer is part of our organisation's DNA and that we continue to make improvements in this area.

People come to us with a range of questions and problems—and getting that help in their first language, particularly when discussing personal issues, is extremely important.

# Increasing our reach through meaningful partnerships

Advicelink Cymru is designed to help people who are most in need of advice services, particularly those who would not usually seek advice.

Advicelink Cymru offers quality assured advice on welfare benefits, debt, employment, education, housing, immigration and discrimination. The service aims to help people access the right advice, at the right time and make it easier for them to access services again if they need further help—whether that's about the same issue or something new.

The Advicelink Cymru service aims to:

- Reach out to clients proactively, often through partners, to get advice service interventions to those most in need of them before they are in crisis
- Work seamlessly so the client's journey is as simple as possible
- Provide regionally based services with national consistency
- Deliver quality assured advice with wraparound support for clients from partners. Partner support could be practical, emotional, clinical or social

## Partnership working

A key component of Advicelink Cymru is partnership working. By working with a mix of organisations we can improve the lives of the most vulnerable groups in society. We work with partners from the public, private and third sectors to ensure our experience, and that of our clients, is used proactively to inform policy and practice for the better.

In 2021-2022, we continued to establish partnerships across Wales to reach out to people who need help and advice most. We grew a range of partnerships, from broad national advice delivery partners, funding local partnerships across our different regions, and unfunded partnerships where we share information and create referral relationships.



# 9 in 10

callers were likely or very likely to recommend the Service

This year we delivered training sessions to partners and the public to raise awareness of the impact of advice. Partners included British Red Cross, Carers Wales, Disability Wales, and a range of organisations supporting racially minoritised communities, including Travelling Ahead, Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST), and Bawso. We've also continued to share our policy work, like survey results and reports on No Recourse to Public Funds, with partners to deepen the relationship and give them an opportunity to engage with and support our research and policy asks.

# Our value to society

We use an established model to calculate the financial value of our advice and the positive outcomes it contributes to individuals and society.

It's impossible to put a value on everything we do, so this is likely to be a conservative estimate. For more detail on these savings and a full explanation of our model, please see our [financial modelling](#).

**£53m** in savings to 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.

Total:

**£53 million**

**£347m** in wider economic and social benefits (public value).

Solving problems improves lives and this means better wellbeing, participation and productivity for the people we help.

Total:

**£347 million**

**£224m** in value to people we help (financial outcomes following advice).

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

Total:

**£224 million**

# Citizens Advice Cymru 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.

**[citizensadvice.org.uk](https://citizensadvice.org.uk)**



## Contact details:

For press queries email [press.office@citizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:press.office@citizensadvice.org.uk)

For partnership queries email [corporate@citizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:corporate@citizensadvice.org.uk)

© Citizens Advice December 2022

Citizens Advice is an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.  
Registered charity number 279057.