



Rural Cambs

The difference we make in Fenland

Our impact in 2023-24

We are Citizens Advice Rural Cambs (CARC)

Every year thousands of people come to us for help solving their problems.

This means we're an important part of the community, with a credible understanding of local needs.

We use this to tailor our services and help improve local policies and practices.

This is Natalia

Natalia is an example of one of the people we helped and her story shows how we help people solve their problems and why this is important



What we do

We help people with a range of problems including issues with housing, debt, benefits, employment, relationships and consumer rights.

Sometimes people have more than one issue they need help with.



Natalie is a single parent with two school aged children, and lives in private rented accommodation

She has limited English and was between jobs, but had lost her ID which led to issues accessing an immigration status code for employment purposes.

Whilst she was unable to work, she was struggling to pay bills and afford items, such as school uniforms for her children. She had only £1 left on her electricity meter. Her fridge freezer has broken down beyond repair, making it difficult to keep food fresh/store.

Natalia was having to choose between paying essential bills and buying food therefore Council Tax arrears started accumulating.

How we help*

People access us in different ways:



face-to-face



by telephone



by webchat and email



Self-help via our website

*This can include multiple activities/channel per client.



Natalia attended at the local Foodbank and saw one of our Advisers, Maria, during one of our advice sessions there.

How we help

People often come to us with multiple or complex problems.

We can deal with most of the issues people come to us with, tailoring our advice to their needs, offering an holistic and full wrap around service.



During their initial meeting, Maria carried out an assessment to check Natalia's income and benefit entitlement .

It was identified that Natalia should be eligible for Council Tax Reduction, which would help to reduce the costs of her Council Tax bill by some £27.55 per week, and it could be back-dated subject to the back-dating rules.

Through checking her energy usage, Maria was able to provide Natalia with information and advice on energy saving costs.

Maria was also able to advise Natalia on who to contact to obtain evidence of her status and ID so that she could look for work again.

Our advice is effective

Problems don't happen in isolation and can have a severe consequences. Solving them stops these situations escalating. Across Fenland:



3,084 clients have been helped (represents the total number of unique clients with one or more case notes in the period.



Via **11,715** activities e.g phone, emails, in person, text/webchat, letters



With **21,262** issues



£2,457,952 income gains / **£325,518** debts written off



70% of CARC clients said their problem was solved following advice



82% of CARC clients said we helped them find a way forward

The difference this makes

The wider impact of advice – what we achieve as a result of solving problems and providing support – is just as important.



Natalia was able to obtain evidence of her status and ID and subsequently secured a new job with suitable shifts and manageable travel costs.

From information Maria had provided Natalia with, she was able to get help with the cost of her children's school uniforms.

Through local grants we were successful in applying for foodbank vouchers, energy vouchers and help with replacing her fridge/freezer to a value of just over £800

Feedback from client:

Natalia was very grateful for our help and said that whilst it is still not easy to manage on her income, now that she has found a job, she knows that things will fine once she is back at work.

Why fixing problems matters

If left unsolved, problems don't just affect the individual – they affect this community. Solving them creates considerable value to society.



We are here to help - whoever you are and whatever your problem



Our service is free because we believe nobody should feel unable to ask for help because of cost.



All Fenland residents have access to our free independent, confidential and impartial advice and guidance services in the form of telephone, web chat, and email five days a week as well being able to find information and advice on the CARC website and the national Citizens Advice public website 24/7.

We have regular drop-in face to face services in Chatteris, Whittlesey and Wimblington for residents local to those areas . At our Wisbech office we have face to face appointment sessions for general advice and we have a benefits advice drop-in session for local residents who are aged over 55.

Our volunteers



The wider value of volunteering

Our team of CARC volunteers give their time, skills and experience to enable us to reach as many people as we do.

There are also considerable benefits for them too, such as gaining new skills, making new friends, making a difference locally, and frequently also gaining enough confidence to move into employment.

In 2023-24 our trained volunteers gave up **£234,346** worth of volunteering hours to help CARC deliver its service.

Additional value for service provided to Fenland residents

Local Delivery

projects funded by other organisations and operated by CARC:

- ◆ **Energy Advice Programme:**
- ◆ **CCC Income Maximisation**
- ◆ **CCC Change Grow Live**
- ◆ **Money and Pension Service**
- ◆ **CitA Cost of Living support**
- ◆ **Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme**
- ◆ **Wisbech Foodbank**
- ◆ **Over 55's Benefit Clinic**

National Delivery

Funded through national Citizens Advice and operated by other local Citizens Advice:

- ◆ **Universal Credit**

Research and campaigns



One of the aims of the Citizens Advice service is to *"to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives"*. This means that the central Citizens Advice service talks to Government and other policy makers to help improve the laws and services that affect ordinary people.

Most recent monthly report attached separately.

If you would like to know more about this side of the Citizens Advice service please visit: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/our-work/our-campaigns/>

Thank you
Fenland District Council
for your support



Citizens Advice Rural Cambs



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Citizens Advice Rural Cambs is the operating name of Rural Cambs Citizens Advice Bureau Ltd

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Company limited by guarantee, Registered Number: 07931354 England



April 2024