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# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23

22/23  
year in review






£8.3m  
Income generated  
for local families






## Our Aims

To ensure that individuals do not suffer through:

-  Lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities;
-  Lack of knowledge of the services available to them; or
-  An inability to express their needs effectively.

## Our Values

Community Advice Antrim & Newtownabbey is:

-  Committed to a socially just, tolerant and pluralist society;
-  Opposed to all forms of discrimination; and
-  An equal opportunities employer and welcomes the participation of all sections of our community at all levels of the organisation.

*Community Advice Antrim & Newtownabbey exercises a responsible influence on the development of laws, policies and services locally*



43k+  
Client Enquiries



1526  
Disability Forms completed



52  
Awareness Events across the Borough



88%  
success rate at appeal tribunals



630  
clients referred from Health Professionals through our Advice4Health Project



93%  
of clients were happy with the advice they received



1128  
Digital Enquiries



164  
new Money Advice clients



263  
clients supported with appeal tribunals

# Chairperson's Report

**Valuing and supporting our people to deliver for our clients is at the heart of strategic decisions made by CAAN's Trustee Board; this approach has never been more vital than it has this year. Ensuring the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers has been key to navigating CAAN through the demands of a Cost-of-Living crisis and to proactively deliver an Advice Plus model that meets the needs of those struggling within our community.**

Delivering quality advice has led to many households across the borough being better off than they would have been without the CAAN service. £8.3million of income has been generated, subsequently supporting the local economy.

As chairperson, I acknowledge the team of volunteers, staff and trustees that is CAAN. Through their dedication, they continue to ensure our public benefit is fulfilled; they pull together to ensure clients do not suffer through a lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, or of the services available to them, or through the inability to express their needs effectively and equally.

On behalf of the board, we acknowledge that our achievements are only made possible by the unwavering support of our funders and partners, for this we extend our sincere gratitude.

Geraldine Haire



# Money Matters

2022/2023 - 12 months

## Reserves brought forward

**2022**  
**£318,253**

## Income for the year

Antrim and Newtownabbey Council	£420,511
ANBC Social Supermarket	£149,987
Public Health Agency (Northern Office)	£96,052
Macmillan Cancer Support	£62,260
AdviceNI – Money Advice	£39,553
Oasis Care	£6,799
Pensionwise	£5,850
The Enkalon Foundation	£2,500
Donations	£945
Investment Income	£94

## Total

**£784,552**

## How funding was spent

Charitable Activities	£793,619
Governance Costs	£3,458

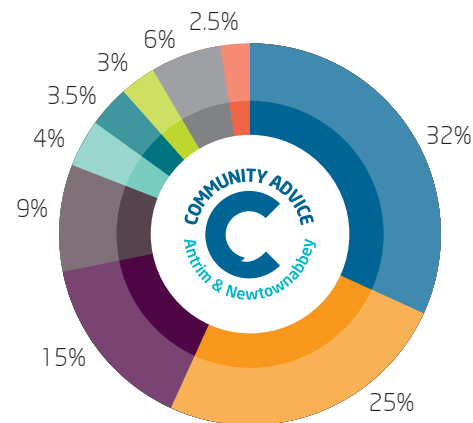
## Total

**£797,077**

## Closing Reserves

**£305,728**

# Top Enquiries



Universal Credit	13,787
Disability Benefits	10,765
Other Welfare Benefits	6,514
Crisis Intervention	3,833
Employment	1,756
Housing	1,504
Consumer & Debt	1,235
Miscellaneous	2,489
Other*	1,195

**Total Enquiries = 43,078**

*\*includes: Legal, Family, Education, Immigration*

# Area Manager's Report

**As a manager, a team, a service; we are proud of the impact we have had this year on the wellbeing of those across our community.**

Knowing the Cost-of-Living challenges that people faced, CAAN grasped feasible opportunities to increase awareness and develop our advice service to support those in need.

