Conference Awards Shortlist 2025

In this document you will see each full shortlisted nomination for each award category.

Read the shortlisted nominations. Each category has 3 or 4 shortlisted projects.

Decide which project you would like to vote for. You will be able to vote for one project in each category.

Vote using the Google Form here. To make sure voting is fair, only 1 vote per person per category will be counted. Everyone across Citizens Advice (national and local) can vote. **Voting closes on 30 October at 5.00pm.**

Attend Annual Conference and join our Awards Ceremony on Thursday 13 November. The ceremony will also be streamed live on Workvivo and will be available to watch back afterwards.

On the next few pages find out more about the shortlisted nominees for the following categories: These are bookmarked.

- **Most Impactful Mission 1 Project - Advice Fit for the Future**
- **Most Impactful Mission 2 Project - Close the Gap**
- **Most Impactful Mission 3 Project - Take Early Action**
- **Championing Wellbeing**
- **Championing Equity, Diversity & Inclusion**
- **Best External Partnership Collaboration**
- **Power of our Network Award: Best Collaborative Working Across the Network**
- **Best Client Service Innovation**

Most Impactful Mission 1 Project - Advice Fit for the Future

Consumer Energy Debt Advice - CEDA

Energy Advice Strategy, Business Development, Consumer Service and Debt Funded Service teams. We have worked with a range of local offices in the development of our thinking, including but not limited to, Caerphilly, Plymouth and Lincoln and Lindsey Citizens Advice.

What is the potential of this project to deliver transformational change in the way we provide advice in the future?

Energy consumer debt has more than doubled from £1.8bn in 2021 to £4.15bn in Q1 2025, as energy prices rose and remain stubbornly high.

We used our influential role to advocate for an unprecedented and scalable whole of the market solution (CEDA), recognising the systemic nature of the problem. This aimed to improve access to debt advice for existing clients and create direct referrals across the energy sector into a single debt service. This combined the strengths of 3 of the largest debt advice providers and enabled a single front door to triage client needs.

Exploring a 'whole of the market' solution may also provide evidence for the impact debt advice can have in consumer markets and how it could be applied for other statutory services. This may open new doors and opportunities for Citizens Advice in the future.

What is the direct benefit this could deliver to our clients, specifically thinking about groups who find it harder to access our services?

Energy debt within households increased by 43% between 2023-24. In response, teams across Citizens Advice brought together 3 of the leading debt advice charities in Great Britain to combine their specialisms in household, business and specialist debt solutions. This enabled us to support more people, when unmet demand for debt had been growing

across existing services.

Through taking direct referrals from energy suppliers, we will also plan to support those who may not have sought debt advice independently, may not know about the offer we have or may not engage early enough in the journey.

The service developed will reduce the cost of bad debt on all energy bills by engaging people who can repay at least some of their debt. This will return an annual £2.53 saving for each household bill when fully mobilised. The value of our work is rated as £4,600 per client.

How does this project show collaboration across the network and national organisation?

The team worked closely with experienced local offices to workshop the design, ensuring we could create a service that could meet the needs of our clients. This helped ensure we thought strategically about any risk to current services as well as how we could develop the offer over time.

We developed an innovative approach to the selection process for Local Offices to support the service. Balancing the need to meet funder expectations for quick mobilisation of the service against the opportunity this presented to develop resilience within our network, we planned for a phased approach and selected offices not only able to implement rapidly but also local offices in a 'development lot' where additional peer support and national team support would be provided to enable them to deliver contact centre model debt advice for the first time.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

The team influenced multiple governments, gained support from the energy industry, managed complicated commercial interests, stakeholders and partners and created an opportunity for a long term debt advice service that did not exist before, which will have a huge financial impact for our clients estimated at £4,600 per client.

Court Outreach and Representation Service

Citizens Advice - Hull & East Riding

What is the potential of this project to deliver transformational change in the way we provide

advice in the future?

The Courts are a daunting place for our clients, and obviously in the case of possession for rented or mortgaged property, carry serious consequences. Sometimes there is limited help through a Duty Possession Scheme. However, this can literally be 3 minutes within the hearing, with no opportunity to plan and no discussion of what caused the issue in the first place, or how to solve it going forward.

Our service is 2 services in one - Full debt advice (plus signposts to other services as needed) - which explores what happened, why, and how to fix it - coupled with the 2nd service of going into court to put the agreed plan to a judge. Judges much prefer this service over the standard Duty scheme. The Judges say that we can really solve situations, meaning 'litigants in person' don't tend to appear back in front of the court.

What is the direct benefit this could deliver to our clients, specifically thinking about groups who find it harder to access our services?

The most vulnerable of our client group often end up in rent arrears. They often withdraw from speaking with their landlord / Housing Officer which brings allegations of non cooperation. This is especially true of those who already have outstanding mental health issues, they tend to close down and not deal with their situation.

Other CA services within our area refer in to the team (GAU, other projects) as well as tenancy officers, social workers and mental health charities.

We have kept thousands of Hull & surrounding area clients in their homes using this service, who in the past may have gone through the stress of emergency accommodation.

How does this project show collaboration across the network and national organisation?

The team worked closely with experienced local offices to workshop the design, ensuring we could create a service that could meet the needs of our clients. This helped ensure we thought strategically about any risk to current services as well as how we could develop the offer over time.

We developed an innovative approach to the selection process for Local Offices to support the service. Balancing the need to meet funder expectations for quick mobilisation of the service against the opportunity this presented to develop resilience within our network, we planned for a phased approach and selected offices not only able to implement rapidly but also local offices in a ‘development lot’ where additional peer support and national team support would be provided to enable them to deliver contact centre model debt advice for the first time.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

This project keeps vulnerable clients and their families in their own homes, it provides a holistic service that looks at what caused the issues, advice and support on how to fix them, then moving forward debt managed or debt free and safely housed.

Debt Team Coventry Citizens Advice

Coventry Citizens Advice

What is the potential of this project to deliver transformational change in the way we provide advice in the future?

The debt team is investigating the modernisation of debt advice across the service. The project is a relatively new project but is doing some amazing work to improve the debt advice provision for advisors and clients. They are looking at using AI to assist clients in information gathering and to improve the quality of information given to clients. The project aims to reduce some of the admin tasks spent with clients so more time can be spent assisting clients. It also aims to improve clients understanding of the information provided after the appointment making it more meaningful and empowering the clients.

What is the direct benefit this could deliver to our clients, specifically thinking about groups who find it harder to access our services?

Many of our clients advise they cannot read our letters due to literacy and/or language barriers. Clients will directly benefit from the translated casenotes rather than many using inaccurate translation services on-line or having to rely on someone else to read them. They will also have information provided to them in a clearer format not just a long written letter but graphics making the advice clearer and easier to understand.

Our other main concern regarding accessibility to debt advice is clients providing information and updates to allow advisors to carry out tasks such as DRO's trust funds etc An easy to use on-line service to assist them in compiling data would prevent some clients dropping out of the advice process when this becomes overwhelming.

How does this project show collaboration across the network and national organisation?

The project is working with multiple LCA's to learn from each other techniques and innovations using AI to improve the service. This overview of how it is being used will mean we all have a greater understanding of how AI can assist the network overall and any issues we work together to resolve. We are often all working on improvements separately and can pool resources to allow improvements for all our clients.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

A project designed to improve accessibility and understanding of debt advice and to reduce admin time for debt advisers.

Sparky - Energy Advice Chatbot

Citizens Advice SORT (Stockport, Oldham, Rochdale, Trafford)

What is the potential of this project to deliver transformational change in the way we provide advice in the future?

This project has the potential to deliver transformational change by pioneering a hybrid advice model that blends AI efficiency with trusted human expertise. By providing 24/7, instant support for general energy enquiries, Sparky dramatically increases accessibility and frees up specialist advisers to focus on the most complex cases.

Its innovative 'human-in-the-loop' system ensures vulnerable clients receive expert, personalised guidance, safeguarding quality and trust. Incorporating 'Easy Read' functionality makes the advice more inclusive for users with varying literacy levels.

This scalable and replicable model is a blueprint for the future of advice services. It demonstrates how technology can be integrated safely and effectively to help more people, creating a more sustainable and equitable service that could be adapted across numerous sectors beyond energy

What is the direct benefit this could deliver to our clients, specifically thinking about groups who

find it harder to access our services?

The most direct benefit for clients is significantly improved accessibility, especially for hard-to-reach groups. Sparky offers 24/7 support, removing the barrier of traditional office hours and providing instant answers to general questions.

For those with lower literacy levels, the integrated 'Easy Read' functionality presents complex information in a clear, simple format, ensuring they can understand and act on the advice given.

Crucially, the 'human-in-the-loop' system provides a vital safeguard. It intelligently escalates complex queries from vulnerable users to a trained human adviser, ensuring they receive the nuanced, personalised support they need instead of just an automated response.

How does this project show collaboration across the network and national organisation?

