



Angus Citizens Advice Bureau (SCIO)



**ANNUAL REPORT
2022 - 2023**

Chair's report



I am delighted to have this opportunity to highlight the impact that Angus Citizens Advice Bureau have made to the people of Angus this year. This report describes an impressive range of work delivered by a team of staff and volunteers who share with us, in the report, their pride as working as part of the Angus CAB Team. Each of the 3,378 who have been helped by Angus CAB have been able to get in touch by phone, coming into one of our three offices, sending an email, or meeting our staff and volunteers in their community and stay with us until their situation has been resolved.

It was to be expected with the economic environment we are living in and through that more people than ever are struggling with day to day living in a complex range of circumstances. I am so fortunate to be part of an organisation which has risen to the challenge of helping local people, some of which have never had to contacted services for support before. We have had no uplift in our core budget through our grant agreement with Angus Council for several years. The Board of Trustees have worked hard this year to modernise the way they work to ensure the strategic development of the organisation can meet the challenges of demands on services and look forward to working with our range of current funders, as described in detail in this report, to provide the most effective and impactful support to a everyone who needs this across the towns and villages in Angus.

The Board of Trustees also look forward to continuing to work with our staff and volunteers to ensure their expertise drives forward service development using their proven innovation and skill to inform how we use the resources we have to reach the most people who need us in as an effective way as possible. I would also like to take the opportunity to record my thanks to five people who have, over the course of this year stood down from the board. Vicky Smith, who had been on the Board for almost 6 years, latterly with a rotation of being Chair, stood down from the board this year following our AGM. Cllr Beth Whiteside and Cllr Lois Speed left the Board in December, and Jan Holburn and Kimberley McMahon left the Board within the final quarter of the financial year. We offer our sincerest thanks to all of them for their time spent on the Angus CAB Board and the skills, experiences and knowledge they shared with us during the time served.

Huge thanks also goes to four people who have joined the Board of Trustees this year. James Franco, Georgina MacDonald, Cllr Kenny Braes and Cllr Martin Shepherd all bring with them a range of professional and life experiences which further enhanced the range of skills and knowledge around the board table or screen, as the Board reflects the hybrid model work of that staff and volunteers have developed.

I will end this report by personally thanking our Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) Network Services Manager, Gavin Lovesey, for the guidance and perspective he offers the board when we are working through our business and the wisdom he shares with us. Also, for the opportunities and space he gives me to develop my critical thinking whilst navigating through the role of Chairperson in this dynamic organisation.

2023-2024 will be another challenging year for people in Angus, that said, I couldn't think of a better bunch of people to face these challenges with than all the people who make up Angus CAB.

Alison Myles, Chair.

Chief Officer's report



From my office in Arbroath, which is next to the corridor linking the reception area and the interview rooms, I've noticed something very important. I see and hear clients being welcomed into the rooms by our kind and attentive advisers, and often the clients might look stressed, saying something to the adviser about how much their enquiry is troubling them. Time passes, and then I hear voices again. Its the same adviser, walking their client back to the main door. More often than not, what I hear is laughter, or 'thank you for helping me' from the client as they leave. That cannot be recorded in our database, there is no adequate way to capture these moments. But, they matter. They matter to our advisers, many of whom are volunteers, to our clients, to our Board of Trustees, to me.

It has been a challenging year for us, as it has been for the entire Third Sector. Our clients are feeling the weight of the cost of living crisis, and we are not immune to funding uncertainty ourselves, having started the year with a challenging deficit budget.

The Angus CAB team are a 'can do' group who will go the extra mile to provide advice to our clients. It is that resilience and tenacity that steered us through the year. We were delighted to welcome new volunteers and staff to the team, each one welcomed in. With all our volunteers back, we were able to continue to meet the demands on our service and provide that support to people in the Angus community when they needed it. We are so lucky to retain such a large group of volunteers and continually recruit more to join us, when nationally Third Sector organisations are struggling to recruit and retain volunteers.

Alongside their day-to-day work, the team spent their time refining a triage model as our first point of contact, to ensure we could manage enquiries based on urgency or deadlines. They also went out to roadshows, talks and events all over Angus so the community know who we are and how we can help them. Balancing their caseloads with this engagement was no mean feat, and I am grateful to them for taking this on, and for agreeing to be photographed for our Facebook page while they were at it!

It is impossible not to be encouraged by the spirit that runs within the team, no matter the challenges that face us in the future, as we consider how to sustain ourselves and deliver the services despite the funding uncertainty. It is that spirit that will see us continuing to deliver free, confidential, impartial advice to the people of Angus for years to come. My thanks go to everyone involved in Angus CAB for their phenomenal effort this year. There are not enough words to describe how determined they are, how hard they work, how much they care for their fellow members of the community we live, work and volunteer in.

Throughout the annual report, you will see quotes from the team on why they are proud to work or volunteer at Angus CAB. I am proud on behalf of the entire team - who are a very modest group and don't shout about their achievements nearly as loudly as they should. Its an honour to come to work every day with these inspiring, tenacious people who throw themselves whole-heartedly at their roles and achieve incredible results for the people they give advice to.

The year ahead promises to be just as challenging, if not more so than the year this report celebrates. The funding uncertainty looks likely to continue, the cost of living crisis shows no sign of subsiding which impacts both our clients and us as an organisation. We must continue to carve a path that balances delivering a quality-assured, free, confidential, independent advice service with ensuring our outgoings reflect the income we receive. It is a tough challenge, but one I know we are well placed to rise to successfully.

Laura Stewart

Who We Are

Angus CAB was formed in 1984, and has been providing free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to the citizens of Angus ever since! We are a charity, and we rely on income from grants and trusts to provide our services. We are a member of Citizens Advice Scotland, and we work towards achieving the following twin aims:

1. To ensure that individuals do not suffer through a lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, the services available to them, or through an inability to express their needs effectively
2. To exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services both locally and nationally.

What We Do

With offices in Arbroath, Forfar and Montrose, alongside advice by telephone and e-mail, we provide advice to the people of Angus on a wide range of subjects. At our core is a volunteer-led generalist advice service, supported by specialist projects.

