



# Sheffield Citizens Advice



**Annual Review 2014/15**  
**Tackling poverty and  
campaigning for social justice**

# Our year

Welcome to the Sheffield Citizens Advice Annual Review for 2014/15.

Our advice services helped 19,833 people with 62,484 issues

**This has been our first full year of operation, during which we have made considerable progress towards realising the benefits of bringing Sheffield's advice services together in one organisation.**

**We helped over 20,000 people in 2014/15.**

We have introduced new services, including providing advice at foodbanks, and the new Pension Wise service which we provide across South Yorkshire.

We have contributed to campaigns and social policy:

- > Our report about benefits sanctions led to a parliamentary debate as part of the growing campaign for the sanctions regime to be changed;
- > Our general election briefing set out some important issues for candidates and the new Government;
- > Our investigation into personal independence payment highlighted unfair rules affecting terminally ill people, for which a change to the law is being sought.

Our mental health advocacy service helped 827 people

We have also helped to refresh Sheffield's strategy for tackling poverty and are contributing to the Fair City campaign. We are joining forces with Citizens Advice in England's other major cities, to make the case for advice services and to work together on campaigns.

We have a great workforce, many of whom we have featured on the cover of this report.

We have made important changes to our paid workforce, so that we now have a single unified management and staff structure, with common pay, terms and conditions.

Our 190 volunteers are equally important, and we have embarked upon creating a new volunteering framework and strategy.

Among our greatest challenges is our premises, many of which are in need of considerable improvement. We very much hope to begin to resolve this problem soon.

We received funding from over 45 sources in 2014/15. All our funders have continued to support us, often despite the significant challenges they face. We owe them our thanks.

The need for our services is growing. Poverty haunts the lives of one fifth of Sheffield's households. Welfare cuts, unstable jobs and changes to social housing will leave more families facing serious difficulties.

We need your support and are launching "The Friends of Sheffield Citizens Advice" which we very much hope you will join.

Our work is supported by over 45 funders

**Ian Drayton**  
Chair

**Andy Buck**  
Chief Executive



**Until I came to Citizens Advice,  
nobody would listen to me.**

**But once I told the adviser my story,  
it was like a weight had been lifted  
off my shoulders.**

**This was the turning point and from  
then on everything started to improve.**

**Joan Slinn, Client**

# Our services

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We helped over 20,000 people in 2014/15.

10,011  
people  
were helped  
with welfare  
benefit and  
tax credit  
problems

**Without our help, many more people would have faced very serious hardship and destitution. The people and families we help are among the most vulnerable in Sheffield.**

Most of the people who use our services live in the poorest parts of the city.

Over 38% of the people we helped have a long term health condition or disability.

36% of our clients are from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

4,408  
people  
were helped  
with debt  
problems

**We are ensuring that our services are available to many of the neediest communities:**

- > Our new foodbanks advice service works alongside foodbank volunteers to reach people facing serious crises
- > Our mental health service continues to support people with serious and enduring mental illness
- > Our hospital based service supports people living with cancer
- > Our service for deaf people meets the needs of this very marginalised community.

2,132  
people  
were helped  
with  
housing and  
homelessness  
problems

**Citizens Advice has helped us to assess the value of our services to the city. For every £1 invested in our advice services, we generate at least:**

**£1.22 in savings to national and local government** for example less need for health services, homelessness services and out of work benefits for clients and volunteers.

