



East Dorset
& Purbeck

Impact Report

The People's Champion

2024-2025



About us

Citizens Advice in East Dorset and Purbeck is an independent charity that provides free, confidential and impartial advice and support. Our goal is to help local people find a way forward, whatever their problem. In 2024-25, this is how many people we helped:



People helped
5,625



Issues
28,731

We have offices in Wareham and Wimborne as well as outreach locations throughout East Dorset and Purbeck. We also have an Advice Bus that connects rural communities. We are part of the Citizens Advice network in Dorset and across England and Wales.

Our Principles

- Free
- Confidential
- Independent
- Impartial

Our Aims

We give people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward and we work to challenge the underlying causes of their problems

Our Impact

For every £1 invested in our service, we add £12.61 in public value

Adapting, Evolving, and Moving Forward

Impact Reports aren't just a review of achievements in the previous financial year, but a springboard for further improvement and development as we enter our next phase and review our strategic priorities which are summarised below.

In 2024-25 we saw an increase in the number of people we helped and we continued to focus on extending our service and developing new ways of helping people whilst learning from our experiences to further improve service delivery. Our eyes are wide open to the political and economic implications for the future of charitable organisations. We are, however, well placed to rise to those challenges not least because we have high levels of expertise in key areas, enabling us to move forward with positive strides.

We have unwavering commitment to help as many people as possible and reduce unmet demand as increasing numbers of people reach out to us for help. Not only do we constantly strive to grow our volunteer numbers, but our recruitment and training techniques have been reviewed and are in the process of being updated to ensure potential volunteers have a very clear picture of what they are becoming a part of and what is expected of them.

The impact on well-being in our communities as a result of our work cannot be underestimated as indicated by client stories highlighting the suffering endured by people in difficulties and feedback from grateful clients. Our fiscal value to society is very real and without our work, the picture in local communities would be grim and potentially unmanageable.

These results are a testament to the dedication, compassion and commitment of our entire workforce that has worked together tirelessly to help people who, in growing numbers, are coming to us as they deal with the challenges of everyday life.

This report is hard hitting, but will hopefully give you a lasting impression of the invaluable work we do and the importance of us being able to perpetuate this ongoing and vital contribution to our society.

Strategic Priorities

- 1 Accessible Advice** expanding access to advice services through multiple channels and outreaches
- 2 People** investing in our staff and volunteers to enhance service quality and sustainability
- 3 Partnership & Influence** strengthening collaborations to amplify our impact and advocate for systemic change
- 4 Sustainability** ensuring financial and operational resilience to support long-term service delivery

valuable
skills and sense
of achievement

essential to
our service

40 volunteers

Volunteering

7 trustees

the backbone of
our organisation

Volunteers are the backbone of what we do. They are the public face of our organisation and are often the first point of contact for people who are at crisis point and simply do not know how to move forward with their problem.

We have forty amazing volunteers whose work is essential to the service through their wealth of knowledge and experience. They bring crucial support by providing information and advice direct to the person in need. This could be via weekly drop ins at various locations, helping to answer calls on Adviceline or assisting people with appointments for more complex issues.

We also have seven trustees who give their time for free, who support and help guide our organisation. We are very grateful for their on-going commitment.

Volunteers also contribute through Research and Campaigns, identifying systemic issues and supporting our team by analysing problems to find trends and areas where local and national policies need improvement.

In addition, our volunteers bring new ideas, skills and approaches to working, helping us to stay relevant and improve our services through their own experience, whether this is through their working or personal life. Their involvement helps us to adapt and stay relevant to the needs of the community.

Volunteering doesn't just benefit, help and support us by bringing in a wide range of talent, it also provides volunteers with valuable skills and work experience. We are always looking for volunteers in a number of different roles. Whether you're a student, looking to return to work or retired, there's a role for you. We welcome people from all walks of life and with varying abilities to the differing opportunities to support Citizens Advice in East Dorset and Purbeck in continuing to deliver services to the local community.

Our volunteers say...

"As I witnessed increasing numbers of people deeply affected by challenging aspects of life, I hold a desire to, in some way shape or form, learn as much as possible and be part of the help."

"My involvement with Citizens Advice came about, as is the case with so many other former clients, by a want to 'give back' in appreciation for much-valued help received."

"I get a sense of satisfaction helping people deal with, and hopefully resolve, everyday issues such as relationships, benefits, finance, housing. Everyday is different and there is satisfaction in dealing with some of the challenges presented."



Out and about in the community

Sometimes people who need our help can't easily travel to us, so we go to them. We visit different locations across East Dorset and Purbeck in order to help as many people as possible.

