



## What do Citizens Advice do?

### Give advice

The Citizens Advice Service is independent and provides free, confidential and impartial advice to everybody regardless of race, sex, disability, sexuality or nationality. It is the largest advice-giving network in the UK, with over 3,000 outlets and 20,000 volunteers. We helped 2.4 million people deal with their problems 2020-2021, in local offices, by phone and email, at outreach sessions in places like GP surgeries and courts – even in people's homes.

Our clients and volunteers come from all walks of life. We are committed to providing an independent advice service, and volunteering opportunities, to the whole community.

Local Citizens Advice (LCA) offices act as a one-stop-shop for clients. Advisers provide up to date advice and information using our unique electronic information system, link clients up with other services and agencies, help write letters and complete forms, negotiate with creditors, make phone calls on clients' behalf and may represent them at tribunals.

The problems we are most often asked about concern employment, debt, housing & benefits, but we will help people who come to us with any enquiry including consumer rights and education. Advisers don't tell clients what to do, but explain their options and the possible outcomes of different courses of action. Clients are encouraged to make their own decisions and act on their own behalf. We enable clients to manage their own problems by focusing on their needs as individuals.

### The Citizens Advice Service is based on four principles. It is:

- ⌚ **Independent** – We will always act in the interests of our clients, without influence from any outside bodies
- ⌚ **Impartial** – We don't judge our clients or make assumptions about them. Our service is open to everyone, and we treat everyone equally
- ⌚ **Confidential** – We won't pass on anything a client tells us – or even the fact that they've visited us – without their permission
- ⌚ **Free** – No-one has to pay for any part of the service we provide

Putting these principles into action enables us to provide a vital service to the millions of people who turn to us for help each year

**You can help us make a real difference to people in your community**



## Citizens Advice Profile

### Campaign for changes in policies and services

Citizens Advice offices make a record of every enquiry brought to them. This adds up to a huge wealth of information about the problems people experience. We work proactively to help prevent similar problems happening to others.

#### **National campaigning**

We use evidence collected from client interviews to highlight the effects that policies have on real people in the real world, and to suggest where improvements can be made to the policies and services of national and local government as well as businesses. We aim to stop problems at their source, using the direct experience of the communities that LCAs serve.

Each LCA sends information about the problems brought to them (but not about their clients) to the national Citizens Advice organisation. Evidence is collated to help research and campaign officers identify national trends. The local office can then present evidence to policy makers by writing reports and submissions and participating in consultations to improve policies.

#### **Local/regional campaigning**

With local or regional issues, LCAs may act individually or join forces with other local offices and outside agencies, using their client evidence to lobby MPs, Assembly Members (AMs), councillors, local authorities and others, as well as presenting their findings in the media.

#### **Turning evidence into action**

The Citizens Advice Service is respected for its impartiality and independent analysis, and is listened to at all levels of government. Councillors, MPs, and Ministers all consult the Citizens Advice Service on a wide range of issues. This enables us to effectively campaign for social justice and get laws and policies changed for the better.

#### **We have recently campaigned on issues as diverse as:**

Payday Loans, Bailiffs, Letting Agents Fees, Installation of Pre-Payment Meters

#### **You can help us make life better for everyone**

**Location** 2 Bower Terrace, Tonbridge Road Maidstone, ME16 8RY

**Wheelchair Access** 2 Bower Terrace – on notice

**Opening Hours Phone Advice** Mon to Fri 10am – 4pm

2 Bower Terrace – by appointment only.

#### **Advice Services**

Generalist Advice via Adviceline 0808 250 5704

Money Advice – by appointment



Benefits Advice – by appointment

Help to Claim

**Number of clients** 8795 (2020/21 figures)

**Number of enquiries** 29586 (2020/21 figures)

**Main Enquiry areas** Debt, Benefits, Housing, Employment, Consumer, Relationships,  
Legal

**Volunteer Advisers** 24

**Trainees** 4

**Admin Volunteers** 6

**Paid Staff** 31

**Area Served** Maidstone Borough & surrounding areas