

citizens  
advice  
bureau



# Hamilton

## Citizens Advice Bureau

Annual Report 2023 / 2024

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# Chairperson and Chief Officer's Welcome

It is with pleasure that we present our 2023/2024 annual report, which celebrates our hard work, partnerships, and achievements.

This was another busy year for Hamilton Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). We saw a further increase in people needing advice and support, particularly around food and fuel insecurity, reflecting the challenges our community is still facing around rising costs. Against a background of challenges and demands, we continued to step up and provide a free, comprehensive advice and advocacy service. No one was turned away.

This time last year we were optimistic about concluding negotiations with South Lanarkshire Council to occupy new town centre accommodation that would serve our long-term operational needs. Unfortunately, the identification by the council of previously unknown structural issues affecting the entire site precluded this from going ahead. Our search continues, and we acknowledge the continued support from South Lanarkshire Council.

On a more positive note, we have taken constructive steps forward with delivering our strategic plan, including the formation of working groups around fundraising and social media and communications. We also had the pleasure of receiving a visit from Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal. More on this later.

We would like to say a big thank you to all our volunteers, staff, and trustees for their hard work and dedication over the past year. We could not do this without you. Please read on to learn more about the fantastic work we have carried out over the past year.

Finally, we would like to remember former Lord Lieutenant Mushtaq Ahmed, former Chair of Hamilton CAB, who sadly passed away last month.



Ian Todd

**Chairperson**



Jennifer Howdle

**Chief Officer**

# About Hamilton Citizens Advice Bureau

Hamilton CAB is an independent organisation and a member of the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. We are a charity, which was established in 1970 and became a limited company in 2010.

We offer free, impartial and confidential advice and representation to residents of Hamilton and the wider South Lanarkshire Area. We provide practical support and guidance on a range of everyday topics, giving people the information they need to cope with any situation they may be facing. We offer advice across 15 areas of the law including welfare benefits, housing, employment, debt and utilities.

We are a volunteer led service and during the reporting period benefited from the input of 25 volunteers. As a charity we rely on our volunteers to deliver the important work we do.

Our twin aims are:

provide free, independent, impartial and confidential advice and information to ensure that people are not disadvantaged by lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, or through difficulty in expressing their needs effectively

And equally

campaign and influence to tackle the root cause of the problems people face, and to work to strengthen their rights.

We have 13 principles that guide our work:

- Free
- Impartial
- Independent
- Confidential
- Accessible
- Effective
- Community accountable
- Client's right to decide
- A voluntary service
- Empowerment
- A generalist service
- Social policy
- Brand protection

# Our services

Hamilton CAB provides its core services within the Hamilton and district area, consisting of the communities of Blantyre, Bothwell, Hamilton, Larkhall and Uddingston. Each week, we provide advice via drop-in face-to-face sessions, appointments, video and telephone calls, emails and home visits.

## Drop-in:

Our drop-in service is provided by volunteer advisers and deals with both routine and emergency enquiries. We continue to operate a triage system for initial contacts. During this reporting period the service moved back to offering more face-to-face appointments. However, a large proportion of the advice was still delivered via telephone, due to space constraints within our public facing office. During the reporting period, the drop-in service provided advice to **1,607** people. Of the advice provided, **47%** related to welfare benefits issues.

## Specialist services:

We continued to deliver a number of specialist services:

- Lay Representation Service
- Health & Welfare Service
- The Beacons Project
- Money Advice
- Energy Advice

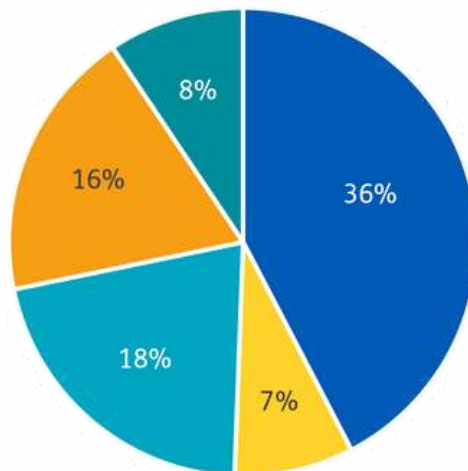
These services provided specialist advice and representation on welfare benefits, multiple debts, complex energy issues and housing/homelessness issues.

## Outreach:

We continued to offer outreach advice sessions at four locations across Blantyre and Larkhall. This work was essential to allow us to target the most vulnerable and hard to reach, and ensure we remain as accessible as possible. We assisted **170** people across these locations. Thank you to Larkhall & District Volunteer Group, Terminal One Youth Centre, The June Stewart Centre and Larkhall Trinity Church for accommodating us.

