

Sheffield Citizens Advice

citizens
advice
bureau

Annual Review 2014



**Tackling poverty and
campaigning for social justice**
The impact of Sheffield Citizens Advice

Our year

Welcome to the first Sheffield Citizens Advice Annual Review.

A year ago, 12 advice organisations came together to form Sheffield Citizens Advice. Our purpose is to tackle poverty and campaign for social justice, and in our first year we have done just that.

- **We have provided independent, impartial and free advice to almost 20,000 people and their families.**
- **We have provided advocacy for 750 people with mental health problems.**
- **We have helped 906 people via our improving financial confidence service.**
- **We have helped 575 people through our legal aid service.**
- **We have used the intelligence gathered from our work to highlight some of the serious problems arising from changes to welfare benefits.**

This is a great start, and one on which we are determined to build.

The people, families and communities who rely on our services are facing even greater challenges. Over one fifth (46,000) of households in Sheffield are in poverty. The Government's welfare reforms are affecting many people. Unemployment, low pay and insecure work are far too common. Migrants and asylum seekers face complex rules and procedures. People are finding it harder to secure their employment rights.

The case for advice as a key part of Sheffield's response to poverty remains undimmed.

Our first year's success would not have been possible without the commitment and determination of our paid staff and 170 volunteers. To them we owe a huge thank you.

Our Board of Trustees, all volunteers themselves, has worked hard to lead and oversee the new organisation.

All our funders have continued to support us and to them too, we are very grateful.

We hope you will find this annual review report informative and interesting. You are welcome **to request a copy of our formal Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period 1 October 2013 to 31 March 2014**, which is also available from our website.

Please feel free to get in touch with us if you would like any more information or would like to discuss how you can support our work.

Thank you.

Ian Drayton **Andy Buck**
Chair **Chief Executive**



“

When I thought I was going to lose my benefits, the stress was so severe it affected my health. I couldn't have got through this without your help.

”

Lance Liversidge
Client

Our services

We are available to help people from 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, and round the clock via the internet.

Our advice services are provided from nine main offices and seventeen other venues. Our clients can call in, phone or, if they already know us, make an appointment to see one of our advisers. We will assess their needs, offer immediate advice and then in-depth follow up if necessary.

We provide a range of specialist services for people with mental health problems (including providing advocacy for 750 people), people with cancer, deaf people, and we are a partner in Healthwatch, offering information and advice on health and social care. We also have advisers who are fluent in over 15 languages, including British Sign Language (BSL).

33%
of clients are families with children.

38%
have a long term health condition or disability

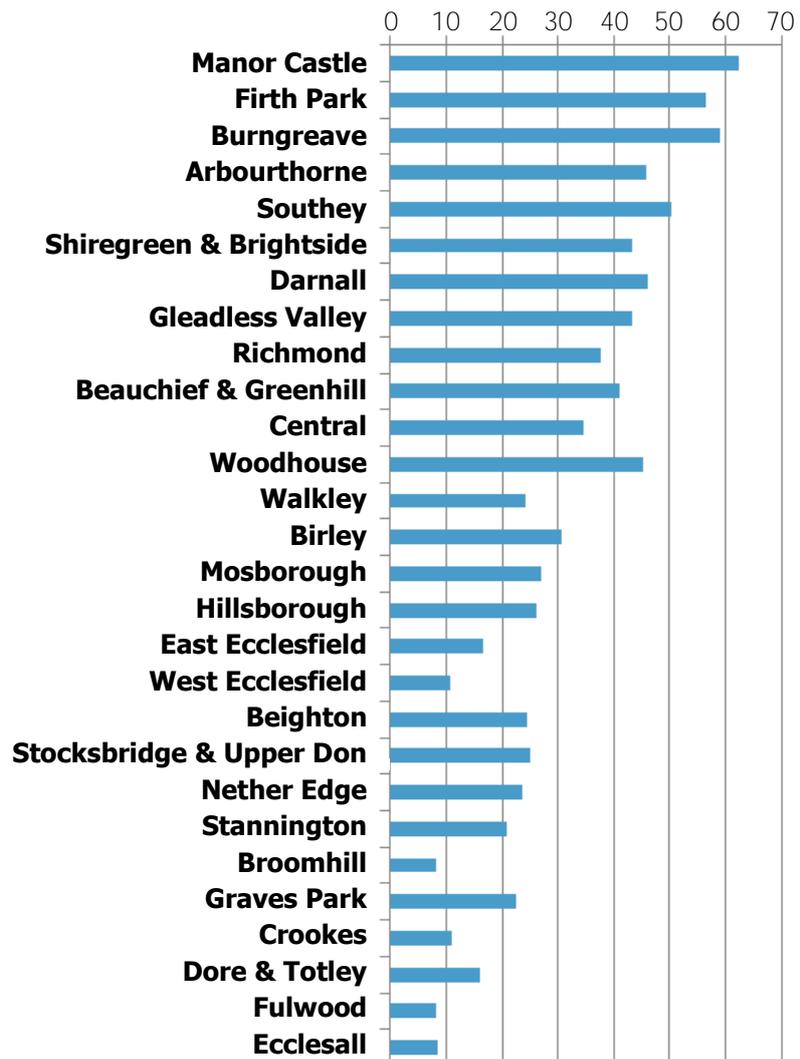
31%
are from black or ethnic minority communities