We give advice that enables people to understand their rights and make sense of legislation. We support people to maximise their income and address their debt concerns. We help people who need to make a complaint about goods or services. We provide the information that allows people to make informed decisions. Our advice is free, confidential, impartial and independent.

We also provide training opportunities to enable people from our community to train as volunteer advisers, so that 'community supports community'.

Our year 2022-2023

11,346

PIECES OF ADVICE GIVEN

3,338

CLIENTS SUPPORTED

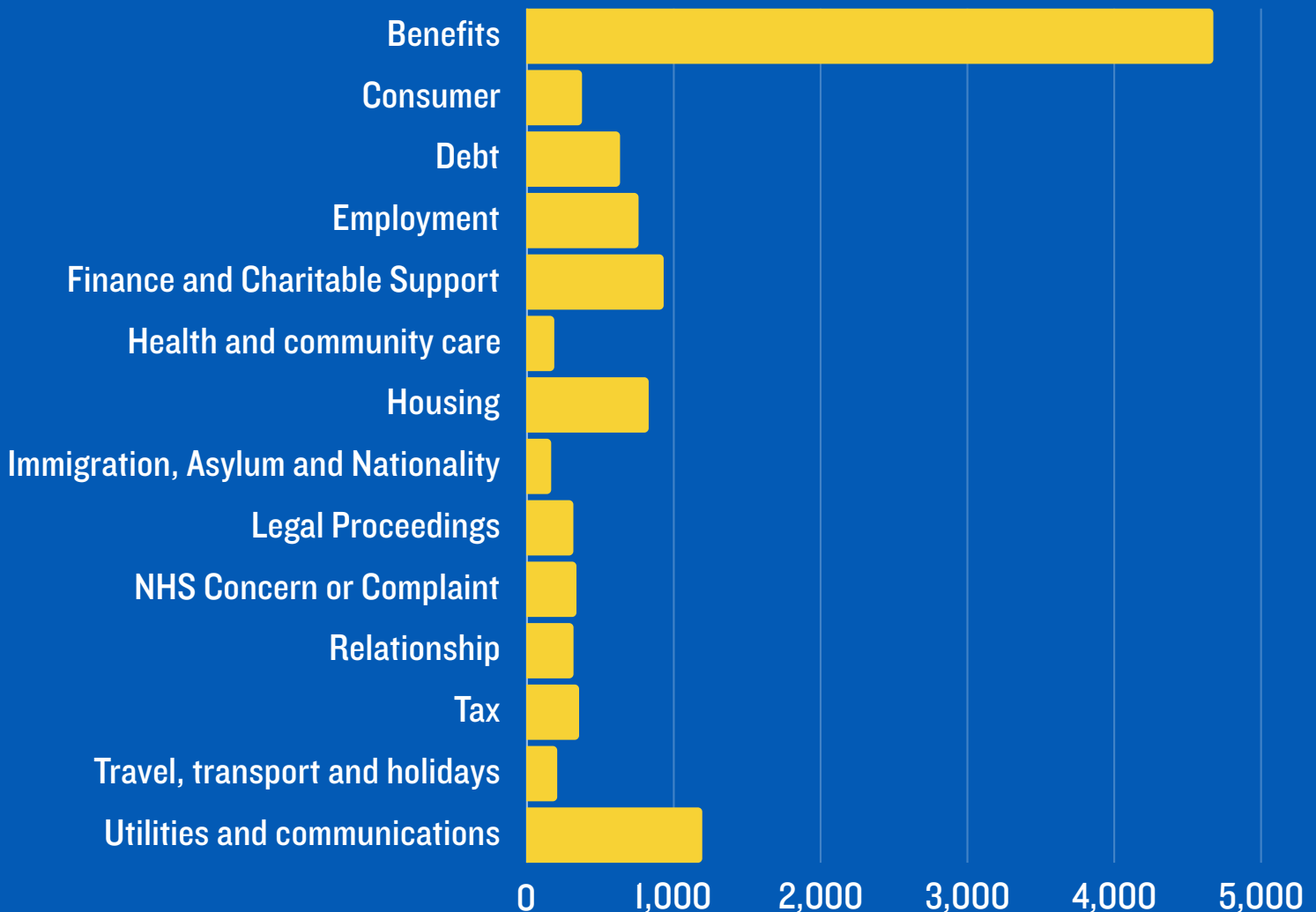
£973,000

KNOWN CLIENT FINANCIAL GAIN

8,868

VOLUNTEER HOURS

What We Helped With:

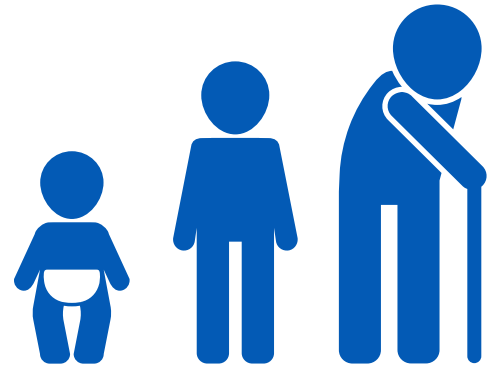


Who We Helped:

(From clients who responded)