# Statistics 2023/24

Support provided



■ Welfare benefits ■ Debt ■ Utilities & Communications ■ Finance & Charitable ■ Housing



## Top 5 advice areas:

- Welfare benefits = **36%** (2022/23: 30%)
- Utilities & Communications = **18%** (16%)
- Finance & Charitable = **16%** (12%)
- Housing = **8%** (3%)
- Debt = **7%** (22%)



**Client Financial Gain = £1,042,832 (£1,381,363)**



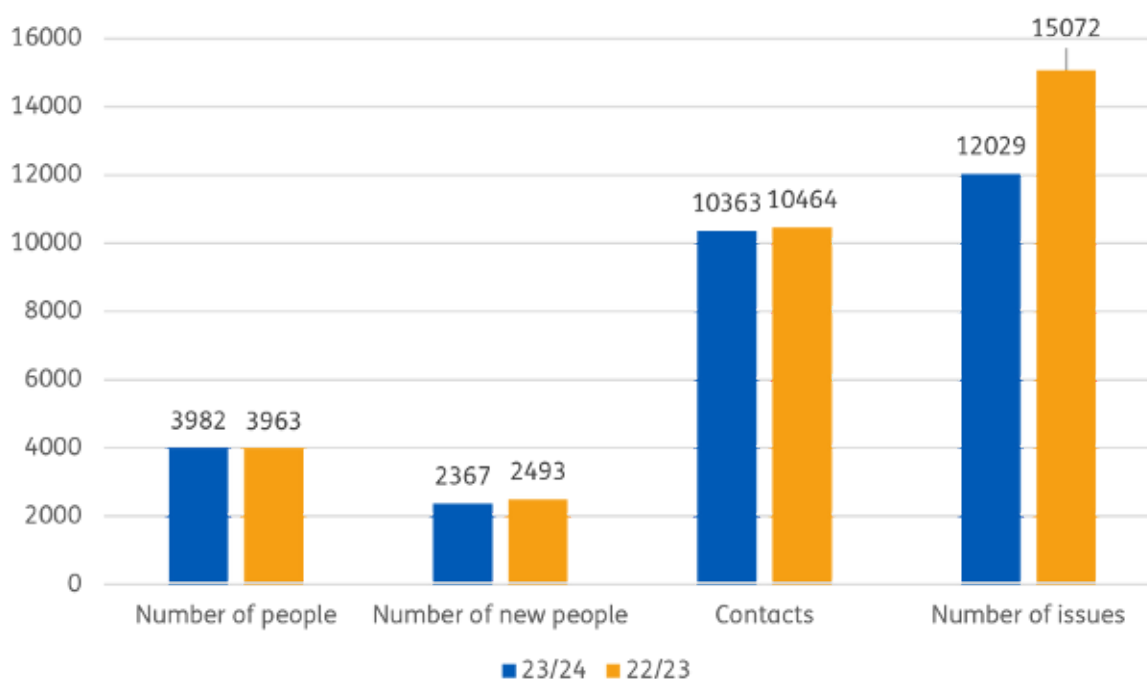
## Methods of contact:

- Face-to-face = **30%** (22%)
- Telephone = **61%** (65%)
- Email = **7%** (8%)
- Letter = **2%** (2%)

During 2023/24 advice was provided to **3,982** people (2022/23: 3,963). Of these, **2,367** (2,493) had never used our service before. We had a total of **10,363** (10,464) contacts with people during the year. We provided assistance with **12,029** (15,072) different issues.

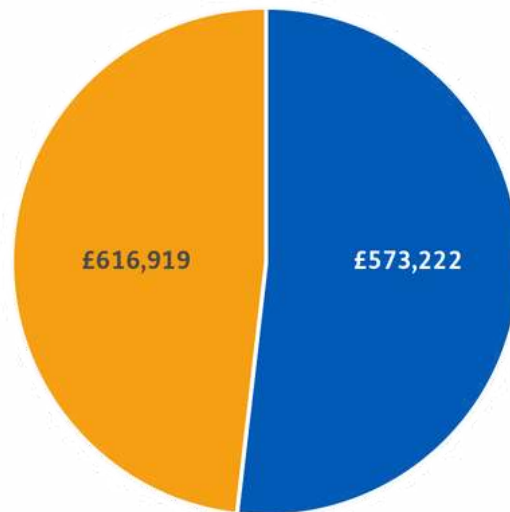
People using our services in 2023/24 came from all social and economic backgrounds and from **24** (27) different ethnic groups. The age profile of people who used our service ranges from 15 - 80+ years.