New innovative partnerships were created, and old ones were strengthened:

- *Awareness events and pop-up advice clinics undertaken at unprecedented levels with community groups across the whole borough.*
- *New advice clinics set up in conjunction with local Trussell Trust foodbanks*
- *New wraparound Social Supermarket piloted for the borough, supporting 1,200 adults and children*
- *Key wraparound advice partner in new Fuel Bank for Newtownabbey*
- *Extension of our charitable support partnerships, including those with Enkalon Foundation, Save the Children, Northern Trust and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council*

- *Shaping the future of advice across NI through membership of DfC's Independent Advice & Debt Reference Group.*
- *Influencing change through participation on regional policy groups*

Advice often makes a long-term difference to our clients, but for CAAN to strengthen this support to include the immediate and short term, demonstrates the effectiveness of our partnerships. There is no doubt that our people know how to deliver outcomes for our community! In addition to the £8.3million we generated for clients through wraparound advice and advocacy, we helped to put food on the table for those hungry, heat in the homes of those cold, and connections for those isolated and alone.

We are grateful for the strong partnerships we have with Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Department for Communities, Public Health Agency and Macmillan. It is with the foundation of these core services that we have been able to enhance services with new partners. My personal thanks must go to our trustees, our staff, our volunteers. A team that inspires, a team that delivers.

Lorraine Adamson



We wouldn't be us without our wonderful, talented and dedicated staff, volunteers and trustees.



## Making a difference is what really matters to me.

The reason I came to join Antrim Citizens Advice, as it was then, was that my mum had received help from Citizens advice that was really beneficial to her. So a few weeks later she asked me to bring her down so she could leave in something as a thank you. While we were in Reception, I noticed a sign saying, "Volunteers wanted", I asked the receptionist about this and she gave me an application form which I completed and returned.

The Manager Valerie then contacted me and explained the work the bureau did, and I was immediately interested, I completed the Adviser training Programme and began volunteering in the bureau and loved it, after approx 12 months the bureau secured funding for a Hospital Advocacy worker, I applied and was offered the post.

The nature of the organisation is that it relies on funding and the Hospital post was a 3 year funded post. When that ended, I was lucky enough to be offered a role as General Adviser. Training opportunities are always encouraged and I was able to complete the Tribunal Representative course and for a while I was the Tribunal Representative for Antrim CAB. I have done lots of other roles during my years with the organisation, I was the Senior Telephone Adviser, Advice Sessions Supervisor and Deputy Manager before making the decision to reduce my working hours at which point I took over the Welfare Reform role which is my current role.

Over the years there have been a lot of changes. In 2016 we went through a merger process with Newtownabbey Citizens advice then changing to Community Advice Antrim and Newtownabbey. At the start of 2020 Covid changed the way we work forever; we went from fully office based to all working from home. The introduction of Universal Credit meant staff had to undergo intensive training to enable them to assist clients on this journey. Throughout all of these challenges, Management have always addressed any issues quickly to ensure we continue to work together as one team and continue to provide the high level of advice and support to our clients that we are known for.

Although there are many things which are unrecognizable from the bureau I joined in 2003 the underlying reason why I joined and why I continue to want to do this work remains the same, I want to do my best each day to provide holistic advice to our clients, to advocate and/or empower clients to challenge decisions which are wrong, to proactively look for and report on Social Policy issues and use these to lobby for change and on a basic level just have a positive impact on a client's life, like my mum experienced all those years ago.



# Community Advice Antrim & Newtownabbey

## Support in Time of Need



Jo (not her real name) was referred to Colleen as part of our Financial Inclusion project within the Antrim Foodbank. As a regular user of the Foodbank one of the staff members brought Jo over to Colleen to see if she could be entitled to any additional benefits.

As a single parent in receipt of Income Support and Tax Credits, Colleen established that even though all of her means tested benefits were in place due to Jo's mental health she could be entitled to Personal Independence Payments (PIP). It was clear that Jo would fulfil the criteria for PIP but she did not want to apply as she had previous experience of the process and it had a detrimental impact on her health. With reassurance that we would help her through the claim she agreed to proceed and we supported her with the application. During this process we were able to support the client

further with the introduction of the Social Supermarket and provided the client with 6 weeks of vouchers to ease her financial struggle. Jo's claim was disallowed.

With her consent we requested a Mandatory Reconsideration, and we supported it by obtaining further medical evidence. The decision was overturned and Jo was awarded the Enhanced Rate of Daily Living at £101 per week. On doing a further benefit check it became clear she would also now be entitled to an increase on her Income Support claim of £76 per week.

