

### Welcome to the Citizens Advice Hertfordshire May Newsletter

In our latest newsletter, we feature our 2022/23 impact in numbers, plus:

- Meet Marcus, our new British Sign Language Adviser
- We also share details of Citizens Advice Watford's successful ongoing partnership with the Watford Community Housing Trust



Citizens Advice Hertfordshire is a consortium of the 10 local Citizens Advice charities:

<b>Broxbourne</b>	<b>Dacorum</b>
<b>East Herts</b>	<b>Hertsmere</b>
<b>North Herts</b>	<b>St. Albans and District</b>
<b>Stevenage</b>	<b>Three Rivers</b>
<b>Watford</b>	<b>Welwyn Hatfield</b>

Each local Citizens Advice is an independent charity with its own strategy and priorities, focused on the needs of its local residents.

**Citizens Advice Hertfordshire works to maximise the voice of the 10 local offices and facilitate the county-wide delivery of services where working together is better for our communities.**



"I'm excited with my role as a BSL Adviser for Herts. Based in Welwyn Hatfield, I'm proud to work with an amazing network of professionals, providing advice for clients in the community.

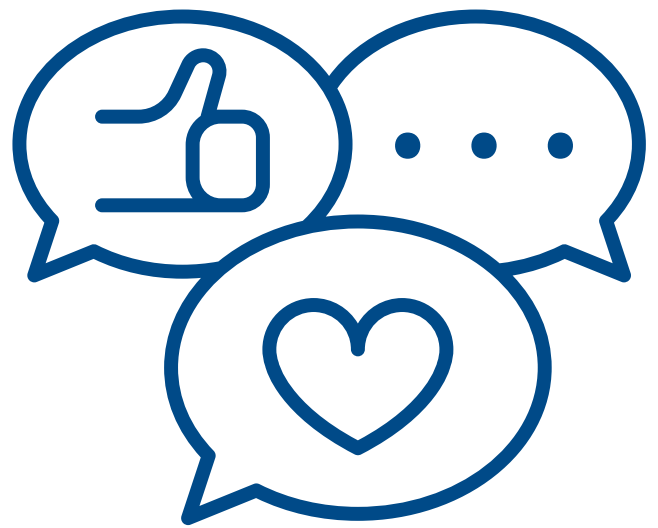
Working with Citizens Advice is a fulfilling experience and I am dedicated to improving accessibility to the diverse community, empowering everyone together."

A native BSL user, Marcus has experience in communicating including international signs. Marcus can provide advice to anyone across Herts who needs it, and can use any readily accessible platform for video calls (e.g. Zoom), text messaging including WhatsApp, emails, and face-to-face meets if required.

For a deaf person, receiving support indirectly with third parties involved (using interpreters) can be tedious with unnecessary appointment delays, miscommunication and difficulties. The BSL Adviser's role is to provide direct advice to deaf people, eliminating the barriers without delays.

This means one-to-one confidential, accessible advice from Citizens Advice with a positive impact provided by the BSL Project.

**Marcus can be contacted by emailing [bsl@whcab.org.uk](mailto:bsl@whcab.org.uk)  
or messaging 07942 348149**



## 2022/23... In Numbers

**During 2022/23 the ten Citizens Advice services across Hertfordshire have had an amazing impact:**

- **46,966 people helped**
- **£49,302,760 in financial outcomes**
- **159,189 issues advised**
- **46% of our clients had a disability or long term health condition**

### **Our top five issues:**

- **Benefits: 31,829**
- **Debt: 24,407**
- **Universal Credit: 21,640**
- **Housing: 18,820**
- **Charitable Support & Food Banks: 9,461**

**"The CAB have certainly changed my life. I feel less stressed and have a better handle of my circumstances and how to embrace them."**

**"I have had very good and positive experiences. Have referred friends and will definitely use again should I have the need. CAB has always been very accommodating and understanding with empathy. A service that is DEFINITELY needed and appreciated"**

**"I think your service is invaluable and I could not cope without it"**



**Watford**

**Focus on  
Citizens Advice Watford**

## **Citizens Advice Watford Celebrates Successful Partnership Working**

Citizens Advice Watford has recently celebrated a very successful first year of partnership working with the housing association, Watford Community Housing Trust.