We generated **£20 for every £1** of South Lanarkshire Council grant funding (£25 in 2022/23)



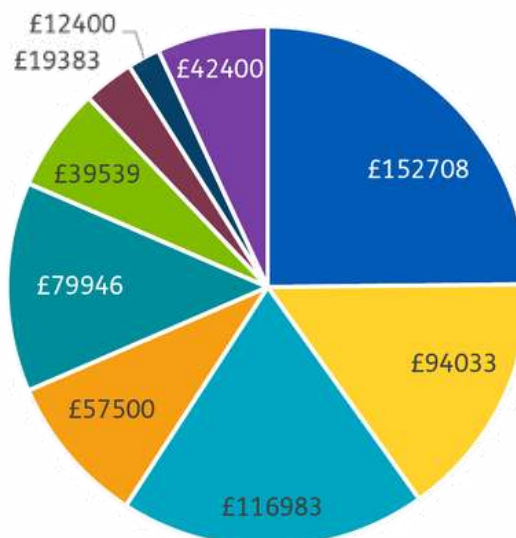
# Income and expenditure

## Income & Expenditure



■ Income (£616,919) ■ Expenditure (£573,222)

## Sources of Income



- Scottish Legal Aid Board (£152,708)
- CAS (£116,983)
- ICF/HWA (£79,946)
- VASLAN (£19,383)
- NHS Lanarkshire (£42,400)
- SLC (£94,033)
- Bank of Scotland (£57,500)
- SLC ADP (£39,539)
- Clyde Valley Housing Association (£12,400)



# Strategic plan progress

We began work to deliver our new Strategic Plan, Here for All. This plan was developed through consultation with our community, staff, volunteers and partners and set the following objectives:

- Enhance our service delivery
- Stay resilient
- Build the brand

Progress so far:

- Formation of a working group to begin drafting a comprehensive social media and communications strategy. This will help us improve our social media offering, targeting those that don't already use our service.
- Formation of a fundraising sub-group to explore alternative and additional sources of restricted and unrestricted funding.
- Restructured our volunteer recruitment process, making it more flexible and responsive, resulting in a boost to numbers based on the previous year.

Objectives for the year ahead:

- Finalise our social media and communications strategy, which will include creating a volunteer role dedicated to social media.
- Work with partners to secure town centre premises which are fit for our purposes, ensuring we continue to meet the needs of our community.
- Continue to improve our volunteer recruitment and training process, which will include achieving Investing in Volunteers accreditation.

# Volunteer spotlight



## Sheyla, Receptionist/Admin

### What do you get out of being a volunteer at Hamilton CAB?

The knowledge one possesses by volunteering for such a wonderful organisation. The ability to help others gives me a sense of confidence and happiness, and I can honestly say it is the greatest reward I've ever experienced.

### How was the training?

Training can be daunting at first, but once you get into it, it gets easier. The experience, the amazing skills, the multitude of issues one can face in a day - it is always satisfying knowing you know how to assist someone because you've been trained to handle it. It can be challenging dealing with a complex situation, but it is worth it and rewarding at the end.

### What are your plans for the future?

In addition to my volunteering, I am currently attending college and studying two Highers and National 5. Once I've finished college, I am planning to apply for a HNC in social sciences so I can attend university and study international relations & social policy/law. I aspire to work in government, and helping people at CAB has solidified that path. Volunteering for Hamilton CAB has helped shape my skills, confidence and self-worth. Thank you to Hamilton CAB for always embracing me with open arms about my mental health and any issue I have encountered throughout the time I have been volunteering.



I can honestly say it is the greatest reward I've ever experienced.

# A royal visit

On the 18th of January we had the pleasure of receiving a visit from Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal. Her Royal Highness has been patron of the CAB service since 1990.

Staff, volunteers and trustees were delighted to speak to The Princess Royal and share their experiences of working in the CAB to support local people with free, impartial and confidential advice.



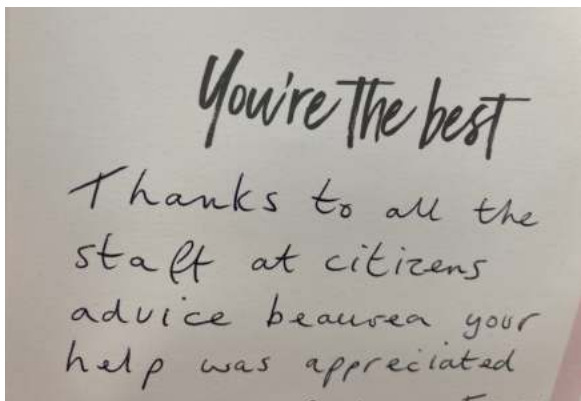
# Client testimonials

“Thank you so much for your continuous help. You can’t put a price on what you do, it’s a godsend”.