We reached **5,625** people this year

We're out every day on our Advice Bus and Energy Bus providing help in our communities. We attend events and talks so people gain a better understanding of the help available. Home visits are also an option for vulnerable people.



A Royal visit

We were very fortunate to welcome The Princess Royal to our Advice Bus this year in celebration of its second birthday. Her Royal Highness, who is Patron of National Citizens Advice, was shown around the Advice Bus which has helped over 3,000 residents since 2023 when it was first on the road. The Advice Bus, reaches out to rural communities, bringing vital support and guidance to those who need it most.



Advice Bus

drop-in

friendly experienced
advisers

1,061 people
visited our
advice bus

essential to
our service

9 weekly locations

visits rural communities with
limited public transport

Amber's story* - support that makes a real difference

Amber lives in a rural part of Dorset, where public transport options are very limited. The Advice Bus visits her area once a week and is consistently busy supporting both new and returning clients.

Over time, Amber began visiting the advisers on the bus and built a trusting relationship with them. She eventually shared that she was finding it difficult to manage financially due to the rising cost of living. Amber has multiple health conditions that prevent her from working and currently receives benefits, including Universal Credit (UC) with Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity (LCWRA).

How we helped

Because of her health conditions, Amber was unable to travel to the Citizens Advice office for support and felt much more at ease speaking with the advisers on the Advice Bus. With their help, she applied for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and was successfully awarded the higher rate for both daily living and mobility components.

Amber expressed that she is extremely grateful for the support she received and described the outcome as life-changing. The adviser believes that without the Advice Bus visiting her village, Amber may not have known where to turn for help.

*Name has been changed to protect identity

Stop
Here

"The lady who is in the van on a Friday is absolutely lovely, professional, welcoming, supportive and showed a genuine interest to help. She is exactly how an adviser should be. Kind and compassionate."

Financial outcome:

PIP back payment **£8,967.92**
(higher rate care and higher rate mobility awarded)

Additional payments:

Household Support Fund **£500**
Foodbank **£180**
Surviving Winter Grants **£400**
Discretionary Housing Payment **£922.22**

"Brilliant service from the bus advisers at Swanage. Very efficient & knowledgeable."



supplier questions

Dorset Energy

meter
issues

energy saving
tips and
advice

energy bus visits
rural locations

we gave energy
advice to
1,031 people



Daphne's story* - *resolving energy disputes*

In December 2021, Daphne moved into a rented farm cottage on an estate after a fire destroyed the farmhouse and outbuilding she used to rent. The electricity meter was also damaged. Daphne faced ongoing billing issues. Her previous energy supplier continued to charge for both the farmhouse and outbuilding—even debiting her husband's card multiple times—despite the outbuilding being returned to the estate and a new meter being installed by the current supplier.

How we helped

Struggling to resolve the matter while caring for her husband, Daphne approached Citizens Advice in February 2024. Outcomes included a full review of her bills, identification of incorrect meter readings, a formal complaint to the energy supplier, and escalation to the Energy Ombudsman after no resolution. The previous supplier ultimately acknowledged their errors, logically disconnected the destroyed meter, closed both accounts, and reimbursed Daphne for incorrect charges.

Daphne was over the moon with the result and said that she would not have been able to resolve this issue without our intervention and assistance.

*Name has been changed to protect identity

**Financial
outcome:**
£9,232.74 in
reimbursed
charges and
compensation

"Thank you for your support and guidance regarding my issues with my energy bills. These things create a lot of stress and anxiety, and it really does help to have someone on your side when you are dealing with these giant corporations."

"I am so grateful for the oil delivered today, that's a full tank and now, I don't have to worry about strict rationing the heating and I can let my grandson have a full warm bubble bath for quite a while."

Benefits

help maximise
income

PIP

we helped with
8,364 benefit
issues

universal credit

understand the system

David's story* - *from uncertainty to support*

David lives in a rural community and has multiple health conditions, leading to frequent hospital admissions. Growing up in care and attending special needs education, he often felt that "nothing ever goes right" for him.

How we helped

David began visiting the Advice Bus, where staff gradually gained his trust. With support from a Benefits Specialist who visited him at home, he applied for Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Although his initial application was unsuccessful, he was supported through the appeal process and was eventually awarded PIP, including a back payment. Later, David was helped to successfully transition from Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Housing Benefit to Universal Credit, with guidance throughout the process.

David is now financially secure and will often pop his head round the door of the Advice Bus just to say hello.