In April 2022 Your Money Matters launched to give Watford Community Housing Trust residents a fast track to tailored, expert money advice.

With the pandemic bringing unprecedented financial challenges to households, followed by the huge pressure of rapidly rising household bills, Citizens Advice Watford and Watford Community Housing Trust agreed on the urgent need to give early money advice and help people avoid major financial difficulties.

The project aims to help vulnerable groups in particular; including those who have a disability, those struggling with mental health, language barriers or digital isolation, and people from ethnic minorities.

Citizens Advice Watford provides detailed, casework level of advice, supporting people with stabilising their finances, maximising income and finding a way forward with debt where needed.

Watford Community Housing Trust make direct referrals to the project and their customers are also able to self-refer.

**Across the last year, 347 Watford Community Housing Trust residents have been supported with 898 issues, bringing significant financial gain to those helped to a total value of £209,919**



**Emma Burgham, Chief Officer at  
Citizens Advice Watford, said:**

**“The cost of living crisis has  
brought unprecedented pressure  
and hardship for individual  
households.**

**I view collaborative working as  
critical to the delivery of  
impactful, targeted advice for our  
community.**

**I am very proud of the success of  
the Your Money Matters project  
and pleased it is set to continue”**

Where complex debt advice is needed, the team work closely both with the client and with third parties on their behalf.

This includes addressing urgent concerns, responding to enforcement actions, reviewing priority bills and maximising income by conducting benefit checks, including eligibility for Council Tax Reduction.

All suitable debt solutions are considered and to help people avoid future difficulties, budgeting support is provided, including advice on reducing energy bills.

The project aims to empower the individuals being supported, helping them to move forward to a point of stability and security.

A holistic approach is therefore key to the project and the team are careful to identify areas where Watford Community Housing Trust can provide further assistance for those helped, for example with digital skills, help with fuel poverty and welfare support.

On the back of this very successful first year, both Citizens Advice Watford and Watford Community Housing Trust are delighted to have agreed a two-year extension to the project.



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## **Hertfordshire Coronation Celebration Service**

Photo by Herts  
High Sherriff



**We've extended  
Adviceline opening  
hours to cover evenings  
and Saturdays -  
meaning that you can  
call us when it suits you**

Call free on 0800 144 88 48  
Monday to Wednesday 10am to 9pm  
Thursday & Friday 10am to 8pm  
Saturdays 10am to 4pm

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**We were proud to be invited to speak alongside two other community organisations at the Herts Coronation Celebration Service; an opportunity to celebrate volunteering and community.**

**Volunteering and community is the cornerstone of Citizens Advice since its inception. Charlotte Blizzard Welch, Partnership and Development Manager (pictured left), represented Citizens Advice across Hertfordshire and the incredible work of our teams and their commitment to our community.**

**We have modernised (we no longer work out of a horse box!) with new advice methods such as web chat, but what hasn't changed is our commitment, to support our community and the volunteers who help to provide this invaluable service to those who need us.**

**We are available on the phone, face to face, by email and web chat throughout the county during office hours.**

**But we know that for some people, being able to get advice in the evenings and weekends is more convenient.**

**Our Extended Hours Advisers will do their best to help you move forwards with your problem, and if more in-depth advice is needed they can arrange follow up telephone appointments.**

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## How to Contact Us



**Citizens Advice Hertfordshire  
Adviceline number is:**

**0800 144 88 48**



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find the details of your local office and  
their services.**



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[Cath.Bennett@hertscitizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:Cath.Bennett@hertscitizensadvice.org.uk)**