The project is designed with the entire network in mind. It explicitly aims to share its findings with organisations beyond its immediate sphere and identifies the potential to scale Sparky across the national Citizens Advice network as a key benefit. We have been working with national Citizens Advice about how Sparky could form a mixture of experts model for a client facing Caddy. This builds on past AI work that has already gained recognition from national Citizens Advice. Where each AI expert would provide domain specific advice. We have also offered 15 other local offices the opportunity to trial Sparky on their sites.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

This project deserves the award because it pioneers a forward-thinking advice model , blending 24/7 AI support with trusted human oversight to make expert help more accessible and safer for everyone, especially the most vulnerable clients.

Most Impactful Mission 2 Project - Close the Gap

Women's Services Project

Citizens Advice Birmingham

What is the potential of this project to close the gap in access and experience for marginalised people?

Our Women's Services Project addresses welfare advice disparities for marginalised women and survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

We noticed a trend amongst women in this situation who wanted welfare advice to help them to move on. They found it difficult to get the right advice at the right time, delivered in a way that worked for them. We heard that it was difficult to reach out to strangers they had never met, or had an opportunity to build trust with, to tell their story and get help.

We realised that we needed to change how we deliver services to meet these needs, so we set about trying to find ways to develop and deliver a trauma informed, women centric welfare advice service. We were delighted to be successful in securing Innovation Grants from Citizens Advice to develop the concept and share our learning.

What are the direct benefits this project will deliver to our clients in the short and long term?

In the short term, women move forwards with practical issues affecting their lives e.g. housing, benefits, immigration. 279 women have been supported and £669,166 of income gains achieved.

In the longer term, the women build knowledge,resilience and develop independence, positively impacting their own and their families lives. Also, the importance of the right welfare advice at the right time has been raised with our partners'.

Ruqayya* told us "After my divorce I was really lost. I didn't know anyone in this country; I didn't know how to open a bank account; I didn't even know how to catch a bus. I've learned a lot about my rights from my adviser at Citizens Advice Birmingham. I know what benefits I can get and how to seek help.... she was the hand I needed to hold."

*Name changed to protect anonymity

How does this project show collaboration across the network and national organisation?

We have learned so much from this work, including the skills of co production and how to engage effectively with women who often struggle to trust and have challenges with executive functioning, making every day tasks difficult.

Our Women's Services Adviser, Parveen Chatha, has been at the centre of developing and delivering this service. She has built partnerships with other LCAs supporting these groups, local women's services, particularly Anawim, Birmingham Women's Service and The Big Issue. She has shared her knowledge and understanding of the women's experiences with the wider Citizens Advice Network at round table events and by contributing to the Postal Exclusion project. She has also helped women get their voice heard, by enabling contact with Citizens Advice stories team.

Our funding is coming to an end. We are actively seeking partnerships with women's services to fill this vital gap in advice.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

We have minimised disparities by learning what works best from the experts, the women themselves, and building a service around their needs.

CAHF's More Than Advice Model

Citizens Advice Hammersmith & Fulham

What is the potential of this project to close the gap in access and experience for marginalised people?

Our 'More than Advice' model recognises that people need more than one-off solutions. We provide a place where challenges can be addressed together, combining advice with skills, services and opportunities. Alongside expert advice, we deliver library services, workshops and specialist projects that reduce barriers such as digital exclusion, financial insecurity and language. Digital Skills and Money Skills training help clients gain confidence to use online services,

manage finances and access resources independently, while ESOL classes support non-English speakers to participate fully in community life. Our volunteering programme is central to this approach, offering residents the chance to gain skills, experience and confidence while giving back to their community. By embedding services in the trusted space of our libraries, we reach people who might not otherwise seek support. This holistic model promotes independence, resilience and stronger community connections, empowering residents to build long-term opportunities for themselves and others.

What are the direct benefits this project will deliver to our clients in the short and long term?

In the short term, the More than Advice model equips clients with practical skills that improve daily life. Digital Skills training helps clients access online services and benefits independently, while Money Skills workshops support budgeting, debt reduction, and financial decision-making. ESOL classes improve communication and confidence, particularly important in Hammersmith & Fulham where 14% of households have no English speaker. Library services provide safe, inclusive spaces for learning and connection. One client fleeing persecution for their LGBT+ identity shared how seeing staff wearing Pride lanyards made them feel welcome and included. This shows the added value of delivering ESOL classes in an organisation that leads with EDI, where learning goes hand in hand with belonging and dignity. In the long term, these interventions build sustained independence, resilience, and social inclusion.

How does this project show collaboration across the network and national organisation?

The 'More than Advice' model is built on collaboration across local partners, the Citizens Advice network and with the national organisation. Locally, we partner with libraries, community groups, and adult education providers to co-deliver ESOL, Money Skills, and Digital Skills training in trusted spaces, ensuring services are inclusive and responsive. Across the network, we share resources, learning, and best practice with other local offices piloting similar initiatives, strengthening collective impact. Regionally, we work with partners to deliver Pan-London initiatives such as Advice First Aid, while the national organisation provides training materials, data insights, and guidance to ensure quality, consistency, and alignment with Mission 2 priorities. This collaboration ensures local delivery benefits from national expertise, while national strategy is shaped by client experiences from the ground. Together, the partnership creates a holistic, scalable model that reduces barriers, promotes inclusion and demonstrates the power of collaboration to tackle systemic inequalities.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

This model deserves the award because it goes beyond advice to tackle the root causes of inequality holistically, by

building digital, financial, and language skills in trusted community spaces, so marginalised people can access services, gain independence, and fully participate in society both now and in the future.

Migrants Rights Advice

Citizens Advice Liverpool

What is the potential of this project to close the gap in access and experience for marginalised people?

This project directly targets two of Liverpool's most marginalised migrant groups: those with No Recourse to Public Funds and EU citizens navigating post-Brexit residency. These individuals often fall through the cracks of mainstream support, facing exploitation, housing insecurity, and barriers to healthcare and benefits. By offering tailored immigration advice, advocacy, and practical support, the project empowers residents to access their rights and build stable lives. It fills a critical gap in local provision, especially for those ineligible for Legal Aid, and ensures that vulnerable migrants, including survivors of domestic abuse and single parents, are not left behind.

What are the direct benefits this project will deliver to our clients in the short and long term?

In the short term, clients gain urgent help with immigration status, housing, healthcare, and financial hardship, including access to Free School Meals, Healthy Start Vouchers, travel concessions. The project also supports applications for Settled Status, No Time Limit, and Section 3C Leave, helping clients prove their rights and access public funds. In the long term, it secures stability for families, prevents homelessness, and enables access to education, employment, and childcare. By supporting mixed-status households and advocating for policy change, the project creates lasting impact for individuals and the wider community.

How does this project show collaboration across the network and national organisation?

The project is rooted in collaboration. Citizens Advice Liverpool works with healthcare providers, schools, community organisations, and other grant-funded services to create a robust referral network. It also aligns with national Citizens Advice priorities around digital inclusion and immigration support, sharing learning and best practice across the network. The volunteering strategy and exploration of OISC Level 2 accreditation demonstrate a commitment to

capacity-building and sustainability. By engaging partners locally and nationally, the project maximises impact and ensures that vulnerable migrants receive coordinated, holistic support.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

This project closes a critical gap in immigration support for Liverpool's most marginalised migrants, delivering life changing advocacy and advice with compassion, collaboration, and impact.

Pension Wise BSL Booking Process

National Pension Wise team runs it but supported by CA Lancashire West, CA Sheffield and all 16 Pension Wise delivery centres (36 CAs)

What is the potential of this project to close the gap in access and experience for marginalised people?

Pension Wise has developed an accessible appointment for BSL users where an appointment can be had F2F with a BSL translator in attendance or they can choose a video appointment that is translated remotely. However it's always been very hard to book an appointment through the website for BSL users and there are obvious barriers to using the phone booking line. This meant that although a BSL appointment may have been available, few in the community had the ability to take advantage of it.

We have recently been able to introduce a new on demand BSL booking service (via video relay service) where a translator is available to support the BSL user to speak directly to the PW booking team and arrange an appointment similar to how anyone else would be able to. Therefore we've made access to the service more equitable between our BSL and non BSL customers.

What are the direct benefits this project will deliver to our clients in the short and long term?

This will enable those from the BSL community to arrange an appointment independently without having to rely on the help of a friend or family member which will have blocked many from doing so.

This has been a very long and challenging piece of work firstly to gain funder buy-in and then to overcome many significant barriers to drive this through. We were determined to get this over the line whilst CA is still delivering Pension Wise to leave a lasting legacy that will be preserved when it transfers to MaPS.

We also wanted to influence the future shape of BSL provision within MaPS services more broadly by demonstrating it is both possible and needed to provide accessible guidance services to this marginalised community. Once in place, it's more difficult to withdraw and we believe it will set a standard that other MaPS services will be encouraged to rise to.

How does this project show collaboration across the network and national organisation?

