

Annual Report 2016-17

Dear Friends

I hope you will enjoy reading this brief overview of the work done by Citizens Advice Oxford over the last year. It is an opportunity for me, in the name of all Trustees, to thank those who have made it possible.

We said goodbye at the last AGM a year ago to Gill Tishler, who moved on after 6 years as our Chief Executive Officer, and were happy to welcome Al Bell as her successor. She immediately had to cope with new structures imposed on local offices by Citizens Advice nationally, which have involved much tightening of our governance procedures.

All trustees have again been impressed by the commitment and skill of our volunteers – now more than 70 of them.. Both those who are visible to our clients as reception workers or as advisers have a thorough training and are supported behind the scenes by further administration volunteers. The hours of service which they give make all the difference in our ability to continue to respond to ever- increasing demand for our help. This report is an opportunity to say 'thank you' for all of their efforts.

It is also an opportunity to thank all our funders, stakeholders and partners. In particular we are grateful to Oxford City Council for their longstanding support for us and for their commitment to working constructively with voluntary sector agencies to deliver creative best value solutions for City residents. We have valued on-going support from local charitable trusts including notably St Michael and All Saints Charities and St Aldates Parochial Charity. We have also received support in kind from the many local professional firms who have helped provide our free Wednesday evening pro bono surgery sessions.

We look forward to working more closely with other Oxfordshire Citizens Advice offices. Thanks are also due to the network of our partner organisations in the city with whom we work closely on a daily basis to get people as quickly as possible to the service that can help them best. We appreciate the spirit of collaboration and generosity which accompanies this contact, in spite of the resource pressure we are all experiencing. Citizens Advice Oxford is helping clients from every ward in the city and beyond. Our clients reflect the diversity of the city's population and we are proud to be able to support people in challenging any discrimination they may face.

The work of all organizations in the advice sector is needed now more than ever in order to help people navigate uncertain employment, precarious incomes and benefits, insecure housing and unknown futures. I look forward to reporting back next year on the ongoing impact of our work.

With best wishes

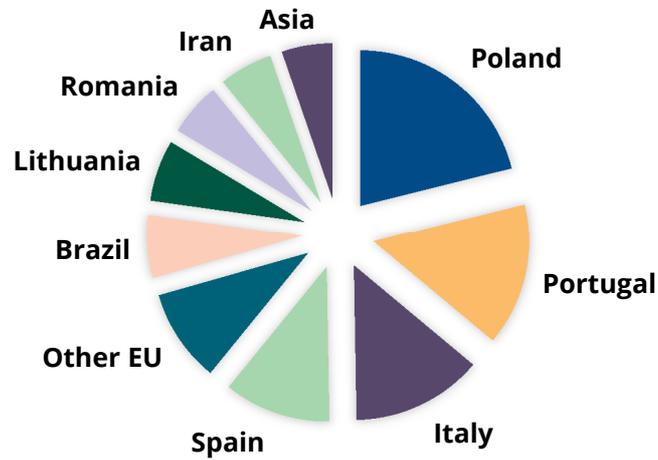
Catherine

Catherine Hilliard, Chair of Trustees

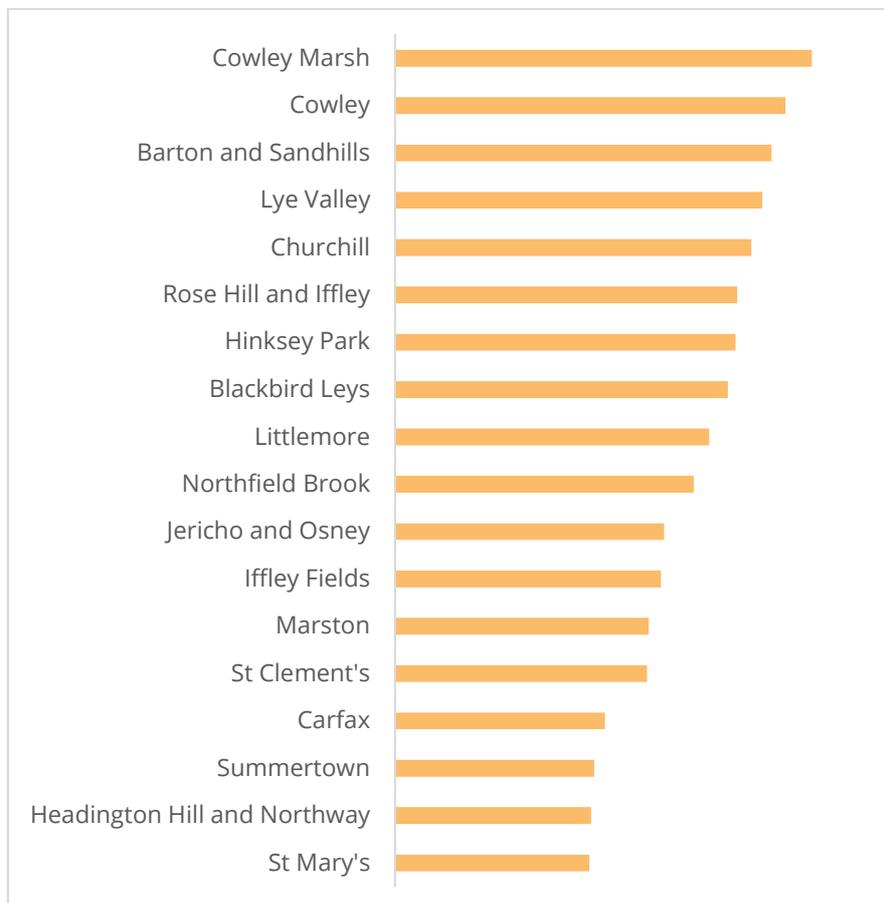
Our clients

This year we supported **5,849 individual clients**, an **increase of 11%** on the previous year. 38% of our clients have a disability or long term health condition, slightly increased from last year's 36%.