58% said they had a health condition/disability



45-59 was the most common age range of clients



15% of clients are in some form of work

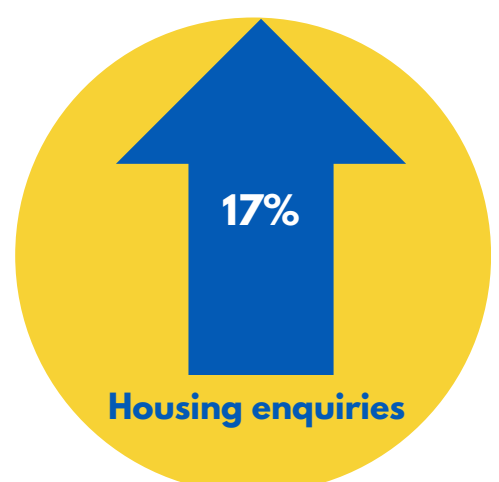


while 22% of clients are retired/unable to work

9.8% of clients are unemployed/not seeking work

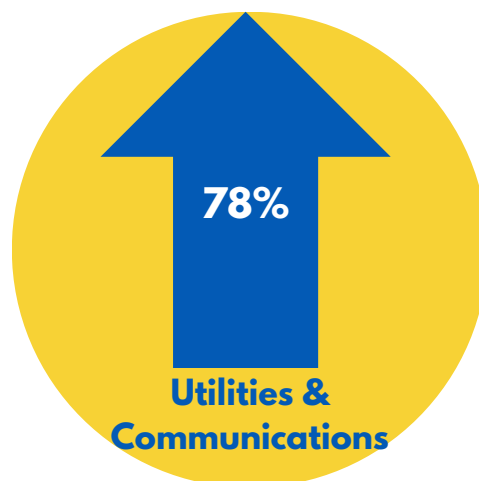
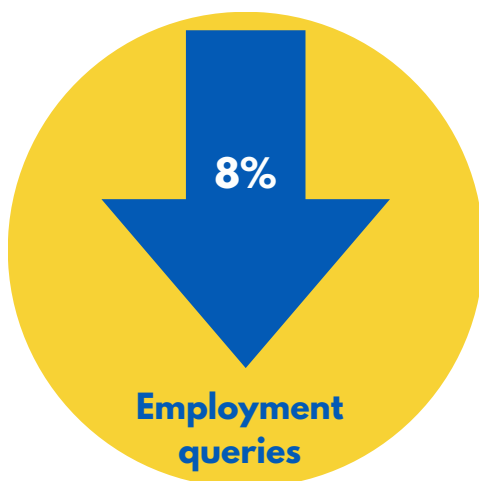
Advice Trends

We compared our data from the 21-22 financial year with this year's data, and here's what we found:



• we changed the way in which we use the debt advice code this year

• we now record some kinds of debt to the Finance advice code



We can see from comparing the data that our year was a busy one! The number of clients grew, and the number of times we were in contact with a client grew, too. This suggests people came to us with multiple and/or complex enquiries. You will see we changed how we record debt queries, which meant that the use of the Debt advice code reduced, but we now code these cases to the Finance & Charitable Support, which has increased enormously in use this year. It is of concern to us that there is an increase in Housing enquiries, many of which were around issues of properties requiring repair or incorrectly served eviction notices. Whilst it is unsurprising, given the landscape, it is of great concern to us that there was such a high increase in the use of the Utilities & Communications advice code, the majority of which sat with energy enquiries and people struggling with the cost of energy.

Our Volunteers

An average of 32 people volunteered with us every month, providing vital support to the generalist advice service. In total, over 8,800 volunteering hours were delivered. 13 new volunteers joined us in this year, too. The monetary value of our volunteer hours is £161,915!

In September we were finally able to gather together to say thank you to many of our volunteers for their hard work, and to celebrate long service awards that had been missed during the pandemic. Whether a volunteer has been with us for a few weeks or for many years, we are so grateful for the huge difference they make!



Long Service awards went to:

5 Years: Maureen, Sheena, Julie, Mal,
Mary, Liz, Wilma, Judith, Anne, Alan,
Stewart

10 Years: Brenda, Leona, David

15 Years: Elizabeth, Sylvia, Brian, Vicky

20 Years: Christine

25 Years: Gillian

35 Years: John



Our volunteers worked with 2829 clients in the year - this is 85% of our total clients!

Our volunteers levied known client financial gains of over £218,000 for clients, more than double the funding income we receive to run the Generalist Advice Service.

The Power of Volunteering

We could not do what we do without our veritable army of skilled, experienced, dedicated volunteers, who join us from across Angus and bring an enormous variety of life experiences, backgrounds and knowledge. Every single one makes our work stronger and more meaningful. We asked some of them to share with us why they volunteer with Angus CAB:

“You know how much I enjoy CAB, especially being with “the Tuesday Gang” who are a great bunch of people. I had no idea, before becoming a volunteer, that ordinary people could encounter such a wide and diverse array of situations for which they need help and advice. I enjoy helping people, especially the elderly, as they usually want nothing to do with computers, and it is so good to speak ‘face-to-face.’”

“I enjoy so much about being at CAB, most of which I didn’t expect to be the case. I hoped I would make some friends as I don’t get a lot of personal time and I’m over the moon to be able to say that I have met some incredible people in the office and consider them all friends. Everyone works hard to help other people and we celebrate our successes together, making sure to help one another when we aren’t so successful. Everyone always says that you will always feel welcome and I can 100% agree with that- it doesn’t matter who you are or where you’re from, you will always be welcome as CAB, as a volunteer, employee or a client. Every day gives us the chance to help someone else and there is no better feeling than knowing you helped someone. As a full time carer being at the CAB allows me to interact with others and take a break from caring, something I didn’t think was possible. Whilst not every situation is solvable, as an organisation we strive to do everything we can to help others. Thank you, CAB, for giving me the freedom to make friends and do something I love.”

“My experience in the office has been very positive. Everyone has been very welcoming and friendly, and I’ve found it to be a very easy place to adjust into. Gael has been very supportive of me right from the time that I e-mailed for more information volunteering. She also gave me information about different roles which I had not initially thought about but was interested in. She gave me all the login details that I needed for the training programmes as soon as I started and always asks if I need anything, or any help. I have all of her contact details so I can get in touch even if she is in another office. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working with everyone in the CAB office, so much so that I have applied for a job that has become available. My experience has been very positive, and I don’t think there are any changes that need to be made.”

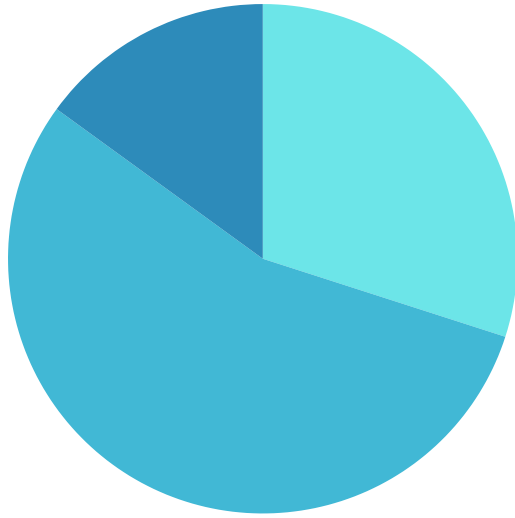
“Random thoughts from a very happy - and grateful- volunteer:
Volunteering at CAB has given me a new sense of purpose
The work of a volunteer is engaging and fascinating
I love feeling that I can make a difference
I feel well supported by Gael and my colleagues
This is an important service!”