We have worked closely with a number of local offices, particularly CA Lancashire West who have delivered the BSL video appointments for a number of years now. We've also worked closely with CA Sheffield and their wonderful Deaf Advice Service who have provided great support in promoting the program and even shot a number of promotional videos in BSL to help raise awareness of the service. Throughout the implementation of the new BSL booking process we have been supported by the whole Pension Wise network who recently adjusted all their appointment schedules to allow for double appointment slots to be available so BSL users can select one at their convenience as part of the accessible booking process.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

The introduction of the accessible booking process for BSL users has been a remarkable achievement for the whole Pension Wise service giving service users an equal access point and the potential it has to set the standard for the level of accessibility expected of other guidance services in the future.

Most Impactful Mission 3 Project - Take Early Action

When Advice Really Matters (WARM)

Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire

What is the potential of this project to ensure fewer people reach crisis point?

Many people feel too overwhelmed to approach advice services and are reluctant to seek support. By receiving referrals directly from GPs and Social Prescribers, WARM identifies those most at risk of reaching crisis point and provides practical help before problems escalate. This is vital because many secondary mental health services are unable to begin treatment until a person has the capacity to engage — often blocked by concerns such as debt or housing instability. Addressing these issues first gives people the space to focus on recovery.

Since its launch in April 2023, WARM has supported more than 340 individuals experiencing low to moderate mental health difficulties. Through targeted help — including resolving benefit issues and ending episodes of street homelessness — people have been able to stabilise their situations and prioritise their wellbeing. By tackling the root causes early, WARM significantly reduces the risk of people reaching crisis point.

What are the direct benefits this project will deliver to our clients in the short and long term?

In the short term, the project helps clients resolve urgent practical issues — such as securing benefit back payments or clearing debts — which quickly reduces stress and eases pressure on their mental health. By stabilising their circumstances, clients can focus on their wellbeing rather than being consumed by crisis.

In the longer term, the project builds resilience by equipping people with the knowledge and confidence to manage challenges independently. One client reflected that she now approaches problems by asking herself, “What would India do?” — a mindset that has enabled her to resolve most issues without further support. This empowerment reduces fear around practical problems and increases independence. The project’s very low rate of re-referrals demonstrates its success in giving clients lasting tools to prevent future crises.

How does this project show collaboration across the network and national organisation?

WARM works closely with our local specialist Debt and Energy teams, as well as the national Help to Claim service, ensuring clients receive expert support quickly and without having to repeat their story. Locally, we collaborate with GPs, care coordinators, and social prescribers to reach people who might never seek advice independently. We also share learning at GP forums, council meetings, and community events, strengthening trust and building effective local networks.

The issues we identify are fed into national Citizens Advice Research and Campaigns work, helping shape policy and influence change at a UK level. In turn, our project benefits from national expertise and resources, ensuring our delivery remains both high quality and community-focused. By linking local practice with national action, WARM demonstrates how collaboration across the network can reach more people earlier, resolve issues faster, and improve the way advice is delivered.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

The WARM project deserves this award because it takes early action to resolve practical problems, reduces the risk of crisis, enables access to mental health support, and creates lasting positive change by providing timely, expert advice when people need it most.

UEC Respiratory Link Workers

Citizens Advice Blackpool

What is the potential of this project to ensure fewer people reach crisis point?

The early interventions we put in place over the winter months have helped people stay healthy and well in their homes. Vouchers for fuel and food have been distributed alongside advice on income maximisation and budgeting. Support for people who are isolated and struggle to get out has been put in place and people's homes have been repaired and insulated to help them stay warm and reduce their bills. The target group of vulnerable people who would normally access our service and other services due to ill health, have been supported earlier. These were people with COPD, Asthma and other respiratory illnesses. People who become unwell due to cold homes over the winter months and often end up in hospital. We have prevented health crises by the link workers supporting people to access help before

they become so unwell that they need an acute service. The Link Worker model of working across the VCFSE, mobilising assets and navigating through complex systems has been instrumental in helping people before they reach crisis point.

What are the direct benefits this project will deliver to our clients in the short and long term?

The direct benefits are that people received immediate direct support to heat their homes, purchase food, insulate their homes, carry out repairs to help stay warm and access advice on debts, benefits and housing. These short term measures had the impact of keeping people out of hospital as well as helping them engage with other local support. The longer term impacts have been the on-going engagement that has seen people take up adult learning and volunteering, exercise and interests in the form of joining groups and organisations. These longer term benefits have been described as a life-line by clients who were often very isolated and did not know where to turn.

How does this project show collaboration across the network and national organisation?

The project was funded through the ICB (Integrated Care Board) Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) budget. This funding is available in all ICBs, but often goes directly to acute trusts to fund hospital beds and other hospital based interventions. By making a case for this budget to be targeted at early interventions in the community, delivering a project in 2024-25 with tangible outcomes and independent research on the impact, we have supported other LCAs to influence their ICBs. By sharing the project model and impact report, LCAs across other regions have been able to deliver health based, early interventions work. This collaborative sharing of strategies and project implementation is on-going and, as we embark on year 2 of this work in Blackpool, we continue to collaborate across the network to help other LCAs deliver this type of early intervention work. In addition, we also learn from this collaboration and improve our local delivery as more LCAs test out ways of doing this type of work in their local areas. Collectively, we are demonstrating the difference health based services, together with advice make to people in our communities.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

When we deliver advice, alongside early interventions that keep people safe and well in their homes and away from hospital, we save lives!

Mind & Money

Citizens Advice Liverpool

What is the potential of this project to ensure fewer people reach crisis point?

The Mind & Money Programme prevents crisis by intervening early to address financial instability and its impact on mental health. Through holistic triage, keyworkers identify risks and provide tailored support that stabilises households before problems escalate. Immediate interventions like emergency welfare assistance and bailiff pauses reduce acute stress, while medium-term support such as grant applications and benefit checks help families manage the cost-of-living crisis. Long-term actions, including budgeting, energy advice, and access to social tariff, build financial resilience and reduce future risk. By combining practical help with emotional support, the programme ensures fewer people reach crisis point and more can move forward with confidence.

What are the direct benefits this project will deliver to our clients in the short and long term?

In the short term, clients receive urgent help with food, fuel, debt, and emergency financial support, reducing stress and stabilising their situation. Medium-term benefits include increased income through benefits and grants, improved access to essentials, and reduced financial pressure. Long-term, the programme builds financial capability through budgeting support, energy efficiency advice, and access to food pantries and social tariffs. These interventions improve mental wellbeing, reduce reliance on crisis services, and empower clients to manage future challenges. Since April 2025, the team has supported over 100 households, securing £113,747 in financial outcomes and £1,617 in emergency fuel vouchers, a clear demonstration of impact.

How does this project show collaboration across the network and national organisation?

The Mind & Money Programme strengthens the Citizens Advice network by combining local delivery with national influence. Keyworkers gather frontline evidence on the cost-of-living crisis, which informs national policy and campaigning on issues like Child Poverty, Fuel Poverty, and Welfare Reform. The programme also shares learning across the network, contributing to best practice in early intervention and financial wellbeing. Collaboration with local partners, including mental health services, food banks, and energy providers, ensures joined-up support for clients. This integrated approach amplifies client voices, improves outcomes, and supports wider systemic change across the organisation.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

This project delivers early, holistic support that prevents crisis, improves wellbeing, and empowers clients, while strengthening the Citizens Advice network through collaboration, evidence, and national influence.

Championing Wellbeing

Extended learning and wellbeing scheme (ELAWS)
Citizens Advice Blackpool

What is the potential of this project to improve wellbeing of staff, volunteers and/or clients over the short and long term?

ELAWS enables staff to tap into a small funding pot to take part in activities and learning of their choosing. This project has significant potential to improve both the short and long-term wellbeing of staff. Short-term, it offers staff an opportunity to enjoy their time away from the office, participating in inspiring, relaxing or stimulating activities. Additionally, staff may be engaging in activities to learn new skills or engage with new ideas that they can then bring back to the workplace. Longer term, participating in activities like learning new skills nourishes our personal development, while engaging in relaxing activities helps protect against burnout in staff and supports resilience. For staff engaged in demanding work with clients with complex needs, it is important that we feel we have time and the funding to invest in something enriching and providing this resource is a way of acknowledging that our own wellbeing is as important as the wellbeing of our clients.

Demonstrate how this project clearly meets an identified need of staff, volunteers and/or clients.

Staff working in emotionally demanding roles need to make sure they make time for activities that are meaningful and/or relaxing in ways that are important to them. Wellbeing is about much more than simply resting or having the time to do the chores at the weekend. It's about feeling inspired, feeling that one's own personal growth is nurtured. For me, the ELAWS enabled me to engage with academic dialogue that is aligned with my interests in spirituality, ecology and the human search for meaning in life. For others, it enables them to participate in activities that are personally meaningful to them. These are things that are not always possible with the everyday pressures of frontline work. Allowing staff to participate in what's important to them allows them to return to work refreshed and re-inspired because they have had time to

reconnect with themselves, with their interests, in ways that are nourishing to them This supports wellbeing and that ultimately leads to better service delivery.

How does (or will) the project create positive outcomes for its intended audiences?