68% of all clients are British, the remaining 32% come from 70 other countries, the top 10 are indicated below

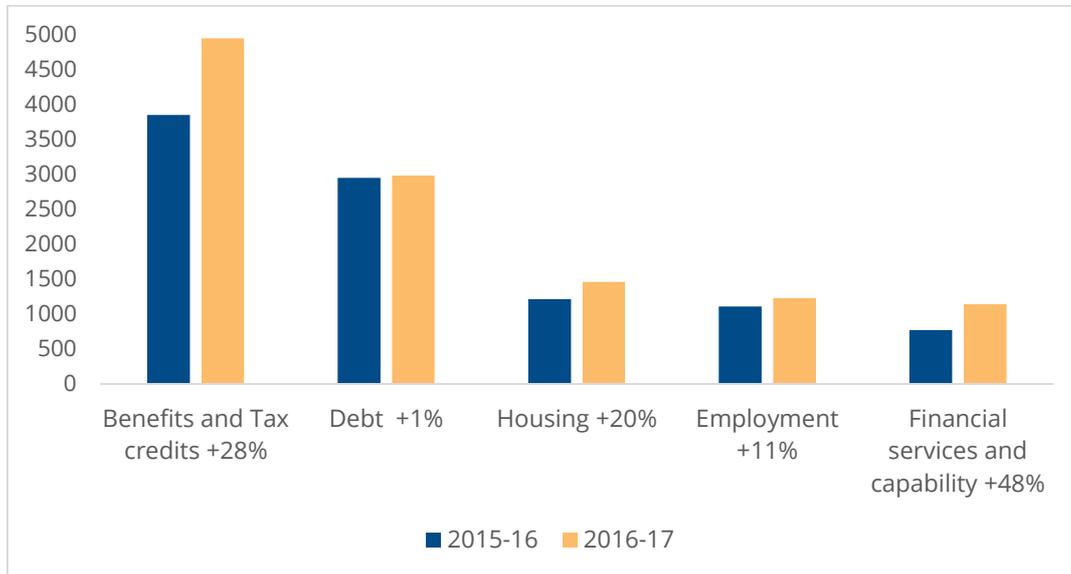


And come from across all wards in the city



Issues

The four main issues that clients come to us with remain unchanged but the overall number of issues has **increased by 25%** with the largest increases in benefits and tax credits and financial services and capability, as indicated below.



Overall the year on year picture is of increasing demand, vulnerability and complexity of our work.

Our response

In response to these challenges this year we have;

- Recruited and trained an additional 25 volunteers, which has enabled us to
- Expand our telephone service 'Adviceline' 03444 111 444 resulting in a 66% increase in call volume, and
- Piloted an extension in face to face drop in service opening hours from 10.00 – 12.30 to 10.00 – 14.00 Monday to Friday

Our people

We are grateful for the professionalism, dedication and hard work of our 70-80 volunteers and 19 staff that have delivered and supported our work this year. Our volunteers contribute c£300,000 worth of time and expertise to the service.

Special thanks to Glynis Newton who we say a fond farewell to after 28 years with us. Glynis established our partnership with HMP Springhill, trained and supported our volunteers and has been the glue that brought us together. Thank you for your dedication, professionalism and care, we wish you the very best for the future.

Partnership working

Many thanks to our funders and partners Oxford City Council, Public Health Oxfordshire, Macmillan, BIG Lottery Advice Services Transition Fund, Citizens Advice (making grants from BIS and Energy Best Deal), Christ Church Carol Service, Friends of Oxford CAB, Feoffees of St Michael and All Saints Charities, GreenSquare, J Paul Getty Charitable Trust, Macmillan Cancer Support, Refugee Resource, St Aldates Parochial Charity and Thames Valley Police. Through whom we have been able to deliver;

- Core face to face and telephone advice services
- Specialist housing debt and benefits advice
- Benefits in Practice outreach in nine surgeries in the most deprived areas of the city
- Specialist cancer benefits support for clients with a cancer diagnosis
- Energy advice and interventions to tackle fuel poverty
- Dedicated advice service for refugees and asylum seekers

During the year we started a five year partnership project to support and deliver longer term change for clients experiencing or at risk of hardship crisis with seven local partners; Agnes Smith Advice Centre, Barton Advice Centre, Rose Hill and Donnington Advice Centre, Asylum Welcome, Refugee Resource, Shelter, Age UK Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire Mind.

Financial summary

Following the increased pressure on grants and statutory budgets income for 2016-17 was down 3% on 2015-16 and the financial year closed with a deficit of £799. A full set of accounts which have been subject to independent audit is available on request.

Total income	£614,221
Total expenditure	£615,000
Surplus/deficit for the year	(£799)

Plans for future periods

During 2017-18 we plan to:

- Secure longer drop in service opening hours
- Create a dedicated disability benefits service
- Expand our pro bono legal clinic
- Improve outcomes for clients following advice
- Continue to campaign for vulnerable people
- Enable clients to have a greater voice in our services and campaigning activities
- Review our organisational structure
- Improve our cost effectiveness