

OXFORDSHIRE SOUTH AND VALE CITIZENS ADVICE (OSAV CA)

Report on Year 24/25 for Abingdon Town Council

Up to 1st March 2025 (11 months data)

1. This report

This report covers the first 11 months of 24/25 operational year for Oxfordshire South & Vale Citizens Advice. We will produce an updated report at the end of Quarter 4 to cover the whole period.

2. Introduction to Oxfordshire South & Vale Citizens Advice

We are an independent local charity providing free, confidential and impartial advice on a wide range of issues such as debt, benefits, housing and employment to over 10,000 local people each year. We serve the communities of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. We aim to deliver a full Citizens Advice Service from the main towns in the two Districts including **Abingdon Town Centre**. Our Abingdon office is also our Head Office.

Our approach is to empower people. We can all face problems that seem complicated or intimidating. We believe no one should have to face these problems without good quality, independent advice. Our work gives people the knowledge and the confidence they need to find their way forward. Our service is available to everyone.

Compared to district averages, a higher proportion of our clients are non-white, suffer from a long-term health problem or a disability, are on a low income and are more likely to be in rented housing or at risk of homelessness.

We are currently the front line in helping people navigate the continuing cost-of-living crisis. People can access support Monday to Friday 9:30 – 4:30, via telephone, webchat, emails, drop ins or appointments.

Our local volunteers provide the backbone of our advice services. We cannot meet the many challenges of our community without volunteers, recruited from the communities that they serve. Their enthusiasm and dedication define the culture of the charity.

We have **123** active volunteers supported by 30 paid part time staff (equivalent to just 14 full time staff), responsible for maintaining a quality service and managing the organisation.

3. Merger into Citizens Advice Oxfordshire

As we informed the Town Council earlier this year, from **1st April 2025**, Oxfordshire South & Vale Citizens Advice will be merging with Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire and Citizens Advice Oxford to

become **Citizens Advice Oxfordshire**. We will be maintaining **all current client services**, while exploring new and innovative ways of reaching those most in need.

We believe that working together will ensure greater sustainability of our respective organisations, so we can continue to provide vital services to the communities we serve.

As a valued supporter of our work, we wanted to assure Abingdon Town Council that our commitment to delivering an exceptional, quality service to the community of Abingdon remains steadfast and we firmly believe this merger will enable us to leverage our combined resources, expertise, and capabilities to better serve our clients.

4. Abingdon Advice Centre in 24/25

At time of writing our 24/25 numbers are very similar to 23/24, however we only currently have 11 months of comparable data. By the end of Q4 24/25 we expect to see a marginal increase on client numbers and complexity of issues.

Client Numbers seen*	2023/24 (12 months)	2024/25 (11 months)
Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizens Advice	10,378	9,647
Vale of the White Horse	4,941	4580
Abingdon Citizens Advice**	2,728	2,494

Unique Abingdon residents by ward (clients may visit several times):

Caldecott	290	296
Northcourt	260	213
Peachcroft	182	141
Fitzharris	196	162
Dunmore	123	119
Total Abingdon residents	1,051	931
No. of total Abingdon residents' issues addressed	4,254	3,771
No. of resulting actions by advisers	4,563	4,522

* These numbers are based on unique *monthly* client count. This counts the number of unique clients we advise each month and the monthly totals are added together to give the annual total. This is better measure of workload. A unique *annual* client count counts the number of unique clients in a year. This latter figure will be smaller because a significant number of our clients come to us more than once in a year.