**£8.02 in wider economic and social benefits** though better participation and productivity for clients and volunteers.

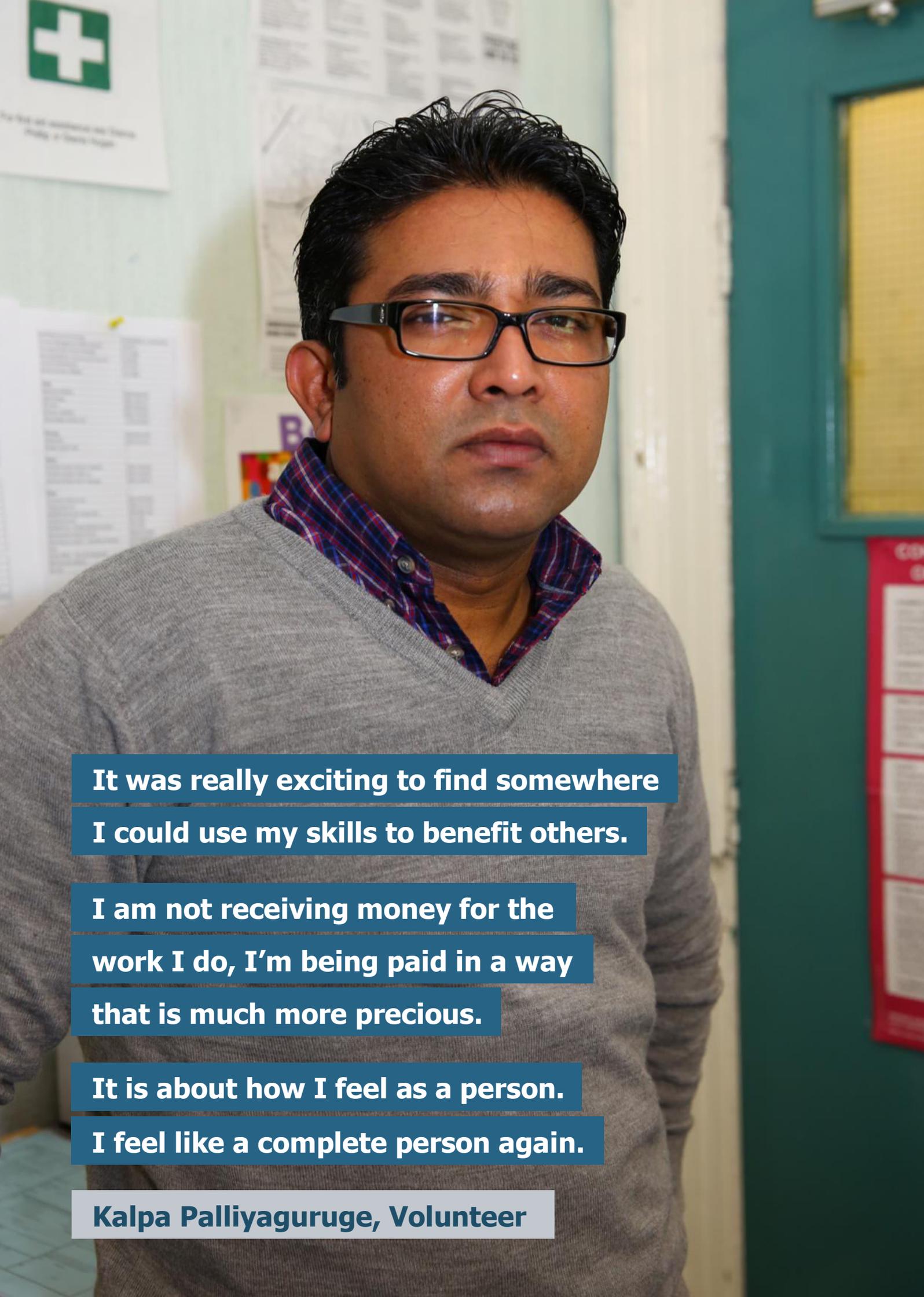
**£13.48 in benefits for individuals** for example through benefits, debts resolved and consumer problems resolved.

1,561  
people  
were helped  
with  
employment  
problems

**Most importantly, for the people we help, our services are often a lifeline.**

Four themes stand out from our survey of 1,255 clients in May 2015:

- > Our paid staff and volunteers are knowledgeable, kind, caring and patient
  - > Our help relieves many people of worry and distress
  - > Our advice guides people through really complex rules and regulations
  - > Our help means people can get their lives back on track.
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**It was really exciting to find somewhere  
I could use my skills to benefit others.**

**I am not receiving money for the  
work I do, I'm being paid in a way  
that is much more precious.**

**It is about how I feel as a person.  
I feel like a complete person again.**

**Kalpa Palliyaguruge, Volunteer**

# Our learning and development

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We want our services to be as good as possible. Finding out what we do well, and what we could do better, is very important.

## Learning from the people we help

Our client survey gave us really useful insight. Whilst the feedback we received was generally positive, it also told us about three things the people would like to see improved:

- > **Waiting:** too often, people have to wait to see an adviser
- > **Appointments:** to be able to book appointments rather than use drop-in services
- > **Premises:** people would like us to have better premises.

We have launched an improvement programme - 'The Way We Provide Advice' - to tackle these issues.

## Learning from audits

We must also make sure that the advice we give is of a high standard. Citizens Advice is introducing a new quality assurance system, which we have been testing.

For the first time, every month we have an assessment of the quality of the advice we give. The results are good, and are helping us to ensure that our services are of a high standard, always.

## We also want to make sure that we are working well as an organisation.

Earlier this year Citizens Advice audited our compliance with its standards. The outcome was very encouraging:

*This is the first audit of the organisation formed less than two years ago from 12 organisations across the city of Sheffield ... it has achieved a unified staff structure with a new pay, terms and conditions package for staff ...*

*... staff and volunteers are highly motivated and enthusiastic ... it is notable that a significant number of its work force have one or more languages other than English, including British Sign Language ...*

*... it is on a firm financial footing, costs have been reduced, and the continued engagement of funders has been assured.*

## But we still have more to do:

*... its premises are well distributed throughout Sheffield, but several are legacy properties, which necessitate significant resources being spent simply to keep them serviceable and safe ... and will be restrictive of staff and volunteer expansion.*

**... this was a very strong performance at audit by an organisation of significant size, at a still early stage of development, which promises much for the future.**

Citizens Advice



**I started off volunteering just one day a week, but bit by bit that has grown into four days.**

**But I don't mind because I love what I'm doing.**

**I really feel that I'm doing something concrete for the good of the whole.**

**Angela Edwards, Volunteer**

# Our future

We think we have made a pretty good start to realising the benefits of bringing all the main advice services in the city together into Sheffield Citizens Advice.