Empowering staff to participate in nourishing/interesting/inspiring activities deepens their sense of personal fulfilment and acts as a reminder that we have a life outside the pressures of the office – this is a protective factor which reduces the risk of burnout. Wellbeing is about much more than simply relaxing – it's about nurturing the person's whole being – their interests, their learning beyond the learning that we need to undertake in our professional life. ELAWS allows for the individual, diverse interpretations of wellbeing that is unique to each member of staff. For me, it was about enriching my academic learning at the highest level in topic areas that are important to me – for others, it may be total relaxation on a spa day or the challenge of learning the graceful art of archery. The important thing about ELAWS is that it allows for the creative interpretation of the notion of wellbeing according to each individual member of staff.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

ELAWS deserves an award because it recognises that wellbeing is personal and multi-dimensional and, in funding meaningful, individual opportunities, this project honours staff as whole people, which, in turn, fosters resilience and promotes a culture of self-nurture and self-growth.

LDCA Volunteer Coordinator

Lewes District Volunteer Coordinator

What is the potential of this project to improve wellbeing of staff, volunteers and/or clients over the short and long term?

This project has strong potential to enhance wellbeing for our team volunteers both in the short and long term. Led by our Mental Health First Aid-trained Volunteer Coordinator, it offers a holistic approach to wellbeing through initiatives that promote physical health, mental resilience, and social connection. From cycling-to-work schemes and a musculoskeletal policy to healthy eating and sustainable practices, the project supports everyday wellbeing. Regular wellbeing-focused

socials—such as soundbaths, petanque, and Sussex heritage games—foster team cohesion and joy. Crucially, the open-door support service provides a safe space for volunteers navigating emotionally complex client stories or personal challenges. With the loss of the Togetherall platform this initiative fills a vital gap ensuring volunteers feel supported and valued. Over time this culture of care will strengthen retention, reduce burnout, and create a more compassionate, resilient environment for everyone in the service.

Demonstrate how this project clearly meets an identified need of staff, volunteers and/or clients.

This project directly responds to the identified need for accessible, holistic wellbeing support among our volunteer team, who often face emotional strain from the increasingly complex client stories they work on. The removal of the Togetherall platform left a gap in mental health resources in local offices, making this initiative both timely and essential. Our volunteers want more informal, responsive support, which our volunteer coordinator now provides through an open-door support service. Physical wellbeing needs are also addressed through cycling-to-work initiatives, musculoskeletal policy, and activities promoting movement and connection. Social wellbeing is nurtured through inclusive, low-pressure events that bring together volunteers, staff, and trustees. These offerings reflect direct feedback from our team and are designed to reduce burnout, improve morale, and foster a sense of belonging—ensuring that those who give so much to others are also taken care of themselves.

How does (or will) the project create positive outcomes for its intended audiences?

This project creates meaningful, lasting outcomes for our team and the clietns we support by embedding wellbeing into the heart of our organisational culture. Volunteers benefit from tailored mental health support, helping them manage the emotional demands of their roles and maintain personal resilience. Physical wellbeing initiatives encourage healthier lifestyles, while inclusive social activities foster connection and reduce isolation. Staff and trustees also gain from shared wellbeing experiences, strengthening team cohesion and morale. For clients, the ripple effect is significant: supported, well-balanced volunteers are better equipped to offer empathetic, consistent service. Over time, this project will reduce burnout, improve retention, and cultivate a compassionate and sustainable environment where everyone feels valued and cared for. It replaces the lost Togetherall platform with a more personal, responsive approach—ensuring wellbeing is not just an add-on, but a core part of how we work.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

This project deserves the award because it delivers inclusive, responsive wellbeing support that empowers our team to thrive—filling a critical gap with creativity, compassion, and long-term impact.

We Pledge -Prioritising Mental Health in our Organisation

Citizens Advice North East Derbyshire

What is the potential of this project to improve wellbeing of staff, volunteers and/or clients over the short and long term?

Our “We Pledge -Prioritising Mental Health in our Organisation” project, created in partnership with Derbyshire County Council's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention team, delivers both immediate and lasting improvements to staff and volunteer wellbeing. In the short term, we offer practical support through our Employee Assistance Programme, Mental Health First Aiders, clinical supervision, a bespoke handbook, mental health training, and a full timetable of free wellbeing activities provided by the local Integrated Care Board. Everyday morale is lifted through small but powerful initiatives such as puzzles and jigsaws in the office and weekly fruit deliveries. For the long term, a staff-led Wellbeing Group and Mental Health Champion ensure needs are continuously heard and acted upon. We have also reduced the working week, embedding a proactive culture that prevents burnout, promotes balance, and builds resilience. This project doesn’t just respond to challenges—it shapes a healthier, more sustainable way of working.

Demonstrate how this project clearly meets an identified need of staff, volunteers and/or clients.

The project was shaped by a bespoke confidential wellbeing survey in 2023, conducted with Derbyshire County Council. This took place shortly after the pandemic and during the height of the cost-of-living and energy crisis, when pressures on staff were intense and sickness and turnover reached the highest levels our organisation had ever seen. The survey revealed a clear disparity: while volunteers reported positive wellbeing, staff recorded low Warwick-Edinburgh-Mental-Wellbeing-Scores (WEMWBS), indicating risk of clinical depression. Key issues highlighted included low energy, reduced confidence, poor work–life balance, and self-imposed pressure. These findings became the blueprint for the project. Every action, from developing a tailored mental health handbook, to introducing physical wellbeing activities, clinical supervision, and everyday morale-boosters, was designed in direct response to these needs. By grounding the project in staff-led evidence, we ensured the support provided is both relevant and impactful, tackling the root causes of poor wellbeing rather than offering generic solutions.

How does (or will) the project create positive outcomes for its intended audiences?

This project delivers positive outcomes by focusing on prevention rather than simply reacting to problems. Our first wellbeing survey in 2023 showed low WEMWBS scores, but when we repeated the survey in 2025, results had already improved significantly, clear evidence that the project is reducing mental health risks for staff. Better wellbeing has a domino effect: higher retention, fewer sick days, and ultimately stronger service for clients. Happier, healthier staff provide better support, which is reflected in our Client Experience survey, QAA results, and overall statistics, consistently meeting KPIs. Derbyshire County Council has recognised that our results outperform those seen in similar local VCSE organisations. By embedding open conversations, peer support, and staff-led initiatives, we are building a resilient, motivated team and a culture where staff, volunteers, and clients all thrive.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

"We pledge Prioritising Mental Health in our Organisation"-deserves the award because it puts staff wellbeing first, turning evidence into action. It has already boosted mental health, reduced risks, and improved client-service; earning official recognition from the local authority and setting a new standard for wellbeing in a uniquely challenging sector.

The Circle Group

South Worcestershire Citizens Advice

What is the potential of this project to improve wellbeing of staff, volunteers and/or clients over the short and long term?

The Circle Group has proven benefits on client wellbeing, with 89% of participants reporting improvements in their wellbeing scores by the end of the course. In the short term, the structured 10-week programme helps to lessen the impact of isolation, anxiety, and low confidence by creating a safe, welcoming environment where participants can build social connections and explore practical coping strategies. Activities such as yoga, creative workshops, and relaxation sessions nurture engagement while providing a theme for signposting participants to ongoing community opportunities.

In the longer term, the project supports sustained resilience by empowering individuals to access local resources and maintain community involvement. Many participants have gone on to take up new hobbies, made new friends or moved into volunteering and employment, highlighting its transformative impact. By fostering confidence, belonging, and

self-efficacy, the Circle Group enables participants to continue thriving well beyond the programme, reducing long-term reliance on formal services.

Demonstrate how this project clearly meets an identified need of staff, volunteers and/or clients.

The idea of the group came about because of the number of Social Prescribing referrals we received from GPs that cited social isolation or low level anxiety as a predominant factor. Our Social Prescribing team, who are all incredibly passionate about improving wellbeing, identified a gap in provision of this type of informal peer support. They got together to create a safe, welcoming space for people, not really knowing if clients would feel able to attend. The response has been fantastic and the clients involved in each group have helped to shape the agendas of each meeting and the future of the group beyond their initial 10 week period of engagement. Many group members have made lasting friendships and continue to meet up and support each other after the Circle sessions have come to an end. One said 'it brought me back to what I used to be'.

How does (or will) the project create positive outcomes for its intended audiences?

The Circle group has found that perfect balance of engaging and relevant activities, as well as less structured sessions that allow people to interact, talk if they wish, sit on the side and observe until they are ready to contribute, or get fully involved in the session and the planning of future sessions.

Its small, supportive groups provide a safe space where individuals experiencing isolation, anxiety, or low confidence can participate (or just be there) without pressure. Each week introduces taster sessions which help the group to build confidence and find something they enjoy. The group leaders can then link participants to groups who run those activities in the community, ensuring that new skills and interests can continue to grow beyond the programme. One said 'I have got more confidence. I am more comfortable with who I am, less lonely and I have ideas for things I can take up'.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

We just love The Circle, it has a special atmosphere and is the highlight of many staff members' weeks, as well as clients because the transformation in peoples' confidence and resilience, and the changes they go on to make as a result of being there is incredibly rewarding.