Our Income

Total Income - £456,187

Other Income
15%

Angus Council - Core and Debt
30%



Specialist Projects
55%

Our funding from Angus Council for the Generalist Advice and Debt Services provides stability at the core of our operations. We have been able to generate over two times as much additional income as was invested by Angus Council in this financial year to offer specialist projects that bring further support to the people of Angus.

Our Project/Other Income by specialism:

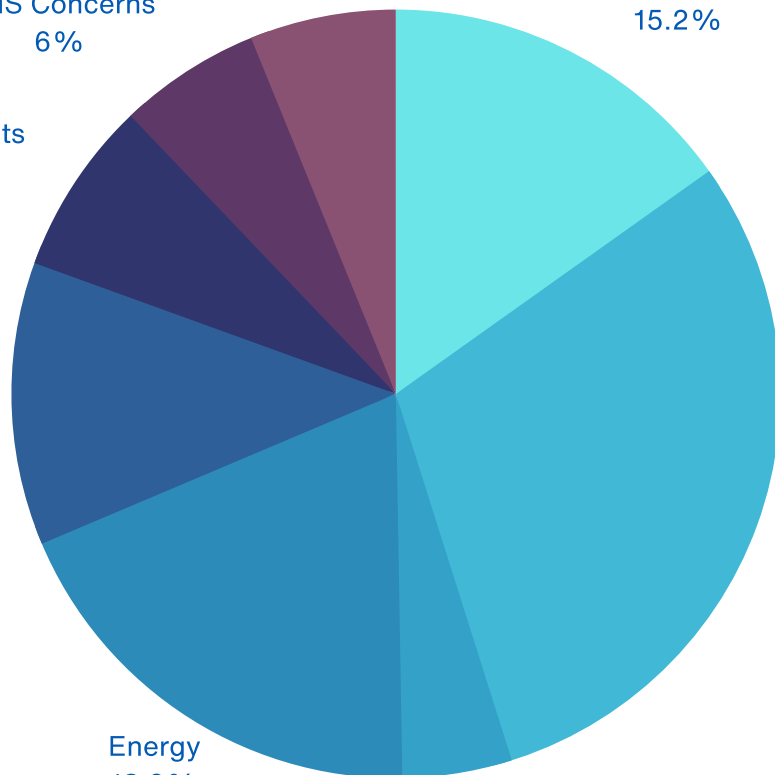
Other Income
6.1%

Debt Advice
15.2%

NHS Concerns
6%

Work Placements
7.3%

Volunteer Training & Development
11.9%

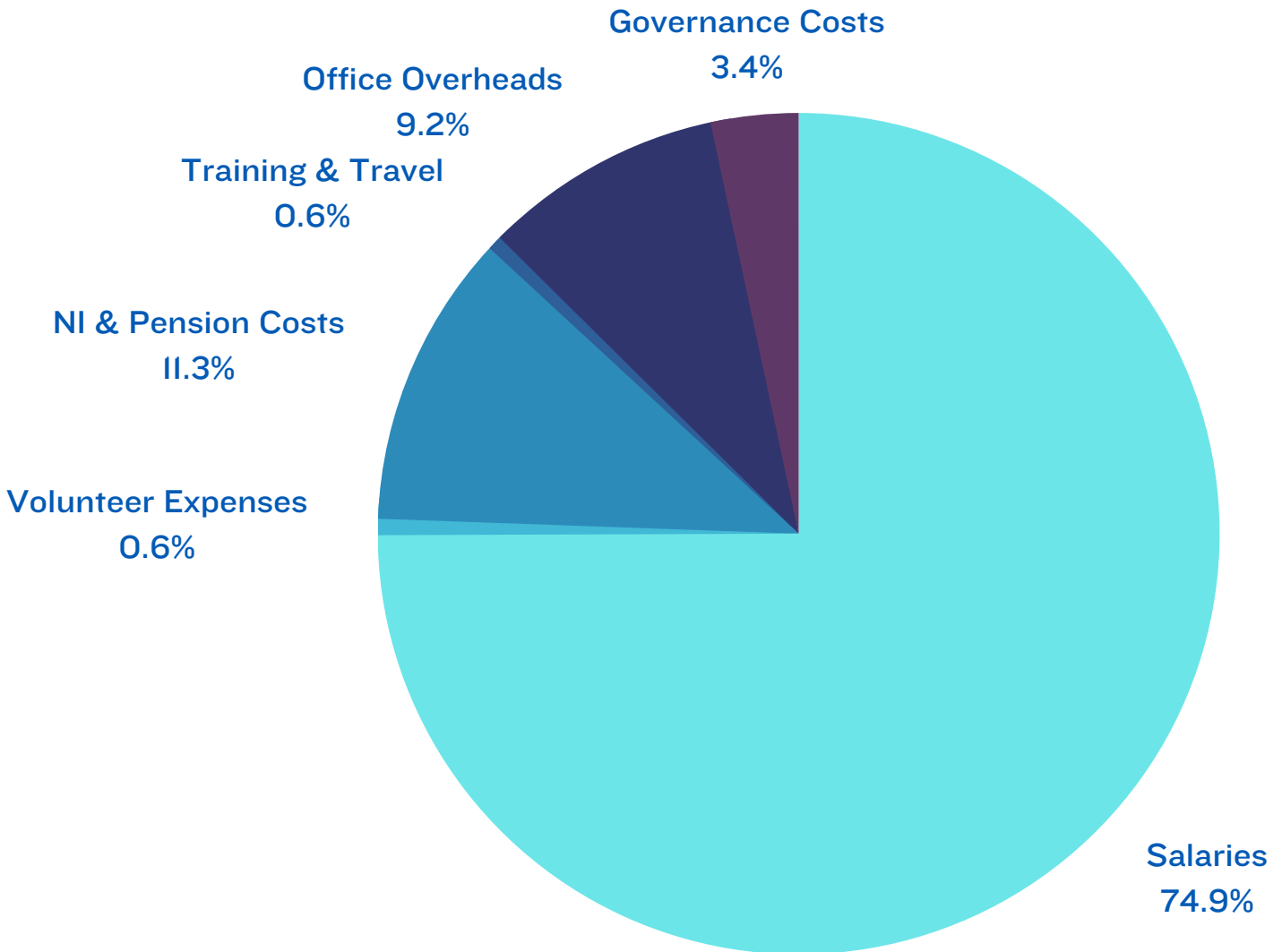


Financial Inclusion
30%

Energy
18.9%

Social Work Placements
4.6%

Our Expenditure

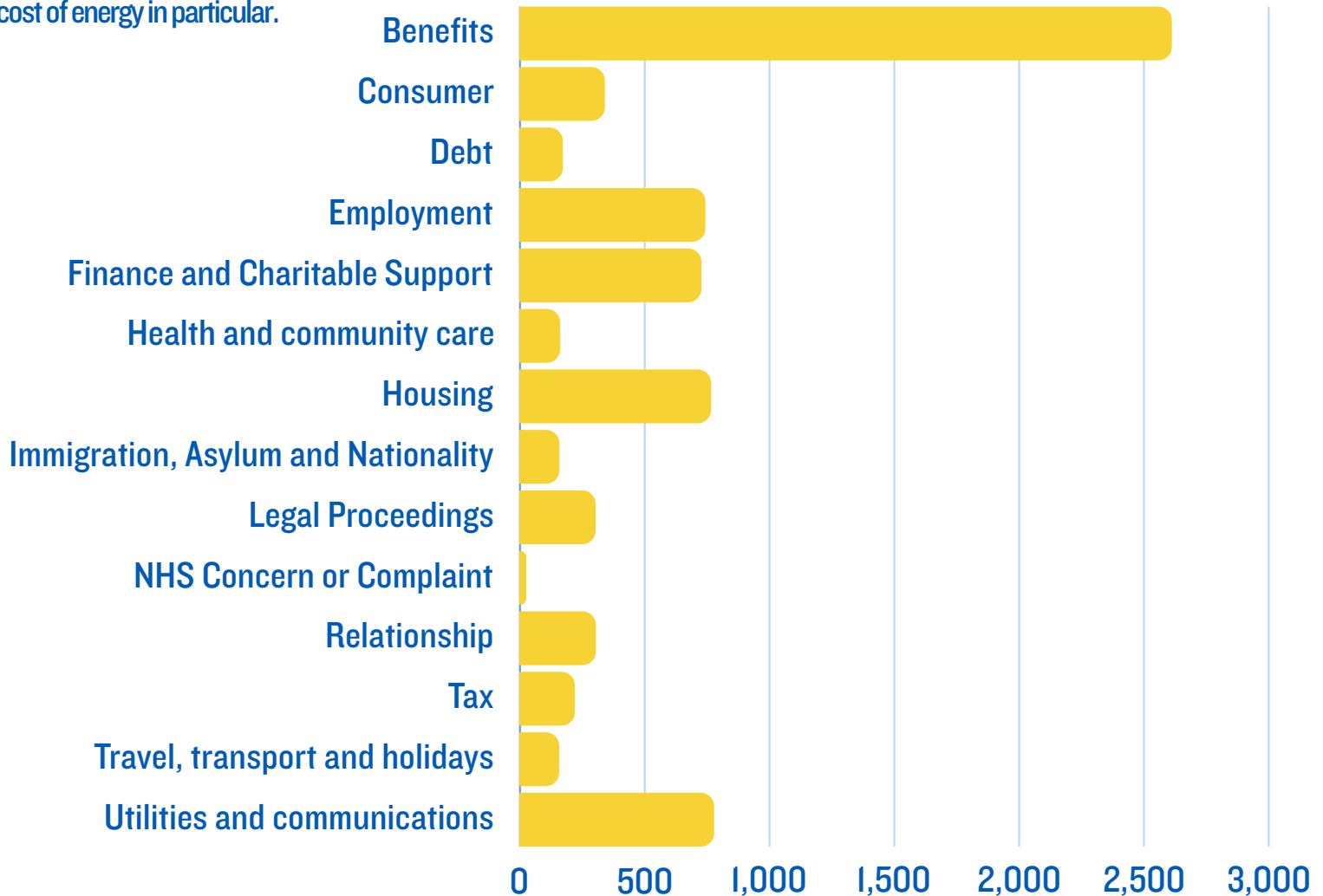


Total Expenditure – £442,547

Our main spend was on staffing costs for the hard-working team of staff that work across our Generalist Advice Service and our specialist projects. Whilst our Generalist Advice Service is driven by volunteers, a core group of two Session Supervisors, a Volunteer Training & Development Officer and an Operations Manager oversaw the work and provided essential support to our volunteers, and conducted case-checking to ensure our client records accurately reflect the high quality advice that has been given. Across our specialist projects, project workers worked singly or in small groups to provide specialist advice across major themes: financial inclusion, debt, energy and NHS concerns and complaints. We also have admin and finance functions which keep the organisation running smoothly, and cleaning staff who keep the offices looking fresh!

The Generalist Advice Service

This bar chart shows the work carried out within the Generalist Advice Service. As you can see, advice and support around benefits dominates the work that we do, but we cover a wide range of queries! Our utilities and communications enquiries grew by 183% compared to the previous year in the generalist service alone, which reflects the concerns that people have over the cost of energy in particular.



We asked one of our Session Supervisors why they are proud to work at Angus CAB:

"The passion and hard work from the volunteers keeps me going. I love the kick they get out of helping a client, some of them get so excited and happy and I love it! A lot of volunteers want to know the end of the story, they don't like it when a client disappears because they want to know how they got on and what happened after seeing us. To me, that's a genuine care and shows clients that their issue is important to us, too. There is a culture of team work across the whole service - project staff give guidance on general queries and volunteers support with project work when they can. Our results are a joint effort!"