We cannot and will not be complacent. We know that there is much more that we need to do if we are to sustain and improve all our services, and continue to meet the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable people. Our service delivery and development plan sets out how we will achieve this.

## Our purpose and ambition:

**We will tackle poverty and campaign for social justice**

### We help people, families and communities by:

- providing advice and advocacy to help people solve the problems they face
- campaigning to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives

**We aim to be one of the best advice and advocacy services in the country, and one of the leading voluntary and community sector organisations in Sheffield.**

## Our strategy is to do 7 big things:

<b>Reshape advice services</b>	<b>Strengthen mental health advocacy services</b>	<b>Support &amp; develop our paid staff and volunteers</b>	<b>Campaign for changes to public policy</b>	<b>Transform our premises</b>	<b>Secure new funding</b>	<b>Launch the "Friends of Sheffield Citizens Advice"</b>
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## We will reshape our advice services by:

<b>Achieving the best balance between:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• on-line</li><li>• phone</li><li>• drop-in</li><li>• appointment</li><li>• casework services</li></ul>	<b>Improving the client journey:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• make access easier</li><li>• reduce waiting</li><li>• and so provide the help people need more quickly</li></ul>	<b>Improving our systems and processes so that we can be as efficient as possible</b>	<b>Clarifying our priorities, so that the people who most need help receive it quickly</b>	<b>Developing a network with other advice &amp; complementary services so that we can direct people to the best source of help</b>
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## We will strengthen our Mental Health Advocacy services

## Our strategy will be supported by:

<b>Good governance</b>	<b>Effective quality assurance</b>	<b>Better communication and engagement</b>	<b>Effective information systems</b>
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**Your service is a lifeline.**

**I do not know what I would  
do without it.**

**Client Survey, 2015**

# Our staff, volunteers and funding

Our staff and volunteers are our most important asset. They are hugely knowledgeable, skilled and committed.

130  
paid  
staff

They are also a wonderful reflection of Sheffield's community. Among them are people from many different ethnicities, who between them speak about 30 different languages. At least 10% are disabled or have long term health problems. And many have themselves faced some of the challenges about which we help people. Their overall ethos is one of helping other people and "giving something back" to the city and its people.

We have strengthened support and supervision for our staff, and have introduced new benefits for paid staff.

We sustained our excellent training programme, with courses attended by 109 paid staff and 157 volunteers.

2014/15 was our first full financial year. Our financial priority was to get our finances under control and to eliminate the deficit inherited from our predecessors. We knew this would take time, and so our plan for the year was to draw upon our reserves whilst we made the necessary changes, critically to our paid workforce.

190  
volunteers

## **Our income was £3,273,000:** **£000**

Sheffield City Council Voluntary Sector Grant	1,020
Citizens Advice - Money Advice Service Debt Advice Project	582
The Big Lottery Fund - Improving Financial Confidence, Deaf Peer Project and Advice Services Transition	450
Sheffield City Council, NHS Sheffield CCG and Cloverleaf for Mental Health Advocacy	418
Legal Aid and other legal services	116
John Paul Getty Trust	100
NHS Sheffield CCG - Mental Health Advice Service	71
Weston Park Cancer Information Centre	71
Citizens Advice - Pension Wise	60
Sheffield City Council - Lifelong Learning and Skills	42
Sheffield City Council - Building Successful Families	33
Other small funders and resources from generated funds	310

Income  
of almost  
£3.3  
million

## **Our expenditure was £3,491,000:**

Salaries and other staff and volunteer costs	2,881
Premises	152
Office and IT costs	255
Other	203

Our year end deficit was therefore £218,000, which was as planned. Our budget for 2015/16 is for income of about £3.6 million, and a balanced outturn. A full copy of our Board of Trustees report and audited accounts is available on request.

# Hate poverty and injustice? So do we.

Join us in making a difference.

Friends of  
**Sheffield Citizens Advice**



**Sheffield Citizens Advice provides free expert help and advice to over 20,000 people each year.**

Most of the people we help are living in poverty and many are very vulnerable. We play a crucial role in tackling poverty and campaigning for social justice.

## **Become a Friend - it's free to join!**

Please show your support by becoming a 'Friend'.

**To register, please email: [friends@sheffieldcitizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:friends@sheffieldcitizensadvice.org.uk)**

As a Friend you'll receive our Friends bulletin three times a year, our Annual Review report and an invite to our Annual Review meeting.

## **You can also support us by:**

- > **Volunteering:** For more info, email: [volunteering@sheffieldcitizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@sheffieldcitizensadvice.org.uk)
- > **Donating:** One off or regular donations can be made via our website.
- > **Campaigning:** from time to time we may ask you to support national and local campaigns.

## Sheffield Citizens Advice and Law Centre

Adviceline: 03444 111 444

[www.advicesheffield.org.uk](http://www.advicesheffield.org.uk)



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**Charity no:** 1153277

**Company Registration no:** 08616847

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