*Name has been changed to protect identity

Financial outcome:
PIP **£5,361.20** per year
PIP back payment
£8,189.84
ESA SDP **£4,310.80**
per year
ESA SDP back
payment **£6,474.68**

"I needed help completing a many page application to claim attendance allowance and I have been awarded this which is a huge relief. Thank you!"

"The person who helped me was extremely professional and helpful. She was kind enough to write a letter for the review of a recent assessment for my PIP and was successful in doing so. I could not be more grateful. This was very difficult to sort out with my dyslexia."



Housing

landlord
questions

homelessness

we helped with 1,728
housing issues

Matilda's story* - securing suitable housing

Matilda was living in a property that was unsuitable for her health conditions. Limited mobility made it difficult for her to leave the home, and she was also struggling to manage financially. She needed support to secure accommodation that met her needs and to ensure she was receiving all the benefits she was entitled to.

How we helped

Matilda was assisted with a housing register application, and Dorset Council was contacted to ensure she received appropriate support in finding alternative accommodation. Matilda was placed in the highest priority band on the register and has recently been offered a suitable property.

In addition, Matilda received help with her financial situation. A full benefits check was carried out to confirm she was receiving all entitled support. She was assisted in completing a Work Capability Form, contacting Universal Credit, and applying for supermarket vouchers to support her while her Universal Credit claim was processed. This combined support helped Matilda move towards a safer, more manageable living situation and alleviated some of the immediate financial pressures she was facing.

Matilda was extremely grateful for the support provided.

*Name has been changed to protect identity

Financial outcome:

Total benefit
increase **£5,079.24**
per year plus **£350**
in supermarket
vouchers

"The team that intercepted and passed on my problem were all absolutely amazing human beings ... the world is a better place with humans like this."

"I found the service that I received was just what I needed. Clear and easy to understand reassuring that the problem would eventually be resolved. With a small insight into how complex dealing with government departments can be."

Debt

specialist debt
advisers

repayment advice

we helped with
2,558 debt issues

rent arrears

struggling to pay bills

Claire's story - *from crisis to stability

Claire came to us after fleeing her mortgaged home due to domestic violence and financial abuse. She had fallen into arrears on her mortgage and other priority debts, with legal action already underway and enforcement agents instructed to recover Council Tax arrears. Claire decided she wanted the property repossessed, as it held too many painful memories. She also struggled with her mental health, experiencing extreme anxiety around men, and needed support to understand the implications of the repossession and manage her debts.

How we helped

We helped Claire navigate this complex situation. A full debt assessment and benefits check were completed, and credit reports were reviewed to identify all creditors. She was supported in communicating with creditors and applying for standard Breathing Space. Detailed advice was provided on repossession, mortgage shortfall, priority and non-priority debts, and enforcement agent protocols for vulnerable individuals.

Six months after her property was sold and her mortgage redeemed, Claire was helped to prepare a Debt Relief Order (DRO) application. The DRO was approved, allowing Claire to move forward with a fresh financial start and greater peace of mind. Claire was extremely grateful for all the support and advice given, as the whole process took three years to complete.

*Name has been changed to protect identity

**Financial
outcome:**
Total debt
written off
£22,957.51

"I really appreciate your guidance and support throughout and has helped massively with the stress that was looming over me."