Championing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Autism Advice Project

Lewes District Citizens Advice and Brighton & Hove Citizens Advice

How has this project made, or will have the potential to make, Citizens Advice, and/or local Citizens Advice charities, and/or the Witness Service more equitable and inclusive; either as a place to work or volunteer or in how we deliver services?

The Autism Advice Project has made our service more equitable by embedding inclusive practices into advice delivery for autistic clients, who often face systemic barriers in accessing support. By offering flexible appointment structures, integrated issue support, and proactive follow-up, we've created a model that meets neurodiverse needs and reduces anxiety around benefits systems. This approach has improved client outcomes and engagement, and also fostered a more inclusive working environment—encouraging staff to reflect on accessibility and adapt their practice. The project's co-development with autistic individuals ensures lived experience is central, and its success has inspired wider conversations about inclusive service design. It demonstrates how small, local charities can lead meaningful change in equity and accessibility, both for clients and within the workplace.

How have people with lived experience been consulted throughout the development of this project?

The Autism Advice Project was co-developed from the outset with autistic individuals, whose lived experience shaped its design, delivery, and ongoing evolution. Initial consultations identified key barriers autistic clients face—such as difficulties with digital systems, rigid appointment formats, and communication challenges. These insights directly informed the project's flexible structure and personalised support model. Autistic clients continue to provide feedback through informal conversations, structured reviews, and reflective sessions with advisers, ensuring the service remains responsive and relevant. Their input has led to practical changes, such as extending appointment timeframes and improving sensory accessibility in office spaces. They have also supported in the development of promotional material. This ongoing dialogue ensures the project is not only inclusive in its outcomes but also in its process—centering autistic voices in every decision.

How does this project include collaboration across a wide range of stakeholders, ideally from across the network and national, and show any plans to scale the project further?

The Autism Advice Project is a collaborative initiative between LDCA and B&H CA, with shared delivery across Lewes and Brighton. It brings together advisers, managers, autistic individuals, and external partners—including local support organisations and DWP contacts—to create a joined-up, inclusive service. Staff across both offices share learning and best practice, ensuring consistency and continuous improvement. The project aligns with national Citizens Advice priorities around accessibility and inclusion, and has already generated interest from other local offices seeking to replicate its model. Resources developed—such as training materials and delivery frameworks—are designed for scalability, allowing other services to adopt and adapt the approach. Plans are underway to share findings and tools more widely across the network, supporting a broader shift toward inclusive advice delivery for neurodiverse clients.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?
The Autism Advice Project deserves this award because it transforms how advice is delivered to autistic people—embedding lived experience, inclusive practice, and collaborative innovation to dismantle systemic barriers and create a scalable model for equitable service across the Citizens Advice network.

Citizens Advice Manchester's EDI Strategy

Citizens Advice Manchester

How has this project made, or will have the potential to make, Citizens Advice, and/or local Citizens Advice charities, and/or the Witness Service more equitable and inclusive; either as a place to work or volunteer or in how we deliver services?
Our EDI strategy has made our service more equitable and inclusive by embedding principles into both our client-facing work and our internal culture.
For clients, we've increased place-based advice, removing barriers like travel costs and digital exclusion. By analysing local data, we established advice hubs in the heart of communities that need us most. Recognising linguistic diversity, we now utilise our bilingual advisers to communicate with clients in their own language and have introduced multilingual feedback forms. This ensures clients feel welcomed and understood, providing us with invaluable insight into how different demographics experience our service.

Internally, we have fostered a safer and more aware working environment through targeted training and our staff-led EDI Working Group. The success of this internal focus is evidenced by our recent staff survey, where:
92% of staff feel strongly that we champion EDI as part of our organisational culture.
92% of staff strongly believe that we actively hire diverse employees.
86% of staff strongly feel that leadership at all levels demonstrates a commitment to EDI.
86% of staff strongly feel that they truly belong at CAM

How have people with lived experience been consulted throughout the development of this project?
People with lived experience are central to the design and delivery of our EDI strategy, ensuring our work is authentic and effective.

In the community, we have trained local people to become 'CAMunity Connectors.' These individuals, who have direct experience of the challenges in their neighbourhoods, act as a vital bridge, sharing insight into local needs and helping to shape our service delivery. We also actively engaged with community groups, such as the Muslim mothers' groups at Longsight Family Hub, to hear directly about the barriers they face.

Our internal initiatives are also led by lived experience. The training modules on mental health and neurodiversity were developed by our training lead, who has personal experience in both areas. Similarly, our hate crime training was co-designed by staff with direct and indirect experience of hate crimes. Finally, our EDI Working Group is composed of self-nominated ambassadors who use their own experiences to raise concerns and advocate for change, as seen in our rapid responses to national events affecting racialised and LGBTQ+ communities.

How does this project include collaboration across a wide range of stakeholders, ideally from across the network and national, and show any plans to scale the project further?
Collaboration is a cornerstone of our strategy, enabling us to learn from others and amplify our impact. We have partnered with Manchester's Local Authority's Hate Crime Policy Office to design and validate our hate crime training. We actively participate in campaigns like the Greater Manchester End Hate Crime campaign and have celebrated with the LGBTQ+ community by marching in Manchester Pride. Furthermore, we have consulted with other LCAs and external organisations to improve our services for clients who are deaf or have hearing impairments.
We have clear plans to scale these successful initiatives.
The 'CAMunity Connectors' model is a scalable framework that can be replicated in other localities to build trust and embed services within diverse communities.

Our internal training , such as Neurodiversity Awareness, have been designed to be easily shared and adapted by other LCAs across the network.
The structure of our EDI Working Group and Ambassador programme serves as a blueprint for other organisations wishing to create an effective, staff-led internal body to champion EDI.
We are committed to sharing our learnings to help build a more inclusive service nationwide.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?
This project deserves the award because it is a holistic and intentional EDI strategy, co-designed with people of lived experience, that has created tangible, positive change for both our diverse workforce and the communities we serve.

Removing Barriers through communication

Citizens Advice in West Sussex (North, South, East)

How has this project made, or will have the potential to make, Citizens Advice, and/or local Citizens Advice charities, and/or the Witness Service more equitable and inclusive; either as a place to work or volunteer or in how we deliver services?
The Removing Barriers through Communication project has elevated our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion work by turning community engagement into actionable insights to improve accessibility. Taking an integrated approach for residents facing inequalities, the project lead used marketing personas to redesign our website—creating an inclusive, disability-compliant platform with improved navigation, neurodiversity-friendly features, translatable and relatable content. The site now supports wider social media reach, QR code access at events, and serves as a trusted gateway for those unfamiliar with Citizens Advice. This digital transformation was complemented by scaling up pop-up events in the community and at Faith Groups, applying the same inclusive principles—such as at Crawley Pride, where interactive activities like children's games sparked conversations and provided help to first-time users. By bringing services into communities, listening to their voices, and embedding their feedback across all access points, we've made our support more inclusive, visible, and equitable .

How have people with lived experience been consulted throughout the development of this project?
We built on our community engagement and research work including feedback from over 50 people in language cafe's, staff and volunteers with lived experience, reviewing feedback from 3 research projects which reached over 300 people

and speaking to clients as they came to us across multiple sites. The feedback from over 60 young people on how they access information was invaluable in understanding the challenge we faced as well as the opportunities. We believe in continuous improvement and the work is not complete, our next steps will be to use analytics and feedback to identify impact but importantly the changes we need to continue to make and build on so we remain inclusive.

How does this project include collaboration across a wide range of stakeholders, ideally from across the network and national, and show any plans to scale the project further?
The project was built on collaboration with the communities and residents we wanted to reach, where data and insight gathering showed low awareness of barriers. This included marginalised groups and where our data said we were not accessible. We spoke with other Citizens Advice to understand their work and aimed to be aligned with National Citizens Advice marketing changes so we could future proof the work and build on the positive impact of being a network. The next steps will be to run, share and learn webinars which local offices will be invited to attend to see the changes we made, how we got there and what we would do differently for example awareness of social media algorithms, IT challenges and measuring success.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?
This forward-thinking project combined bold branding with the voices of marginalised communities to transform accessibility through inclusive, engaging communication. By integrating our brand across digital platforms and community events, it broke down barriers and clearly demonstrated our values, ensuring equitable access to support for all.

Best External Partnership Collaboration

FLOWS - Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors
RCJ Advice

How does this partnership drive significant benefit for our clients?

FLOWS (Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors) is a partnership between RCJ Advice and Rights of Women which provides a range of legal support and advice services to survivors of domestic abuse across England & Wales. A particular focus is helping people work out their best legal option in order to get immediate safety and secure longer term stability for themselves and their families. Between April 2021 and March 2025, FLOWS reached 59,442 survivors of domestic abuse directly with legal advice, and more than 345,000 people received advice or information through FLOWS digital systems. Most powerful are survivors' own words – "FLOWS is the difference between giving up and finding safety" and "I don't think I'd be here without FLOWS...it was someone believing me, standing with me, when I felt like I had no one." For many, it is the reason they and their children are safe today.