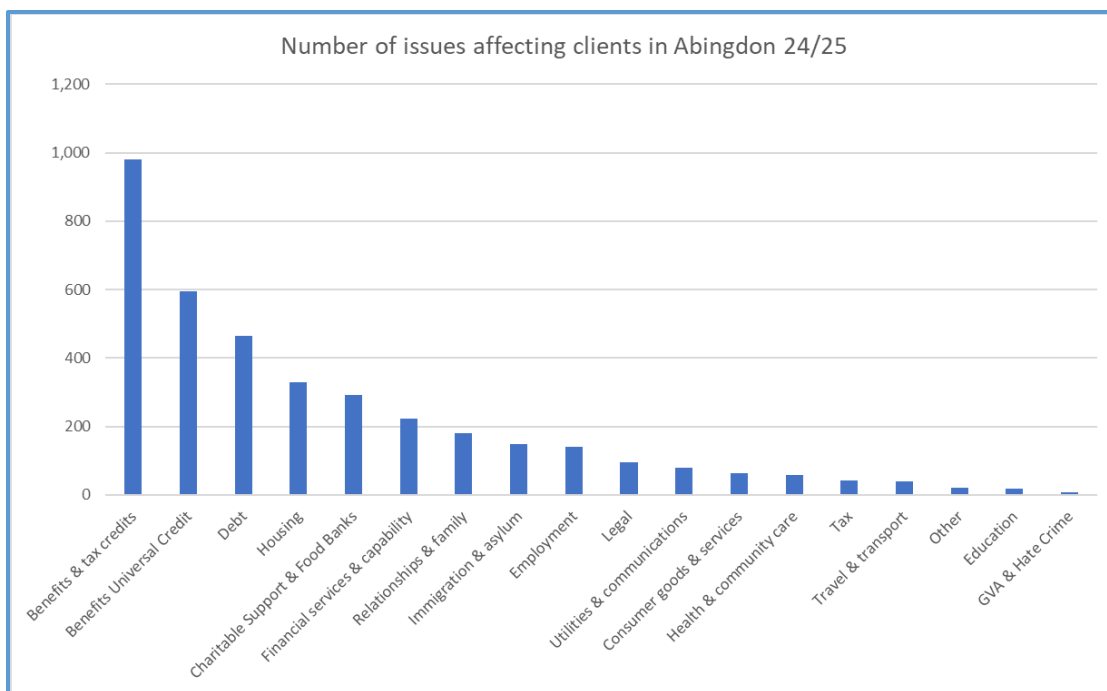
** Abingdon Citizens Advice serves people from elsewhere in the Vale and non-residents who work in Abingdon. Hence its client numbers are greater than the number of Abingdon residents served.

Clients in Abingdon can contact us by a variety of channels. All contact can be broken down as follows:

- 21 % in person
- 28% via email
- 28% phone
- 23% other (letter, video call, web chat)

The most frequent **issues** raised by clients in Abingdon Wards in 24/25 were:

All issues:



Top Benefits Issues:

- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Initial Benefits Claim – Universal Credit
- General Benefit Entitlement

Top Debt Issues:

- Council Tax Arrears
- Other Debt
- Fuel Debt

Financial Outcomes:

At time of writing, in Abingdon Wards alone Citizens Advice facilitated **£592,176** in financial outcomes for Abingdon clients. This breaks down as follows:

Outcomes	
Income gain	£412,139
Re-imburements, services, loans	£28,328
Debts written off	£54,741
Repayments rescheduled	£6,278
Other	£90,690

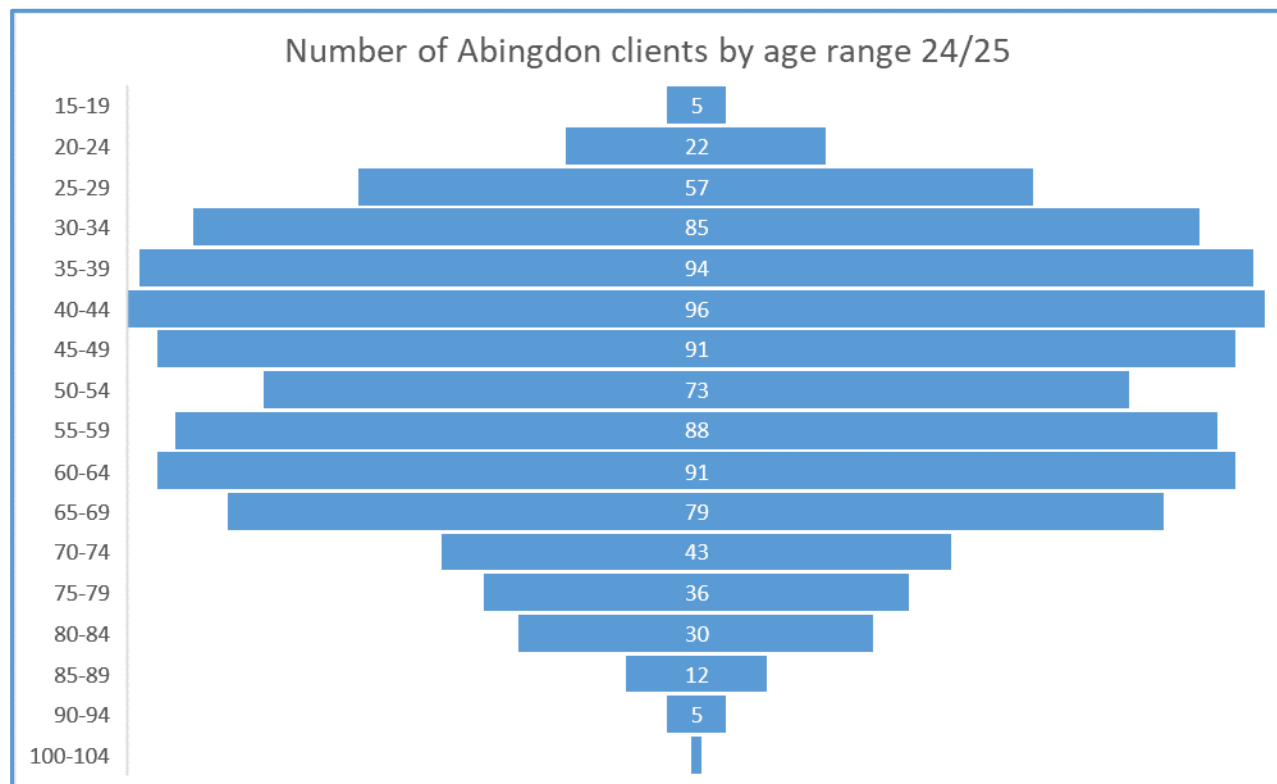
This is practical, measurable, real support for those most in need in our community but we must do more to support those in a 'negative budget' and continue to alleviate hardship. We have grown our Debt team over the last 12 months and this will continue to be expanded. We hope this demonstrates the value for money for the investment that Abingdon Town Council make in the Citizens Advice service each year.