***She now presents more confident and willing to make active changes with support to aid her mental health issues; she is no longer struggling financially and doesn't need food packs from foodbank.***

# Community Advice Antrim & Newtownabbey

## Support in Time of Need

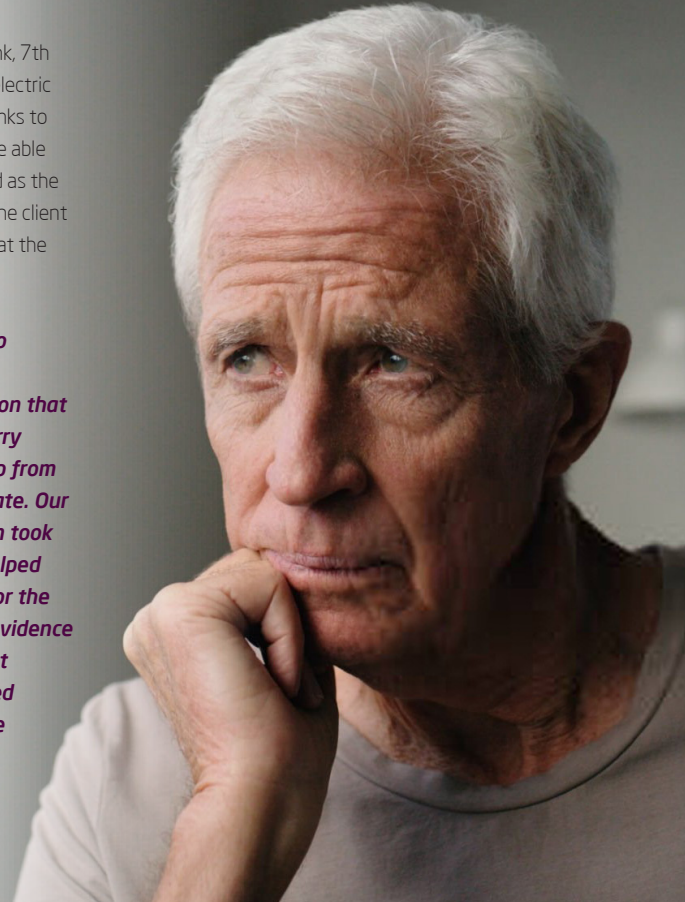
Harry (not his real name) was referred to our Advice4Health project by his GP in 2022 for help with his benefits. Harry explained to the Advice4Health worker Louisa that he had been overpaid Universal Credit and repaying this was causing his mental health to deteriorate. Harry advised that he suffered from depression and anxiety following the passing of a very close family member.

Louisa completed a benefit check for Harry and looked into the reasons for the overpayment. Louisa established that the Universal Credit overpayment occurred as the benefit agency had made an error and failed to deduct Harry's Employment and Support Allowance off his award. His Universal Credit was then reduced and £45 a month was taken off the client to repay his overpayment and other loans. In addition to this error relevant premiums and housing cost supplements were not included in Harry's Universal Credit calculation.

While challenging this decision we asked for deductions to be suspended and helped the client

with charitable support through Foodbank, 7th Heaven support with pet food, gas and electric help through the Methodist Mission. Thanks to Louisa's intervention in the case we were able to get the client's overpayment cancelled as the amount the department had underpaid the client in premiums was almost the same as what the Department said the client owed.

***When discussing benefits Harry also explained that he had a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) decision that had been turned down in 2019. Harry had appealed the decision with help from family but were still waiting on a date. Our appeal representative Danielle then took on this part of the case. Danielle helped to complete a written submission for the client and with additional medical evidence from his GP, Harry was successful at the appeal, being awarded Enhanced Rate Daily Living and Standard Rate Mobility. This is a total of £116.85 a week and Harry received a backpayment of £25,000.***



# Charitable Support - Advice Plus

In response to the cost of living climate now more than ever we recognize the need of immediate support. In addition to the advice provision that supports the clients medium and longer term needs we have also been able to support clients with the following:



214 households supported with home heating through partnerships



1,197 people supported with over £130,000 in food support



78 Samsung Tablets distributed in partnership with The Loneliness Network



578 clients referred to local foodbanks



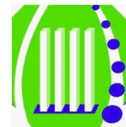
93 families supported with £38k in partnership with Save The Children



700 toys distributed to families at Christmas

37 referrals to Baby Basics

# Thank you to our partners



*\*Case study photos are for representation purposes only*

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Charity Number NIC100420

[www.communityadvicean.co.uk](http://www.communityadvicean.co.uk)



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