54%
of clients needed help with benefits problems

Tackling Poverty

Most of our advice clients live in the poorest parts of the city.

This graph shows the number of clients per 1,000 people living in each ward (for 1/10/13 to 30/09/14). The wards are ranked according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).





“

I feel as if I've got my life back. The support you've given me has taken the pressure off. I don't get in low moods anymore and am not so depressed. It's changed my life dramatically.

”

Clarise Mattis
Client

Our impact

We help people to overcome serious difficulties.

19,523
individual
clients

Our clients tell us how, without our support, they would have continued to face poverty, disadvantage and discrimination.

We help people secure their entitlements, maximise their income, reduce their debt and manage their money.

Helping people with welfare benefits, tax credits and other support can result in significant extra income: for example, for our clients with significant health problems this is often between £1,000 and £2,000 extra per year.

We helped over 3,900 people in debt, securing debt write off for many, often for several thousand pounds.

Improving financial confidence can do the same and we've helped 906 people to manage their income and expenditure so that they do not face unmanageable debt.

We have helped 575 people through our legal aid service, and our legal team has won some landmark cases, particularly concerning discrimination against disabled people.

64,702
separate
issues

Our volunteers' stories tell of the rewards they gain from their work. It is remarkable how many people freely give of their time to help others, very often drawing on their own **experience of being, as our volunteer John said, "on the other side of the fence"**.

We recognise that helping individuals and their families is not of itself enough. We are now in a unique position to be able to analyse and describe the impact of welfare reform and other changes on the lives of people, families and communities in Sheffield.

Dealt with
15,174
calls through
the Sheffield
Adviceline

Our report on sanctions against people receiving Job Seekers Allowance showed how failures in the sanctions system add to the difficulties people experience.

Provided
information to
23,868
unique website
visitors

The report has resulted in some changes and we are campaigning for more. Our next report will be about Personal Independence Payments.

We are playing a key role in refreshing Sheffield's strategy for tackling poverty, which presents a new opportunity to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our city.



“ Volunteering gives me a reason to get up in the morning and has given me back my self esteem. ”

John Whiting
Volunteer Receptionist

Our staff and volunteers

Our staff and volunteers are the bedrock of our service.

127
paid staff

Their knowledge, skills and commitment are what makes such a difference to so many of our clients.

Our workforce is a genuine reflection of Sheffield's community at large. We are proud of our diversity and of the knowledge and skills this brings. We have, for example, 40 people who speak one or more languages other than English, including six who are fluent in British Sign Language, and many staff and volunteers who themselves have experienced poverty and disadvantage and who bring this to bear in their work.