Sooz

Our Specialist Projects

Financial Inclusion

We were fortunate to have funding to run a number of projects with a focus on Financial Inclusion this year. These included:

- Welfare Reform Mitigation and Money Talk Team, which amalgamated in October 2022, funded by Scottish Government - providing income maximisation advice and support with benefit applications
- The Armed Services Advice Project, funded by poppyscotland providing specialist benefits advice to former and currently service armed services personnel and their families
- The Money Support Project, a new project for this year, providing income maximisation support for people experiencing difficulties with their mental health and/or wellbeing, funded by the Scottish Government

£95,892
income
from
funders

484 Clients

£462K
Known
Client
Financial
Gains

£4.82 in
financial
gains for
every £1 of
funding

We asked our project staff why they are proud to work at Angus CAB:

“It was a great experience to see clients grow confident around their finances and seeing them smile again after a period of stress and worry. Knowing clients can be empowered through support goes a long way and I feel very privileged to be part of the client journey and to witness their story.”
Kerry

“The amazing effort that both volunteers and staff give to help all clients that contact us and seeing the positive impact that this can have for clients in both the short and long term. A lot of clients come in to bureau and are apprehensive or uncertain about their options but sometimes even a simple conversation is enough for them to leave feeling like a weight has been lifted and in a much more positive mindset”
Gareth

“As Angus CAB is at the heart of the local community and the support provided to community members is key and indispensable, it is gratifying to work in this cause. Central to my role is income maximisation for households, being able to increase their income, or find another favourable outcome for them, is particularly rewarding. These outcomes are reinvigorating and power the drive to continue working on behalf of clients. Personally, I’ve benefitted immeasurably in terms of having a sense of belonging in the team and being purposeful and productive.”
Colin

And we share here some feedback from clients who were helped in the year:

“I got my back pay on 13th of March. Again, thank you for all you have done. You don’t know how much it is appreciated. With my thanks as always.”

“Thank you very much for all the help you have given me. Much appreciated.”

“Thank you all for the help supplied. Fantastic service.”

Energy

We were extremely grateful for the funding we received for energy projects this year, as the increasing cost of energy meant a large overall increase in clients seeking advice in this area. Whilst some of this falls under our generalist advice service, or is worked on as part of financial inclusion, having specialist energy projects to work with the most vulnerable clients and/or provide support to the most complex energy cases is very important. The known client financial gains from energy are not as high as our financial inclusion projects, but the situation with energy means we cannot support clients to switch tariffs to save money. Our energy funding provided the following projects:

- Warm & Well, a specialist energy and income maximisation project for older people, people with disabilities and people recently discharged from hospital - funded by Angus Health & Social Care Partnership
- Energy Best Deal and Big Energy Saving Network - funding from multiple utility companies, overseen by Citizens Advice Scotland, to provide 1-1 appointments and group advice/training sessions for both clients and frontline support workers in partner agencies.
- SSEN and SGN Outreach - new short-term, staggered funding in this year from both SSEN and SGN, via Citizens Advice Scotland, to attend community groups and warm hub locations and provide energy advice
- Some one-off additional money from Scottish Government to support clients experiencing difficulties with their energy bills

£60,456
from
funders

281 clients

£106K
Known
Client
Financial
Gains

6 group
sessions with
clients/
frontline staff

One of our Energy Advisers tells us why she's proud to work at Angus CAB

"I am very proud to work as the Warm & Well Adviser, the service primarily supported elderly & disabled residents who are often digitally excluded. It can be difficult and frustrating to call energy companies, particularly if the clients suffer with hearing/memory issues. Some clients have struggled for a while and often told me of their relief from their first appointment. Many clients weren't aware of the Priority Services Register - this meant their hard to reach meters were relocated, applications for Warm Home Discount to help towards energy costs and, in some cases, applications to the fuel fund to reduce debts were made. After income maximisation checks, many clients were surprised to discover eligibility to apply for certain benefits/reductions. Home visits were carried out to assist clients with their heating and show them how to work it effectively - it was always a relief to follow up with a client who had previously not turned their heating on to have them tell me they were now able to use it effectively, as they didn't worry as much with costs."

Shona

NHS Concerns

PASS is the Patient Advice & Information Service, a national contract between NHS Scotland and Citizens Advice Scotland. PASS provides us with a part-time member of staff who works both on the national helpline and locally with Angus clients to support them with concerns or complaints about NHS services. It is a vital service that supports people who are often distressed about treatment they have received and need guidance to understand the process they can follow.

We asked our PASS Adviser why she is proud to work for Angus CAB:

160 hours
on the
national
helpline

57 local
clients
supported

"I am proud to work for Angus CAB on the PASS project because as well as having the expertise of a national project, PASS provides Angus residents with locally available face-to-face advice if they need it"

Eileen

Eileen retired at the end of April 2023 after 16 years of loyal service to Angus CAB. We wish her a very happy retirement and thank her so much for her contribution over those 16 years!

Debt

Our Debt Service receives a small portion of the overall funding from Angus Council, and is supplemented by additional income from other funders. This year we had:

- Managing Money Together funding from the Scottish Legal Aid Board. This was our final year of this important funding stream
- Specialist Debt funding from the Scottish Government, which amalgamated into Money Talk Team in October 2022

**£48,503
from
funders**

**206 clients
engaged
with**

**£290K
Known Client
Financial
Gains**

**1 person
finished Debt
Adviser
training & 1
started**

**We asked our Senior Debt
Adviser why he is proud to
work here:**

“Upon joining the Angus CAB debt team in February 2022, my first impression of the bureau was a work culture of staff enthusiasm, cordiality and diligence with an emphasis on providing a quality service to the public at a desperate time of a worsening cost of living crisis. The challenges of the times inspired our collective resolve, which has been producing remarkable outcomes for our clients. I am proud of what we’ve achieved and are still achieving together”

Ernest

A debt client of ours gave us some feedback, and we are so grateful for their bravery and honesty in sharing some of their story:

“ I would like to thank Ernest and CAB with all my heart, for the efficient and professional manner in which he has dealt with my debt problem. Last year I found myself in an untenable situation with mounting debt in excess of £40K.