How does this project demonstrate successful working relationships across a range of stakeholders?
FLOWS works in partnership with Rights of Women, whose services are focused on reducing violence against women and girls. They have a trusted network of organisations across England & Wales, in order to ensure that they then trust the services provided through FLOWS, and run by RCJ Advice. FLOWS also works in partnership with a trusted network of 138 accredited law firms. If someone is eligible for Legal Aid, we can put the person in contact either with a law firm in their area, or a national law firm where there aren't any local firms. FLOWS also works with over 1,977 frontline professionals, who help ensure survivors are never left without support and protection. These frontline professionals, including those from local Citizens Advice, ensure people are supported through the process. FLOWS also works in partnership with university law departments, bringing additional volunteer capacity to support our national telephone helpline

What are the opportunities to scale the project further?
Currently, people wishing to seek immediate protection from an emergency court order, can complete the form using one of the online tools within FLOWS called CourtNav. The form needs to be then downloaded and submitted to the relevant court. RCJ Advice is currently working His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) to pilot then roll out a new approach. Once the application form for an emergency court order is completed, the form will then be able to be submitted online directly in the HMCTS court system. This means that no form needs to be downloaded, and then because the person will have set up an online account with HMTCS they can track the progress of their court application. RCJ Advice is currently testing this with HMCTS in some courts in England and Wales, to then look at rolling out across all courts.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?
FLOWS, Finding Legal Options for Women survivors, is a brilliant example of collaboration between RCJ Advice, a leading

women's justice organisation, frontline professionals, law firms and university students to help survivors of domestic abuse seek protection, safety and longer term stability for themselves and their families.

Hampshire Mental Health & Advice Project

Citizens Advices Winchester District, Basingstoke, Southampton and Solent East

How does this partnership drive significant benefit for our clients?

This partnership tackles the underlying social stressors that often trigger or prolong mental health crises. By embedding a Citizens Advice Caseworker within NHS acute mental health wards, patients receive immediate, specialist support on debt, benefits, housing, and other practical challenges. Independent research confirms the project's impact: 96% of patients said social stressors had been harming their mental health, yet following support, anxiety reduced significantly. Average financial gain per person was £2,798. Service users describe the service as "invaluable" in supporting recovery and easing worries about the future. By reducing financial harm, preventing homelessness, and enabling sustainable discharge, the service directly improves quality of life and restores a sense of hope. For the NHS, this integrated model reduces repeat admissions and frees clinical staff to focus on care, creating benefits across the health system as well as for individuals.

How does this project demonstrate successful working relationships across a range of stakeholders?

The project is a national first, initially delivered through close collaboration between Citizens Advice Winchester District and Hampshire & Isle of Wight NHS Foundation Trust and subsequently extended to other acute mental health hospitals in the region. The co-location of Caseworkers in wards ensures seamless integration with clinical teams, who unanimously report workload reduction and improved patient outcomes. Ward staff highlight that being able to refer patients for housing or financial support enables them to focus on health, while patients benefit from expert, trusted advice they could not otherwise access. The partnership also extends beyond the hospital: families are supported, the Caseworker engages with third-part support (e.g. Housing, Social Care) and warm handovers are made to local Citizens Advice offices post-discharge. The model has gained NHS leadership and parliamentary backing, as well as national media attention. This demonstrates the strength and scalability of a truly cross-sector, multi-stakeholder collaboration.

What are the opportunities to scale the project further?
The model has already grown from a single ward pilot to all acute mental health hospitals across Hampshire & Isle of Wight, demonstrating both demand and adaptability. We see opportunities in extending to more hospitals, expanding capacity for ongoing post-discharge casework to ensure consistency of support and developing community-based interventions (offering preventative support). Independent evaluation found a £14:1 return on investment, with cost avoidance of £244,850 in the pilot year, strengthening the case for further rollout. Nationally, the service offers a blueprint for embedding Citizens Advice support into mental health pathways, aligning with NHS England's "No Wrong Door" vision. With strategic promotion through industry press, media, and Citizens Advice's health strategy, the project can inform and influence new national mental health policy. Scaling would enable thousands more people in crisis to access timely, specialist advice, improving recovery outcomes while reducing NHS pressure.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?
Because it is an innovative, evidence-backed model that transforms recovery by addressing the social stressors behind mental health crises - delivering hope for patients, measurable relief for NHS staff, and a £14:1 return on investment for the health system, as well as bringing positive attention to Citizens Advice nationally.

Advising Londoners Partnership

London Citizens Advice

How does this partnership drive significant benefit for our clients?
We are in the third year of this partnership having originally evolved from a 1-year special Cost-of-living grant; over nearly 3 years the partnership has provided advice support to 78,000 Londoners. Across the partnership £35 million client financial gains have been recorded over the same period, and 26,000+ Londoners have attended cost of living events. The partnership involves over 40 advice agencies working together, also reaching further also by engaging with community groups and the wider voluntary sector across London; Advice First Aid (AFA) is delivered as part of the partnership - frontline workers and volunteers from VCSE/service organisations across London, from Foodbanks, to churches, mosques, carers' organisations and more, have received AFA training. This enables trained advice first aiders

to support their service users more effectively and connect into advice and wider support provision in the community, a significant multiplier effect for the reach of this partnership.

How does this project demonstrate successful working relationships across a range of stakeholders?
There are over 40 advice agencies delivering under this partnership, reaching underserved communities in London. The project is structured as strategic partnership between the Greater London Authority (GLA) as funder, London Citizens Advice, and the London Legal Support Trust, a funder of specialist legal advice agencies, with LCA and LLST subcontracting work for local partnership delivery to increase capacity both generalist and specialist advice. The delivery model is flexible and localised for agencies working on the ground, but key focus is delivering advice in community outreach settings, and/or working with local community partners via referrals and other means to reach those impacted by financial hardship who tend not to seek support. Around 200 different community partners organisations have been involved, supported through a London-wide Advice First Aid programme.

What are the opportunities to scale the project further?
The partnership has already evolved and scaled, the London Citizens Advice holds the contract for local offices; initially the Citizens Advice lead was RCJ Advice, but given the significant amount of funding increasing year on year a decision was taken to form a London wide consortium, as a new incorporated charity. The funding envelope has increased from £2.3m in year 1 to £2.5m in year 2, to £2.75m in year 3. We are currently discussing a further round with GLA, a new programme is being devised for the scaled delivery of advice to families within Family Hub Setting and Children's centres, built on the same principles and collaborative working between local Citizens Advice and other specialist legal advice agencies. The evaluation has demonstrated how this successful model of regional-level strategic funding and delivery can be scalable, and several Government Departments and City Authorities have been looking at this. See https://londoncitizensadvice.org.uk/projects-partnerships/advising-londoners-partnership-2-year-evaluation

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?
It has secured much needed additional funding to help over 78,000 vulnerable Londoners through the cost-of-living crisis, putting £35 million back into their pockets, and reaching further into the community through a unique and strategic regional partnership.

Power of our Network Award: Best Collaborative Working Across the Network

Local Support Offer Project - Co-design and Consultancy workstreams

Local Support Offer Project Team (National) over 80 local Citizens Advice involved

How does this project show collaborative working across both national and the network?

The Local Support Offer co-design and consultancy project workstreams has brought together over 150 staff and volunteers across local and national Citizens advice, to co-design the support available to local Citizens Advice from the national charity.

With multiple co-design and consultancy workstreams taking place during 2025 and continuing into 2026, we've had in person, remote and asynchronous workshops taking place, with over 80 local Citizens Advice representatives involved in co-design while also carrying out their very busy roles at their local offices.

Many workshops have been co-led between local and national colleagues demonstrating the huge commitment by all involved to work collaboratively.
Healthy discussions, challenging conversations, laughter and above all listening to each other has truly shown how we can work together as one service with many leaders, co-designing and collaborating together.

How does this project help to solve an existing challenge impacting our service and/or clients?

It's been over 8 years since the current membership arrangements went live in April 2017. At the time these reset expectations, both in terms of what the network can expect from being a member and what national Citizens Advice can expect in return. Even after this work the membership support arrangements were only outlined in the broadest of terms

The support offer has changed over time, and there are a number of challenges with it.

Prompted by feedback from local Citizens Advice, national staff, and by increasing financial pressures locally and nationally, in January 2024 we began work together to redesign the support offer with this aim:

To deliver a revised local support offer and approach to nationally funded services that supports every part of our service to better serve clients, enables advice that's fit for the future, and reduces our cost base to ensure service-wide competitiveness.

What are the opportunities to scale this project further, or for others in our service to replicate it?

This project is focusing on working together to shape solutions. In co-design sessions it is not clear who is a local or national representative- everyone is focused on making things work better.

The potential for others in our service to replicate this way of working is huge. Co-designing, co-creating, co-production, collaborating, whichever word you choose, it's the most rewarding and satisfying way to identify issues and come up with solutions together.

