

**citizens
advice**

Westminster

Citizens Advice Westminster's newsletter

We are moving!

From 1 September 2022 we will be based in the Stowe Centre, 258 Harrow Road, London W2 5ES (pictured).

We are very much looking forward to delivering our services from the heart of Westbourne Ward. Face to face appointments will be held at the Stowe Centre from early September and we have already been delivering Advice Shop from the Centre since June.



Westminster Advice Forum

We were delighted to host the first Westminster Advice Forum (WAF) since the pandemic in June. The Forum was attended by 25 voluntary organisations and agencies from across Westminster. Our next meeting will be 13 October 2022, 11am.



Local Hardship Support Fund

Citizens Advice Westminster is currently managing referrals to the Westminster City Council Hardship Support Fund. Voluntary agencies across Westminster are eligible to make referrals and the fund has recently been extended, however it is likely to close in early September as planned.



Cost of living crisis

A key focus at the Westminster Advice Forum was the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, with organisations reporting increasing demand for grants to support families and the impact of food and fuel poverty including for those in work.

Our Research and Campaigns team regularly analyse evidence forms completed by Advisers fill in when they see a client with a major problem which is part of a wider issue.

The emerging trends have been:

- Poor administration and systems within the statutory bodies such as DWP. These cause delays which often put the clients in debt which is then hard to get out of.
- This is made worse by the digital divide. When online Universal Credit deadlines are not met this has led to overpayments and demanding repayment schedules, leading to more debt.
- Online housing forms are also challenging for some clients and resulted in one client missing out on a vital transfer to a different accommodation.
- Benefits not covering basic costs of living leading to requests for food bank vouchers, and the impact that the financial struggle is having on the mental health of clients.
- Clients being harassed by creditors and in one case illegal charging of interest on rent arrears by a private landlord



Crisis Prevention Project

We are pleased to be part of the new GLA funded London Citizens Advice Cost of living project, and will be working closely with Kensington and Chelsea Citizens Advice and community organisations particularly in areas of deprivation in the south of the borough to support residents and homeless people at particular risk from the financial, mental health impacts of the cost of living crisis.

Project spotlight: Westminster Protects Project

Citizens Advice Westminster participated in a short health awareness project funded by Westminster Protects which ended on July 31st.

During this project we trialled approaches to talking about health and wellbeing to encourage information sharing on health and Covid vaccination take-up and will be implementing the outcomes from this project over the coming months.



During the spring Citizens Advice Westminster has assisted

- **754** residents with benefits, tax credits and universal credit
- **536** people have received energy and debt assessments and advice,
- **428** people have been supported with housing issues.
- **63%** of clients had a disability or long-term health condition, with the largest advice area relating to personal independent payments.
- **60%** of clients were black or minority ethnic groups.
- Over **88%** clients surveyed would recommend our service

Join us!

We are currently recruiting for Telephone Assessors and a Crisis Prevention Adviser – please see information [here](#).

We are also recruiting for a range of **volunteering** roles including Gateway assessors.



How to contact us

For advice:

Phone: Between 10am – 4pm **0808 278 7834**

Zoom Drop in: 10am – 11 am Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

Live Webchat: 4pm – 6pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

Online enquiry: 6pm – 10pm every weekday

Advice Shop: weekly at venues across Westminster.

For fast-track **energy** information and advice please use the online [referral form](#)

Partnership queries: Adam Zaki, adamzaki@westminstercab.org.uk