3. About our clients in Abingdon

We deal with the most vulnerable people in our community, **6%** of our clients are registered disabled and **42% have a long-term health condition.**

- 57% are women, 43% men
- 69% are White British, 12% White Other, 7% Black, 6% Asian, 3% Mixed race, 3% Other

Over the last two years we are seeing an increasing number of clients under the age of 50.



Quantitative data alone cannot fully capture our clients' experiences. Many face overwhelming challenges, with their homes or jobs at risk. We empower them to take control of their situations, creating a significant impact on their lives, their families, and their future aspirations. This transformation is evident in the testimonials we have received from Abingdon clients:

"I am so happy with the services and the manner that work... really they are very reliable and responsible people in each case they handle"

"I am very touched of your excellent services , that anytime we need help we know where to go because we know you can help us . I am so impressed that you give free services to us in this country in spite of your time you spend with each client. I am so grateful & will not forget the help you do for me"

"The woman who helped me was able to accommodate me even though I wasn't able to arrive until shortly before her office hours ended. She listened to my problem, made some notes and looked into the issue during her hours outside of the office and emailed me some thoughts on what I could do. She was very selfless and hard working and I really appreciated it. She went above and beyond the call of duty"

A wonderful service assisted and dealt with the my issue very well. Left me feeling at ease after months of worrying and feeling stressed.

I was given lots of very good advice it's extremely helpful the help and advice was given in a very compassionate way which is much appreciated the advisor was great support when needed advice many thanks

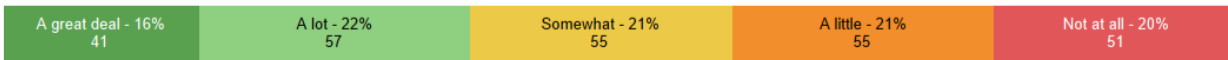
The CAB gives a valued service and meets a variety of needs. It is an essential national help service to be cherished.

4. Client satisfaction and impact

We know our service makes a positive impact on the lives of those we help. Since March 2024 approximately 300 of our clients took part in an independent survey of our service. The results show we are succeeding in our main aims to empower people with **82%** of clients answered positively when asked if the advice we had given them enabled them to move forward and **84%** said they would recommend the service.

While Citizens Advice is not a health charity, our work has a significant positive impact on people's mental health. By providing support on issues such as debt, housing, and employment, we help reduce stress and anxiety, improving overall well-being. This contribution to mental health should be recognized. As part of the same survey, clients were asked "as a result of the help you have received from Citizens Advice, do you feel less stressed, depressed or anxious?" 38% said a 'great deal' or 'a lot' another 42% reported it had 'helped somewhat' or 'a little'. Client reported a positive impact on their physical health too.

As a result of the help you have received from Citizens Advice, do you feel less stressed, depressed or anxious? (Positive = A great deal + A lot + Somewhat)



As a result of the help you have received from Citizens Advice, do you feel your physical health has improved? (Positive = A great deal + A lot + Somewhat)



5. In conclusion

We believe Citizens Advice strengthens the local community by helping vulnerable individuals navigate complex issues, reducing hardship and improving well-being. Additionally, its services relieve pressure on local government and charities by offering expert guidance that prevents small problems from escalating into crises.

On behalf of Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizens Advice, I want to thank Abingdon Town Council for all the support over the years and hope that you will continue to support us in the future as Citizens Advice Oxfordshire.

Debbie Watts, Chief Officer, Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizens Advice