From collaborating on exciting technology solutions such as AI, to co-designing support services, to making informed decisions together, we are far greater than the sum of our parts and working together we can achieve amazing things. I would encourage everyone across the Citizens Advice service to reach out to each other and explore how we can collaborate together to continue to shape a society where people face far fewer problems.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

In the 30 years I've been with Citizens Advice this is the best example of collaborative working that I've seen, shaping a strong shared culture of working together with a shared purpose - true collaboration across the service, it makes my heart sing.

London Citizens Advice Pan-London programme

London Citizens Advice

How does this project show collaborative working across both national and the network?

A 3-year process has created the largest consortium in the Citizens Advice network; London Citizens Advice. London CA is a consortium of the 28 local Citizens Advice offices across Greater London. The process started in 2019 when London LCA Chief Officers commissioned scoping report on enhanced Pan-London working; consultant's report found there was insufficient focus/capacity in the London network to leverage Pan-London collaboration, influencing and funding opportunities. It recommended either a) creating a consortium as it own legal entity, or b) enhancing the London network through a shared staff resource for development work under the governance of a CEO steering group. Following the latter approach, a development worker based at RCJ Advice in (2022) secured significant new funding via a strategic partnership with the Greater London Authority and Mayor's office. CEOs then decided to explore the consortium model, a consultation engaging 28 different LCA boards resulted in all London LCAs agreeing in 2024 to form a consortium, becoming formally incorporated in 2024 with its own board. The consortium has now been operational for a year, employing 2 staff, generating £1.5m income.

How does this project help to solve an existing challenge impacting our service and/or clients?

With LCAs struggling for their sustainability and pressures on local core funding, there is a need to create structures to engage with regional funding opportunities, win bids, influence Mayoral authorities, and collaborate across wider geographies to achieve economies of scale. What started out as a collaborative project to address these issues has succeeded in securing new regional funding, and creating a new business structure for Citizens Advice in London. It has enabled wider engagement with NHS Integrated Care Boards, the London Councils group, the City and corporate partners in London, and many other key stakeholders that operate on a Pan-London basis. As well as the funding gains, we have secured representation on the London Partnership and Growth Boards, and have become a key partner with several initiatives from London Funders. It has helped to grow our service offer in London, for example with the advising Londoners partnership that has supported 78,000 clients (with £35m in financial gains.)

What are the opportunities to scale this project further, or for others in our service to replicate it?

Managing such a large consortium has challenges, but it also offers a great demonstration to other regional and sub-regional LCA networks about how to be inclusive, and engage LCAs (Trustees, Chief Officers, Staff and volunteers) in a change mature management conversation and decision-making process. Organisational, HR, legal and financial barriers have been overcome, associate membership secured, and the capacity to secure and manage contracts. The consortium, which became an employer of its own staff in April is now adopting a programme management approach and developing its governance. As new powers are passed to Mayoral authorities, the "strategic partnership" secured with the GLA can serve as a template for other strategic or combined authority areas. The model will continue to evolve, and London Citizens Advice is grateful for all of the work of the Strategic Change team at national Citizens Advice to help

make this happen, the new local support offer encourages the consortium model and regional working as the direction of travel.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

The successful creation of the largest consortium in the network has been a huge achievement as a collaboration and change management project, improving the standing, reach and profile of the Citizens Advice service in the UK's Capital City, and reaching more Londoners.

National Corporate Volunteering programme co-delivered with LCA's and strategic corporate partners - Employer-supported Adviser Secondments* *An 'Employer-supported adviser secondment' means that the corporate partner colleague is hosted by their local Citizens Advice as a volunteer in an advice and information giving role, while being paid by their employer for this time. We work with our national corporate partners to secure volunteering leave of 1+ day per week for 12+ months for these placements. This far exceeds the usual volunteering leave most corporate organisations provide for their staff, which is usually 1-5 days each year.

National: Corporate Volunteering Team, Fundraising, Partnerships & Advocacy directorate. Local Services: Aviva Adviser Secondments: Citizens Advice Rotherham, Citizens Advice Sheffield, Citizens Advice South West Surrey, Citizens Advice York, Norfolk Citizens Advice. National Grid Adviser Secondments: Citizens Advice Birmingham, Citizens Advice Bromley, Citizens Advice Bromsgrove and Redditch, Citizens Advice Coventry, Citizens Advice East Berkshire, Citizens Advice Greenwich, Citizens Advice Wandsworth, Citizens Advice South Warwickshire

How does this project show collaborative working across both national and the network?

Through our partnerships we've identified that corporate colleagues in customer-facing roles frequently interact with customers experiencing issues beyond the scope and expertise of their business. Colleagues completing adviser placements predominantly work in Customer Vulnerability teams, enabling us to share best practice and positively inform the corporate's vulnerable customer strategies.

As a result colleagues spot vulnerability indicators earlier and share learning with their peers to cascade best practice. Customers in difficult circumstances can be identified and supported before their issues escalate, potentially before the point of needing to access our services.

The success is a result of collaboration. Local teams train corporate volunteers to understand vulnerability, while the national team facilitates peer learning and feedback. Volunteers share insights with their wider teams, and the national team provide feedback to senior corporate stakeholders, influencing their strategies on early intervention for vulnerable customers.

Alongside this, placements have supported 4,864 clients so far.

How does this project help to solve an existing challenge impacting our service and/or clients?

The collaboration between national and local Citizens Advice has been crucial to the success of the adviser placements. The national Corporate Partnerships team secured the opportunity with 2 of our largest national corporate partners, leading on the overall coordination of the programme. Participating LCA's worked with the national team to host the placement and provide an exceptional volunteering experience for corporate colleagues.

We have had fantastic feedback from the cohort of volunteers currently on the programme, and we are currently in the process of agreeing the scale of the next cohort. This is a testament to the strength of the programme, which is made possible through the close collaboration between national and local Citizens Advice.

What are the opportunities to scale this project further, or for others in our service to replicate it?

We now have a strong proof of concept for the adviser programme and case studies that illustrate how impactful it is for LCA's, local communities and corporate partners. We've seen first-hand that placements improves the skills, resilience and understanding for corporate colleagues and enables them to better support their own vulnerable customers. This video from National Grid highlights the impact of this collaboration.

Following the initial programme with Aviva we're now looking to onboard new cohorts and scale up to further LCA's. Alongside this the colleagues who have completed their 12 month placement will have the opportunity to continue volunteering 1-2 days each month during their working hours. This enables further collaboration between national and local Citizens Advice, and our corporate partners, and will continue to bring much needed resource to frontline advice delivery to support local communities.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

This project is a deserving winner for its innovative cross-sector collaboration. By leveraging national corporate partnerships we can directly support local Citizens Advice, helping thousands more people. This unique model also has the power to influence corporate-sector vulnerable customer strategies to create powerful, long-lasting changes for the whole of society.

South Yorkshire Digital Inclusion Network

Citizens Advice Doncaster

How does this project show collaborative working across both national and the network?

The South Yorkshire Digital Inclusion Network exemplifies collaborative working at scale, coordinated by Citizens Advice Doncaster in partnership with Citizens Advice Barnsley, Rotherham, and Sheffield.
This project brings together the collective strength of local Citizens Advice offices across South Yorkshire with key national partners to tackle digital exclusion. Led by Citizens Advice Doncaster, the programme coordinates delivery across Barnsley, Rotherham, and Sheffield, supported by over 80 community and statutory partners.

We work closely with national organisations such as the Good Things Foundation, aligning with their databank and device schemes, and the NSPCC, embedding online safety into our delivery for families and vulnerable adults. This collaboration ensures consistent, high-quality support at a local level, backed by national expertise.

The partnership model enables us to share learning, scale what works, and connect grassroots delivery with national infrastructure—creating a joined-up response to a complex, evolving challenge. Together, we've built a digital inclusion network rooted in community need but powered by national collaboration.

How does this project help to solve an existing challenge impacting our service and/or clients?

Digital exclusion is a growing barrier for our clients—limiting access to vital services, reducing financial resilience, and deepening social isolation. Many struggle to complete online forms, manage Universal Credit journals, or engage with essential support due to a lack of digital skills, devices, or connectivity.

This project tackles these challenges head-on with a coordinated, South Yorkshire-wide response. Through one-to-one advice appointments, community-based digital skills courses, device and SIM donation schemes, and connectivity grants, we've created accessible and dignified pathways into digital inclusion.

By embedding this offer across all four local Citizens Advice offices and 80+ referral partners, we are reaching those most hard to reach communities who feel the impact of the digital divide. Delivering support through a digital lens has strengthened our advice offer, built additional capacity into our teams, and expanded the reach of our partnerships. The project also contributes vital insight to national understanding of how digital access intersects with poverty and service accessibility.

What are the opportunities to scale this project further, or for others in our service to replicate it?

The South Yorkshire Digital Inclusion Network is designed with scalability and replication in mind. With clear workstreams, shared resources, and a flexible delivery model, it offers a blueprint for regional collaboration that can be adapted nationally.