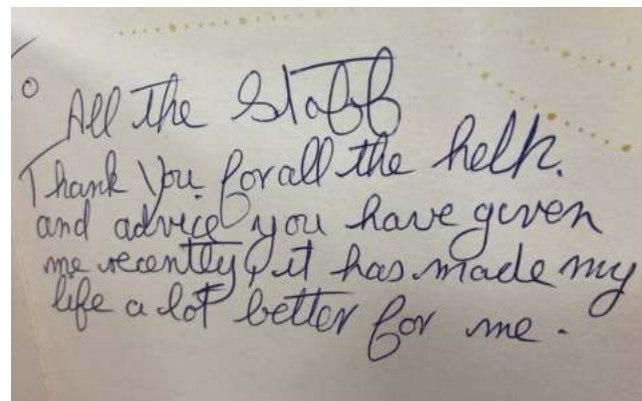
“Many thanks for all your support over the years, since the pandemic and allowing us into your office during very difficult times. It’s good to talk face to face, rather than from home in isolation, as we all need to get out there and interact with people again.”

“Thank you to all the wonderful staff who helped my husband and I through the tortuous benefits appeal process. Thanks to you we won the appeal. Hopefully we can now concentrate on living again!”

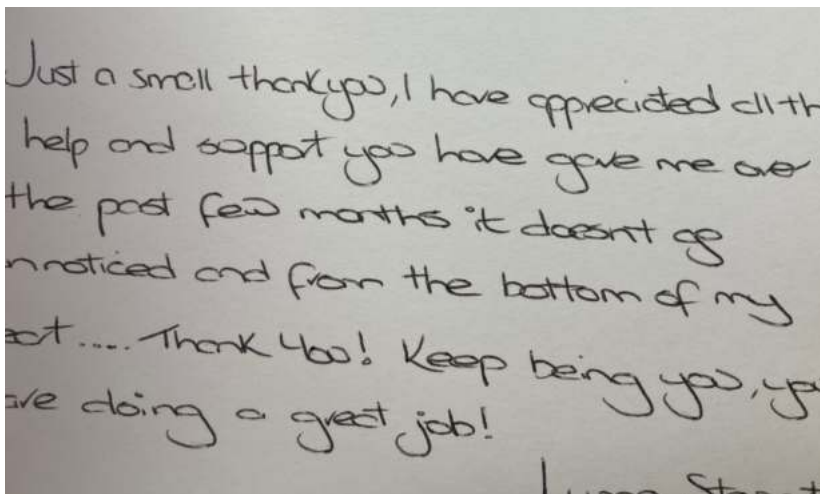
“You do a fantastic job for the people. Big thanks for giving me help.”



You're the best  
Thanks to all the staff at citizens advice because your help was appreciated



All the staff  
Thank you for all the help and advice you have given me recently, it has made my life a lot better for me.



Just a small thank you, I have appreciated all the help and support you have given me over the past few months it doesn't go unnoticed and from the bottom of my heart.... Thank You! Keep being you, you are doing a great job!





# Thank you

We would like to thank our funders and partners.  
Without your support we would not be able to carry out our vitally important work.

## Our funders:

Scottish Legal Aid Board  
South Lanarkshire Alcohol & Drugs Partnership  
South Lanarkshire Council  
Citizens Advice Scotland  
Scottish Government  
NHS Lanarkshire  
Bank of Scotland  
Health & Social Care partnership  
VASLan  
Clyde Valley Housing Association



## Partners:

Larkhall & District Volunteer Group  
Hamilton District Foodbank  
Clyde, Avon & Nethan Foodbank  
Fuel Bank Foundation  
Liber8  
The Beacons  
Community Links (South Lanarkshire)  
South Lanarkshire Council  
Terminal One  
Trinity Church Larkhall  
Our neighbouring CABs  
VASLan

NHS Lanarkshire  
PAMIS  
SL Health & Social Care Partnership  
Lanarkshire Carers Centre  
Covey  
Scottish Courts Administration  
Blantyre Miners Welfare  
The Machan Trust  
Clyde Valley Housing Association  
Legal Services Agency









# Hamilton

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Chief Officer: Jennifer Howdle

Trustees: Ian Todd (Chair)

George Welsh (Vice Chair)

Graham Sturrock (Treasurer)

Cameron Bailey

Andy Knox

Josh MacKenzie

Rosemary Robinson

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