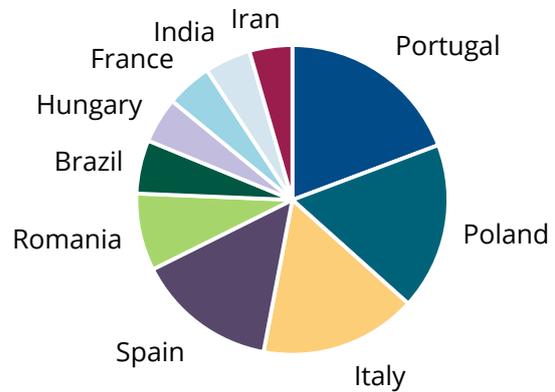


Our work

During 2018/19 Citizens Advice Oxford helped **5,385** people across the City, address **18,381** problems, an average 3.4 issues per client, our fourth consecutive year of this rising, with last year's average at 3.2 issues per client.

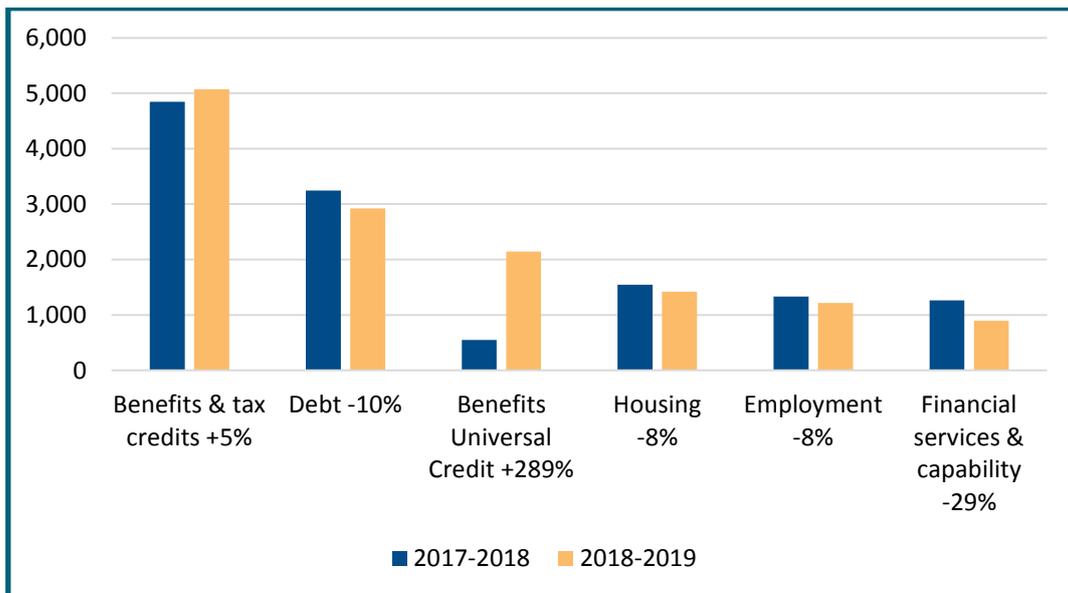
- We recorded outcomes for 1,000 clients with a **total income gain of £3.4 million and £1.2m of debt written off**, up from £28m and £640k in 2017-18
- **40% of our clients** have a **disability or long-term health condition**, which is higher than last year's 32%.
- As last year, **64%** of our clients are **British**, with the remaining **36%** coming from **103 other countries**.

The top 10 are shown here:



Clients have come from across all the wards of the City, with the top five being: Lye Valley, Cowley Marsh, Cowley, Rose Hill and Iffley, and Blackbird Leys.

The overall number of issues we have seen this year has increased by 5% on last year, with Universal Credit, fully introduced in Oxford from October 2017, driving much of the change.



Chair's report

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. The Trustees are responsible for creating the conditions for fulfilling our aims of helping people in overcoming challenges to their lives. These conditions are themselves created by changes brought about by local and central government.

In a climate of austerity and inflation, we must ensure that there is adequate financing for services which are increasingly necessary. Oxford City Council has been our major funder for many years, but it too is facing financial stringency and is changing the manner of commissioning advice services. We are developing different ways of co-operating with other advice-givers in Oxford and with other local Citizens Advice in Oxfordshire.

We are responsible to National Citizens Advice for maintaining organisational structures that can deliver the quality of advice which our service users rely on. I am happy to report that this year we successfully completed a three-year membership audit of all our procedures: this was a time-consuming and stressful task, but we now have assurance that all our procedures, including those for the new GDPR, are robust.

All Trustees have again been impressed by the commitment and skill of our volunteers – now more than 100 of us. This includes those who are visible to our clients as reception workers or as advisers, and those who give support behind the scenes as administration volunteers. All of whom receive intensive and demanding training. The hours of service which they give make all the difference in our ability 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 ongoing support from local charitable trusts including St Michael's and All Saints' Charities,

St Aldates Parochial Charity, and Oxfordshire Community Foundation.

We have also received support in kind from the many local professional firms who have helped provide our free pro bono surgery sessions.

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 organisations 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 response

Achievements in 2018/19

- Recruited over 40 volunteers across a range of areas including advice provision, administration, website development and buddy volunteers.
- Established advice outreaches in Cutteslowe and Hollow Way, so underserved and poorly connected areas of the City have access to advice.
- Participated in and contributed to shaping the Help to Claim Universal Credit pilot with National Citizens Advice.
- Secured from National Citizens Advice a 'green' rating—the highest possible quality of advice rating.
- Carried out and published research into 'Barriers to Accessing Health and social care services faced by people on low incomes in Oxford'.
- Improved understanding in Tenants Rights via an awareness-raising campaign in five European languages.
- Set up a client voices 'influencers group' to support clients to have their voices heard.
- Hosted a digital support worker for clients who need additional help with digital services, such as setting up email accounts or improving confidence in using computer software.

Plans for future periods

In 2019/20 we plan to;

- Change the way we work, to provide a shorter, clearer, simpler client journey with the aim of helping more people.
- Increase our Adviceline capacity and improve our response rate.
- Explore email advice to better meet demand.
- Remodel our Reception area to improve service delivery and enable self-supported, self-service advice.
- Carry out essential maintenance and repair work to the fabric of the building.

Financial summary

A full set of accounts which have been subject to independent audit is available on request.

Total income	£564,972
Total expenditure	£560,267
Surplus/deficit for the year	£4,705

Our people

We are grateful for the dedication, professionalism and hard work of our 100+ volunteers and 19 staff who have delivered and supported our work this year.

Partnerships

We have continued to work in partnership with other relevant organisations in order to maximise the impact of our shared resources for the benefit of clients, and look forward to developing these further in the future.

We are grateful for continued support from **Oxford City Council** as our key funder and to the support of **Oxfordshire County Council** to deliver the GP-based '**Benefits in Practice**' service which we deliver with other Local Citizens Advice across the county.

Citizens Advice Oxford lead on '**Stronger Together**', the eight-agency **Big Lottery**-funded partnership of Oxford Advice Agencies, supporting clients to improve their longer-term resilience and actively participate in influencing social policy. Partner organisations include **Agnes Smith Advice Centre, Barton Advice Centre, Rose Hill and Donnington Advice Centre, Asylum Welcome, Refugee Resource, Shelter** and **Oxfordshire Mind**.

We are pleased to be part of the Oxfordshire County Council-funded '**Specialist Advice Service**' with **Age UK Oxfordshire** and **West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice**, and can report that our partnership with **Macmillan Cancer Support** continues to deliver an excellent service for clients with a cancer diagnosis and their families, to support clients coping with the extra costs associated with cancer.