Key components—such as centralised grant distribution, a device bank, community-based training, and cross-partner referral systems—can be implemented by other Citizens Advice services with the right coordination and funding.

The project has already demonstrated success by aligning local delivery with NHS priorities, forming strong partnerships with VCSEs and public sector bodies, and embedding digital support into advice services.

There is significant opportunity to scale this model through national Citizens Advice infrastructure, ICS partnerships, or future missions-based programmes. Additionally, the data and learning we've captured provide a solid foundation to advocate for sustainable digital inclusion funding, positioning Citizens Advice as a national leader in tackling digital exclusion as a social justice issue.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

This project ensures no one is left behind—bringing together national and local partners to tackle digital exclusion and build a more connected, empowered South Yorkshire.

Best Client Service Innovation

Virtual Court Tours Project

Continuous Improvement Team - Witness Service

How does this project help to solve an existing challenge impacting our service delivery and clients?

Witness are offered the opportunity to attend a physical court to look round ahead of trial this is known as a pre-trial visit (PTV). For many this can be inconvenient, time consuming, costly or just impractical due to work childcare or disability. Virtual Court Tours (VCT) have been developed to allow witness the ability to have a virtual tour of the actual court they will be attending, presented during a video call by a volunteer or staff member who can provide a real equitable alternative to the pre-trial visit. In Q1 of this year they were used 97 times for this reason. They can also used during preparation session with vulnerable witnesses ahead of a court visit and in Q1 they were used 126 times. Finally the product can also be used by those who are able to attend court but where a court room might not be available to view. In this situation a volunteer can use the virtual tour in addition to their physical tour.

Examples of those who benefit - A witness that can't get time off work can have a video call in their lunch break, a witness with anxiety doesn't need to leave home unnecessarily, a child can see a virtual court alongside an explanation of a difficult concept.

How does this project demonstrate strong collaboration across a range of stakeholders as part of its delivery?

The VCT idea was developed by the continuous improvement teas but it has taken a huge collaboration to get it off the group. We partnered with a third party (We are digital) to develop the concept and develop our first product for a court in Manchester. We worked alongside HMCTS, the judiciary and the security service to get permission to film. Then local Witness Service staff and area managers had to physically do the photography of the court building. After many iterations with developers and sign off by local staff the first court tour was ready.

In the initial stages we only had funding to develop a portion of court tours but due to the interest and value of the project we have now got funding from the MOJ to develop court tours for every court in the country where we operate a pre-trial service which is 211. At the moment we have almost 75% of these tours completed.

The filming has been completed by the 20+ local area managers who have each had to seek permissions in their courts and get dates for filming, secure equipment and then work with stakeholder to get the product signed off. Staff and volunteers in the service have now started using them with witnesses.

What are the opportunities to scale this project further, or for others in our service to replicate it?

This is a difficult question as we are in the scaling up stage. We were originally given funding by the MOJ for 118 courts but immediately they and other stakeholders saw the value in the product and we secured funding for the remaining courts taking the total to 211 court tours.

At the moment due to security the court tours are strictly managed by the Witness Service and we show the court tours to witnesses but they can't view them on their own or have access to the URL for the product due to court security reasons. However there would be value in developing the product to allow people to take a court tour on our website. there is also an opportunity to explore using virtual reality headsets alongside the court tour and we did purchase a couple of these to explore the idea however due to the situation with the current Witness Service contract neither of these ideas have been taken any further.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

The introduction of Virtual Court Tours has allowed witnesses to access to the support and preparation for attending court without physically having to go there, reducing barriers to access and increasing participation.

CaseNote

Citizens Advice SORT Innovation Team

How does this project help to solve an existing challenge impacting our service delivery and clients?

This project tackles the significant challenge of adviser time constraints and service delivery bottlenecks at Citizens Advice. By automating the manual and time-consuming process of creating casenotes, the tool directly addresses a key inefficiency. Advisers previously spent a substantial portion of their time on administrative tasks, diverting them from direct client support.

The AI casenote automation tool, now transforms transcriptions of client conversations across channels into structured, accurate casenotes instantly. This innovation has two major impacts: it frees up adviser time to help more clients, and it improves the consistency and quality of case records. Ultimately, this project could allow Citizens Advice to enhance its service delivery, reduce client waiting times, and provide more timely and effective support to those who need it most.

How does this project demonstrate strong collaboration across a range of stakeholders as part of its delivery?

This project's success is a testament to strong collaboration across diverse stakeholders. Citizens Advice staff, including both advisers and supervisors, were integral from the outset, providing crucial insights into the existing casenote process and validating the project's ability to address their pain points. This ensured the tool was built with their needs at its core.

The development team worked in close partnership with advisers and supervisors, establishing a continuous feedback loop. Advisers and supervisors provide expert feedback on the quality and accuracy of the generated notes, and this input is used to refine the AI's prompts and outputs.

This shared approach reinforces that the tool's effectiveness is as much about the expertise of our advisers as it is about the technology. It demonstrates a collective focus from all stakeholders on a single goal: helping more people by enhancing efficiency and the quality of service delivery.

What are the opportunities to scale this project further, or for others in our service to replicate it?

The tool's potential for scaling is significant, rooted in its proven effectiveness and flexible design. We're now successfully trialing it in two other local offices, demonstrating its adaptability across diverse advice channels—face-to-face, digital, and phone. It could be optimised for different services like MAPS and Help to Claim. This not only proves the tool is robust but also provides a clear blueprint for wider adoption. In the last 12 months, the project has already generated over 20,000 casenotes, which serves as a powerful proof point for its impact and a solid foundation for future growth. As we continue to refine the AI with adviser feedback, we are confident it can be scaled across the entire Citizens Advice

network, standardising quality and empowering every adviser to help more people.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

CaseNote deserves the award for its innovative use of AI to solve a critical real-world problem, demonstrating how technology can be used to dramatically improve adviser efficiency and empower Citizens Advice to help thousands more people.

When Advice Really Matters (WARM)

Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire

How does this project help to solve an existing challenge impacting our service delivery and clients?

Many clients who are struggling frequently present at GP surgeries for support with non-medical issues, as they often do not know where else to turn and would find it difficult to seek advice independently. The WARM project addresses this challenge by taking referrals directly from GPs, nurses, care coordinators, and social prescribers. It focuses on people with low to moderate mental health needs who are also facing urgent practical issues such as benefits, debt, or housing problems.

The project has already delivered life-changing outcomes: securing £13,000 in backdated benefits for one client due to a 2022 error, recovering £10,000 for another after a migration issue, resolving homelessness for more than 10 people, and supporting over 100 clients with Personal Independence Payment claims. Without WARM, many of these individuals would not have accessed support at all, making it an essential innovation in reaching vulnerable clients earlier and more effectively.

How does this project demonstrate strong collaboration across a range of stakeholders as part of its delivery?

The WARM project demonstrates strong collaboration through close working relationships with medical professionals, the local council, and social prescribers, ensuring clients receive coordinated support that addresses both health and

practical needs. Information is shared on a near-daily basis, enabling joined-up care across areas such as housing, debt, and benefits. On average, each client supported through the project has seen a financial gain of over £2,500, alongside wider improvements in wellbeing.

The project also contributes to innovation in partnership working. By participating in the local council's Creative Solutions Board, it has helped design tailored approaches for complex cases where conventional methods failed. The project lead has further strengthened collaboration by delivering training to council staff and partner agencies on supporting complex clients, sharing effective strategies that improve outcomes and client satisfaction. This commitment to shared learning and problem-solving underpins the project's success and demonstrates the power of partnership.

What are the opportunities to scale this project further, or for others in our service to replicate it?

In just 18 months, the WARM project has grown from one primary care network to all six across South Gloucestershire, proving it can scale quickly and effectively. With strong local partnerships, a track record of delivery, and endorsement from health professionals, the project has clear potential to expand across all localities within our regional Integrated Care Board area.

We have secured £118,000 over two years in seed funding from our locality partnership and are actively seeking additional investment to accelerate growth. The project's structured model, established processes, and strong evidence of impact make it easily replicable for other Local Citizens Advice services across the network. Scaling up would enable us to reach more people earlier, ease pressure on health and social care, and show how embedding advice in health settings can improve outcomes for communities nationwide.

In one sentence, why do you think this project deserves this award?

The WARM project deserves this award because it relies on strong external partnership collaboration with GPs, social prescribers, and community professionals, creating an integrated pathway that links healthcare and advice - strengthening trust between services and maximising positive outcomes for vulnerable clients who would otherwise struggle to access the help they need.

Vote now!

You have read the shortlisted nominations - now you can cast your vote!

Vote using the Google Form here. To make sure voting is fair, only 1 vote per person per category will be counted. Everyone across Citizens Advice (national and local) can vote.

Attend Annual Conference and join our Awards Ceremony on Thursday 13 November. The ceremony will also be streamed live on Workvivo and will be available to watch back afterwards.

Voting closes on 30 October at 5.00pm

If you have any questions about the awards please contact events.team@citizensadvice.org.uk