170
individual
volunteers

When we were established, we knew we would need to make changes to our workforce. We could not continue with the hugely varied management and staffing arrangements of each of our predecessors. We also knew that we would need to reduce our staff costs.

We will have achieved our twin objectives of a unified staff structure and reducing our staff costs by January 2015. At the same time we will have introduced a new pay, terms and conditions package for most of our staff.

Almost
100
volunteer
advisers

This has inevitably proved stressful for our staff, who have **nonetheless remained focused on meeting clients' needs** despite the changes we have had to make.

Our training programme makes sure that all our staff and volunteers are fully equipped with the knowledge and skills they need.

We have run 170 courses in the past year, with over 1,800 attendees, including over 600 from other organisations who paid to attend our training.

Our trustees

Sheffield Citizens Advice is governed by a Board of Trustees. At 30th September 2014 the Trustees were:

Andy Chaplin
Laurence Coates (Treasurer)
Bryan Coleman
Hilary Dawson
Ian Drayton (Chair)
Mark Gamsu (Vice Chair)

Chris Goddard
Alistair Griggs
Colin Havard
Sharon Hirshman
Sheryl Roberts
Trevor Smith



“

I love to be able to help other Deaf people as I know myself how hard it can be to communicate and deal with everyday issues.

”

Fiona Campbell
Volunteer Adviser

Our resources

Our finances for 2013/14

Our paid staff and our volunteers are of course our most important resource, but, like all organisations, our finances, information systems and premises are also critical to our success.

Sheffield Citizens Advice started operating on 1 October 2013 and our 2013/2014 audited accounts cover the six months from this date to 31 March 2014. Our accounts for this period show that our income was £1.601 million and our expenditure was £1.624 million. In addition, as the predecessor organisations joined Sheffield Citizens Advice, not only did they transfer staff but also all other assets including premises and financial reserves. At 31 March 2014 we had total reserves of £1.419 million, with sufficient free reserves to cover just under three months expenditure. A copy of our statement of audited accounts is available on request.

Our income comes from a wide range of statutory and charitable sources with monies paid as grants, service contracts, earned income and public and private charitable donations. We are very grateful for this continued support and acknowledge contributions from all of these sources including:

Sheffield City Council
Money Advice Service (via Citizens Advice)
NHS Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group
Big Lottery: Improving Financial Confidence and Advice Services Transition Fund
(Funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund)
Legal Aid Agency
Registered social landlords (Sheffield Council Housing, Great Places Housing Group, Sanctuary Housing, Arches Housing, Together Housing Group and South Yorkshire Housing Association)
Healthwatch Sheffield
Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust
Cloverleaf Advocacy Services
Weston Park Cancer Information and Support Centre
SJP Law
Barratt, Goff and Tomlinson; Stewarts Law; and Irwin Mitchell solicitors
CLIC Sargent

Almost 80% of expenditure during the first six months of operation was on salaries and volunteers:

Staff salaries and volunteer costs	£1,293,000
Premises	£83,000
Office & IT	£106,000
Other	£142,000

We have continued to take action to raise funds, and to control costs and expenditure. We recognised that our recurrent staff costs were greater than we could afford, and so offered voluntary redundancy to our staff. Fourteen people will leave us as a result, reducing our staff costs by about £275k. Looking ahead, we anticipate continued financial pressures, not least as a result of continued public sector austerity. We will continue to control costs, maximise investment in service delivery, and ensure that we are as productive as we can be.

We recognised that we needed to have a single **IT system** for all our staff and services. We have been steadily implementing a new system which provides all the services we need for all staff and services. This will be complete by December 2014. We own three of our **premises** and are the sole or main occupier of six other offices. We also use numerous other venues to provide services. Some of our premises are in need of significant improvement, and we will need to find ways to achieve this.



“

I nearly packed in my studies due to the pressure of financial problems. Thanks to the advice service, I'm now back on track to fulfil my aim of getting to University.

”

Abdul Kasim
Client

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Sheffield Citizens Advice is the trading name of
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Sheffield Citizens Advice and Law Centre is a member of Citizens Advice and of the Law Centres Network.

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