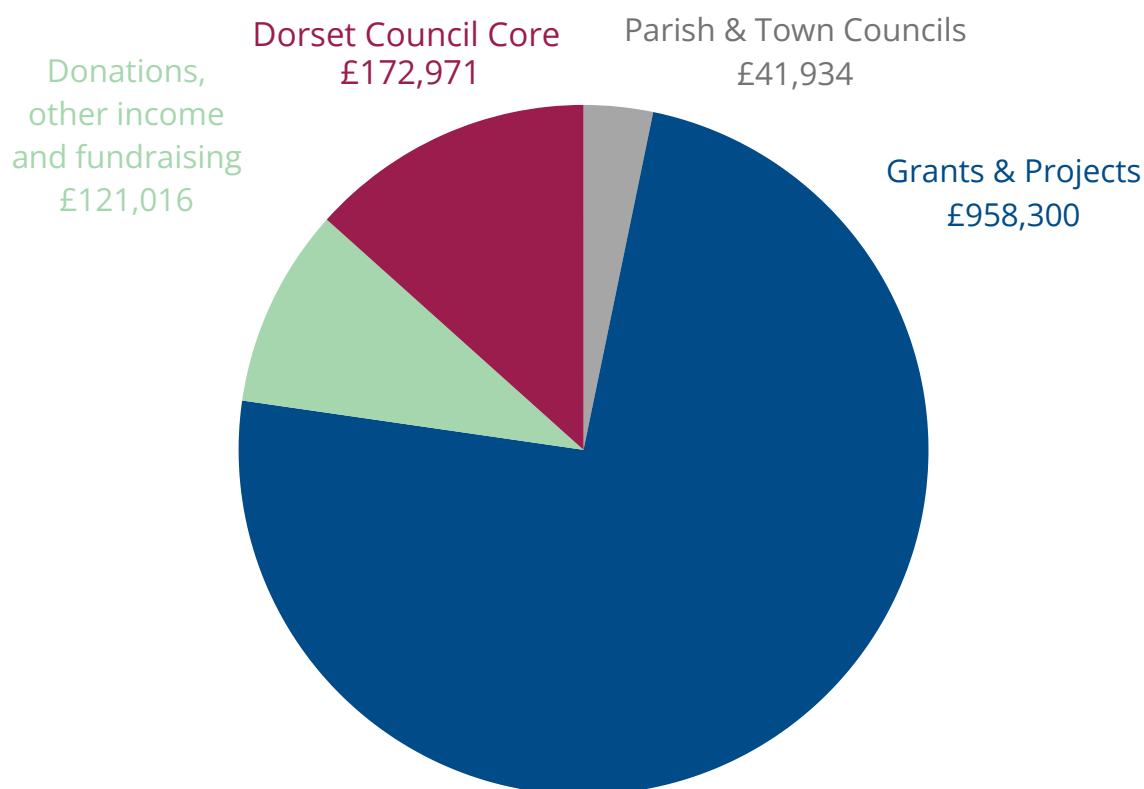
"Excellent service, great support acted swiftly to help me resolve my problems filling in a very difficult form. Considerate and very helpful."



Funding we've received

FY 24/25

Total income  1,294,221



create awareness

influence

a voice for the
people

Research & Campaigns

bring about change

campaign for
fairness



Our Research & Campaigns (R&C) work has been varied and impactful. There has been regular contact with local MPs ensuring they were briefed and updated about our services and the importance of our Advice Bus reaching rural communities.

Issues about digital exclusion were brought to light through several adviser evidence collections, starting a gathering of evidence for potential campaign work. There has been free energy advice training for frontline workers and volunteers working with people who are at risk of fuel poverty to equip them with the ability to help people who are facing difficulty in heating their homes. This has included giving tips on how to save on the cost of energy and updates on available grants.

We collaborated with Together with Tenants to develop a 4-point plan aimed at improving tenant-social landlord relations. This plan includes a Together with Tenants Charter that focuses on communication, resident influence, accountability, well-maintained homes, and a streamlined complaints process. It ensures residents have clear, accessible channels for raising issues and seeking redress.

We conducted stakeholder analysis on Dorset Council and Housing Associations following multiple complaints from clients on their poor administrative practices. Through internal meetings, an agreement was made to focus efforts on researching Housing Associations and develop a plan to get Housing Associations to agree to improving response times with tenants following complaints.

National Research & Campaigns

Throughout this financial year, we supported national campaigns including consumer awareness, consumer rights on product safety and transport cancellation and delays, eligibility for council tax reduction, guidance on student housing, employment rights on rest breaks, support with water bills, scams awareness, renters rights when it comes to home repairs, and energy savers week.

Publicity & Fundraising

We continued to be proactive and generate publicity about our campaigns and key events, including celebrating the anniversary of our Advice Bus, the launch of our Energy Bus and creating awareness of national campaigns including the pension credit deadline and scams awareness.

We took part in radio interviews about our Advice Bus locations, energy saving advice and surviving winter grants. We received media coverage of our fundraising activities including involvement in the Brighton Marathon, which raised over £3,400 and the successful Jive nights that are organised by an ex-trustee John Rynne which raised an amazing £12,500. Not forgetting the ever-popular Wimborne St Giles teas, which raised over £600 and are manned by a team of wonderful volunteers.

We continued to communicate externally to our stakeholders with our quarterly newsletter and we introduced a quarterly Dorset Energy newsletter. The newsletters provide updates about our service, including how to access help, the number of people helped, their issues, together with challenges faced by our residents. People can subscribe to our newsletter by visiting our website **www.edpcitizensadvice.org.uk**

As an independent charity, we rely upon grants and donations to fund our service. For more information about how to support us visit our website **www.edpcitizensadvice.org.uk/donate**





**East Dorset
& Purbeck**

Thank you to all our funders, organisations,
businesses, donors and the many individuals
who have supported us this year



@EDPCitizensAdvice



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