This led to a serious suicide attempt and 3 months in hospital. With nowhere else to turn to, my wife contacted CAB and was put in touch with Ernest. During this time and after my discharge from hospital, Ernest dealt with my household expenses with all the respect and empathy I felt I did not deserve, but going forward in dealing with each of my creditors, he urged them, bar one, to write off my balances on the basis of what had happened, my household finances, and the severe mental health problems I was experiencing solely because of this debt.

On behalf of both my wife and myself, I would again like to thank Ernest and CAB from the bottom of our hearts for the excellent and life changing service provided, for which we are both truly grateful.”

Volunteer Training & Development

The Robertson Trust kindly fund us on a 3 year basis to employ a dedicated Volunteer Training & Development Officer. Gael holds this role and is a time-served member of the Angus CAB team. Gael's role involves (amongst many other things!): recruiting, inducting and training new volunteers and then providing ongoing training, support and development to our skilled group of existing volunteers, so that everyone feels well-equipped to carry out their roles in a changing advice environment. Gael can also be found attending different roadshows and events to both promote volunteering opportunities and help raise awareness of Angus CAB itself. We are so grateful that we have a dedicated resource to ensure our volunteers have access to training, resources and information and that we have been able to recruit a further 13 volunteers in the year to join our team. Nationally, it has been very hard for Third Sector organisations to recruit and retain volunteers since the pandemic, and we cannot stress enough that we couldn't do what we do without them!

This year Gael piloted 'training days' across the three offices with a mixture of different topics and external speakers to provide essential knowledge sharing. Bringing both volunteers and staff together for these sessions helps all of us keep up to date with projects, changes to legislation, making sure our case records are the best possible quality and so much more!

We asked Gael why she is proud to work at Angus CAB as our Volunteer Training & Development Officer:

"My motto that I stand by is "Every day is a School Day" whether that be learning something new about a subject whilst working through an enquiry with an advisor, learning something new from an advisor or learning something new about an advisor. The volunteers make my job enjoyable and one I don't mind getting up in the morning for. I love the variation of enquiries and working alongside such a diverse team from different backgrounds and career paths that it's difficult not to find the job enjoyable. I think it's that reason that brings me to work every day, the support and advice the volunteers provide to the residents of Angus really is second to none and I can't thank them enough for their continued support."

Gael

Social Work Student Placements

We are lucky to have excellent working relationships with both Dundee and Robert Gordon Universities, who allocate us Social Work students studying both at Bachelors and Masters level for short-term placements. We train these students as Generalist Advisers and they get to experience a wide range of enquiries and gain valuable experiencing of working with people experiencing a whole range of concerns. We encourage them to attend our public-facing events to network with other organisations to understand the range of support on offer to the people of Angus. This year, we had a total of 17 students who were on placement with us within the year.

Zoe, our Operations Manager, oversees our student placements alongside many other duties!
We asked her why she is proud to work at Angus CAB supporting these placements:

"It's fantastic to have the opportunity to provide placements for social work students. They always show a great commitment to CAB, even though it is not their choice to be placed with us, and provide a hugely valuable contribution to our generalist service. It's extremely rewarding to see the students progress and gain confidence while with us. The addition of students to our offices provides a learning opportunity not just for them but also for the staff and volunteers. I am delighted that the local universities comment on a placement with us as being valuable, highly experienced and well-rounded for the students; this is a testament to continued hard work of the staff and volunteers"

Zoe

Funded Work Placements

At the end of the 21-22 year, Angus CAB started their first funded work placement through an initiative with Angus Council's Employability Team. This was a 6-month paid work placement for someone who was part of their Long-Term Unemployed (LTU) programme, which aims to match people over 25 with paid work experience opportunities and the chance to undertake a piece of certificated training.

We couldn't have had a better experience!

Within the 22-23 year, our first person on placement moved into a paid role with us in August, and we had two new people join us on placements, one from the same LTU programme and another from a joint initiative between SCVO and Angus Council for people under 25. This gave us the opportunity to welcome new people to our team who might not otherwise have applied for a role at Angus CAB, bringing us new skills, knowledge and experiences. All three came to us with energy and enthusiasm and we are not sure how we managed without them as part of the team! We're delighted to say we have been in a position to retain all three beyond the end of their 6 month placements.

Each placement is given a full contract of employment and paid at the Real Living Wage with the salary and training costs met by the programme, meaning the placements are cost neutral to Angus CAB but allow those on placements to earn a fair wage for their work. The placements are designed to be an 'additional' resource, so have allowed us to try new roles and see how we can add valuable resources to what we do. People on placements have the support of an Employability Worker at Angus Council, who meets with the participant and us regularly, and help make sure they are getting the most out of their time with us and to make sure we continue to be a fair and supportive employer. We're excited at the prospect of offering more placements next year!

This year we mostly worked with Michelle, a Skills & Employability Adviser for Angus Council, who matched participants to us and attended placement meetings to provide support to the participants. Here is what Michelle had to say about our time as an LTU Employer:

"I am incredibly grateful that Angus CAB support our employability programmes. The placements that they have offered as part of our Long Term Unemployed programme have proved invaluable - allowing participants to develop their skills, increase their confidence and gain a sound knowledge of the work that CAB undertake. The team in Angus have been fantastic to work with, providing every participant with a meaningful role, tailoring placements to suit individual skillsets while encouraging both personal and professional development in a remarkably supportive environment. I am hugely grateful for the opportunities that they offer our participants as well as the amazing work they do for our citizens."

Michelle

**Over 1500
hours
worked**

**2 people now
trained in
Mental Health
First Aid**

**3 people
retained in
employment**

**3 fantastic
additions to
the team!**

We are grateful to Michelle for making it so easy for us to bring people in on placements, and for providing fantastic support to the two people on LTU placements during the year. We are glad to be able to offer people from the local community opportunities for paid work experience as well as the volunteering opportunities we provide.

We asked all three participants to share their thoughts on their time on placement with us:

“I chose to take a placement with Angus CAB as I had heard about the bureau and wanted to learn more about what they did. I received an email from Laura and then we had a chat on the phone and it sounded like a really good, supportive place to work.

In terms of work wise skills: After completing the adviser training program, I was a receptionist taking enquiries over the phone and in person, I learned how to communicate with clients in order to extract information required and to reassure/calm them. I built upon my computer skills for example data input, recording client contacts on castle, learning how to run basic benefit checks and dealing with email enquiries.

Following on from placement I started project work – I was really pleased to be able to continue working at CAB. My confidence has grown a lot, I was very quiet and shy when I started placement. I have made some good friends at work with both staff and volunteers and I enjoy meeting new clients – I have met many new people from different backgrounds and age groups who I otherwise wouldn't have had the opportunity to meet.

I received more in-depth benefit training and have helped clients apply for numerous benefits that they are eligible for and have supported clients to apply for disability benefit which have been successful.

I also receive lots of ongoing energy-related training and have learned a lot in terms of support available to consumers I have submitted complaints to the Ombudsman on client's behalf and supported them with hardship fund applications, HES referral and much more. I have also delivered in person energy training to other services who provide support to vulnerable residents of Angus, this was a huge challenge for me but I felt very proud once I had done it.

I would recommend Angus CAB as a placement due to the supportive environment and interesting enquiries that come in. There's are also many different opportunities available if working with clients isn't for you. Its a friendly place to be and you are always learning new things. “

“Angus CAB was recommended to me when I attended an employability course through an organisation called Street League. Prior to starting at Angus CAB I did not know a great amount of what it was that they offered but since being here I have a good understanding of what it is that they offer.

Being on the paid placement has meant I am able to understand a whole range of issues that people can come into the bureau with, no matter what it is.

I also feel that I have learned a lot about different things here at Angus CAB including housing, benefits, consumer and energy issues, for example. I was able to bring my previous experience of dealing with members of the public into this role so I already had some confidence coming into the position. I've managed to make some great working relationships with my fellow colleagues and all our volunteers, too.

When I found out that I was to be kept on at Angus CAB I was not surprised because everyone here loves me!

But, all jokes aside, to first come into this position knowing that only 6 months were guaranteed and to then be told it was being extended further was brilliant news. It showed me that I was making some sort of difference here at Angus CAB.”

“Last year, after many fruitless applications for work, I was offered an initial, short-term placement with Angus CAB. Then 63, I'd started to believe that my days of useful endeavour were over, that I had nothing left to give. I've been reassuringly disabused of this notion over the last year.

Angus CAB has offered me the chance to contribute in a meaningful way, to put some of my experience to good use in the service of this community. In turn, I've been given the opportunity to work alongside a fantastic team of dedicated and knowledgeable professionals.

Together with the continuing support and development I receive, I'm thriving in such a good-humoured, collective enterprise. My self-esteem is newly burnished, my confidence re-invigorated and my dignity restored. Thanks to all the staff, volunteers and students!”

Triage Service

Our Triage Service was first developed during the pandemic when our doors were closed. Whilst our doors are back open to the public and have been all year, we recognised that how the service ran day-to-day was no longer effective for clients or the team. Previously, clients would come in during 'drop-in', take a seat and wait to be seen. If people called us, we would tell them to come to the office and not give advice by phone very often. How many could be seen would depend on how many advisers were there that day, and sometimes we would be unable to help someone. It was hard to triage the enquiries, and people could wait a long time to see an adviser and then find out they should have brought some documents with them that they didn't have.

Our Triage Service aims to make a client's first contact with Angus CAB easier and allow us to get the information we need to give the right advice, making sure we recognise where there is a deadline or time limit involved. When a client calls us, or comes into an office during our walk-in times, they'll speak to a Triage Worker, a volunteer receptionist or a social work student on placement. They will take details about the enquiry the client is making, and (where appropriate) will ask a client to provide us with the information we will need to give advice. If its a housing enquiry, we might ask to see a copy of the tenancy, or a contract if its an employment enquiry. Once we have that, we'll get an appointment arranged for the client - this might be a telephone appointment, a face-to-face appointment, or it might be advice by e-mail, this will depend on the clients needs and preferences. When the client gets to speak to an adviser, the adviser will be in a position to give the right advice on the basis of the information that's been collected.

The Triage Service is also able to pick up on urgent or emergency enquiries. These might be referrals to a foodbank, arranging an emergency fuel voucher, or it might be something that needs to be escalated to an adviser immediately. Anyone in the Triage Service is able to do this, and we ensure we have advisers available to pick up any emergencies over and above the planned appointments for that day. All of this has been possible thanks to the skills and knowledge of the whole team, who have helped shape how the Triage Service works. Our volunteer receptionists and advisers have adapted really well to this change and our two Triage Workers have taken the work in their stride.

**350+ clients
directly
engaged
with**

**104 foodbank
and other
referrals
made**

**Almost
£2500 client
financial
gain**

We asked our Triage Workers why they are proud to work for Angus CAB:

'I've been so lucky in getting to work with such a fantastic crew at Angus CAB - empathetic, professional and determined. I feel honoured to contribute, and work alongside this marvellous team. As a Triage worker, I'm often in a sensitive, privileged position, as a first point of contact for clients with difficulties. I'm confidently able to offer some reassurance that our advisers will be sure to apply their expertise in helping to address their concerns'.

Alan

'I am proud to work for Angus CAB because at the end of every day I feel better about myself knowing that whether it is in person or over the phone I have made a client's day a bit better by helping them in their time of need . That makes feel good about myself, knowing that I made a difference that day.'

Glen

Do you need advice? Would you like to volunteer with us? Become a member or join the board? Maybe you'd like to talk to us about partnership working, funding or collaboration in the future? These are the ways you can contact us in the first instance:

Arbroath:
Walk-in Mon & Fri
10am-1pm
Appointments also available
other times and days by prior
arrangement

Forfar:
Walk-in Tues & Fri
10am-1pm
Appointments also available
on these days by prior
arrangement

Montrose:
Walk-in Mon, Wed & Thurs
10am-1pm
Appointments also available
on these days by prior
arrangement


01241 870661
One number, all offices


advice@anguscab.org.uk



Angus Citizens Advice Bureau (SCIO) is registered as a charity with the OSCR reference SC010051. It is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority FRN 617427.

Our thanks go to the volunteers and staff of Angus CAB for their support in creating this year's annual report. The photograph on the front cover is reproduced with the kind permission of Sophie Milne