

Making a difference

Impact Report for
April 2022 – March 2023

**citizens
advice**

Bromley

“It's been a breath of fresh air talking to an adviser.”

We are Citizens Advice Bromley



Citizens Advice Bromley provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to Bromley residents to help them overcome their problems and understand their rights and responsibilities.

We also campaign on big issues affecting people's lives. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.

In 2022-23, we received over 11,673 calls from local residents wanting advice on a range of issues from what support is available, e.g. mental health issues and learning difficulties, through to support for the elderly.



We are proud that our work is accredited by the Advice Quality Standard for welfare benefits, debt, housing and employment. This year, we passed our three-year Citizens Advice Audit and also gained our Cyber Essentials Certificate which demonstrates commitment to cyber security against national standards.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our staff and volunteers, we are able to assist with local needs. We tailor our services accordingly and our full range of services are available at several locations across the borough.

By using our local knowledge, experience and data, and working in partnership with others, we help improve local policies and practices.

Under the Bromley Well contract, we work in partnership with Age UK Bromley and Greenwich, Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich Mind, and Bromley Mencap to address Bromley residents' health and wellbeing needs.

What we do

Our telephone service through Bromley Well is the first point of contact for all Bromley residents and professionals.

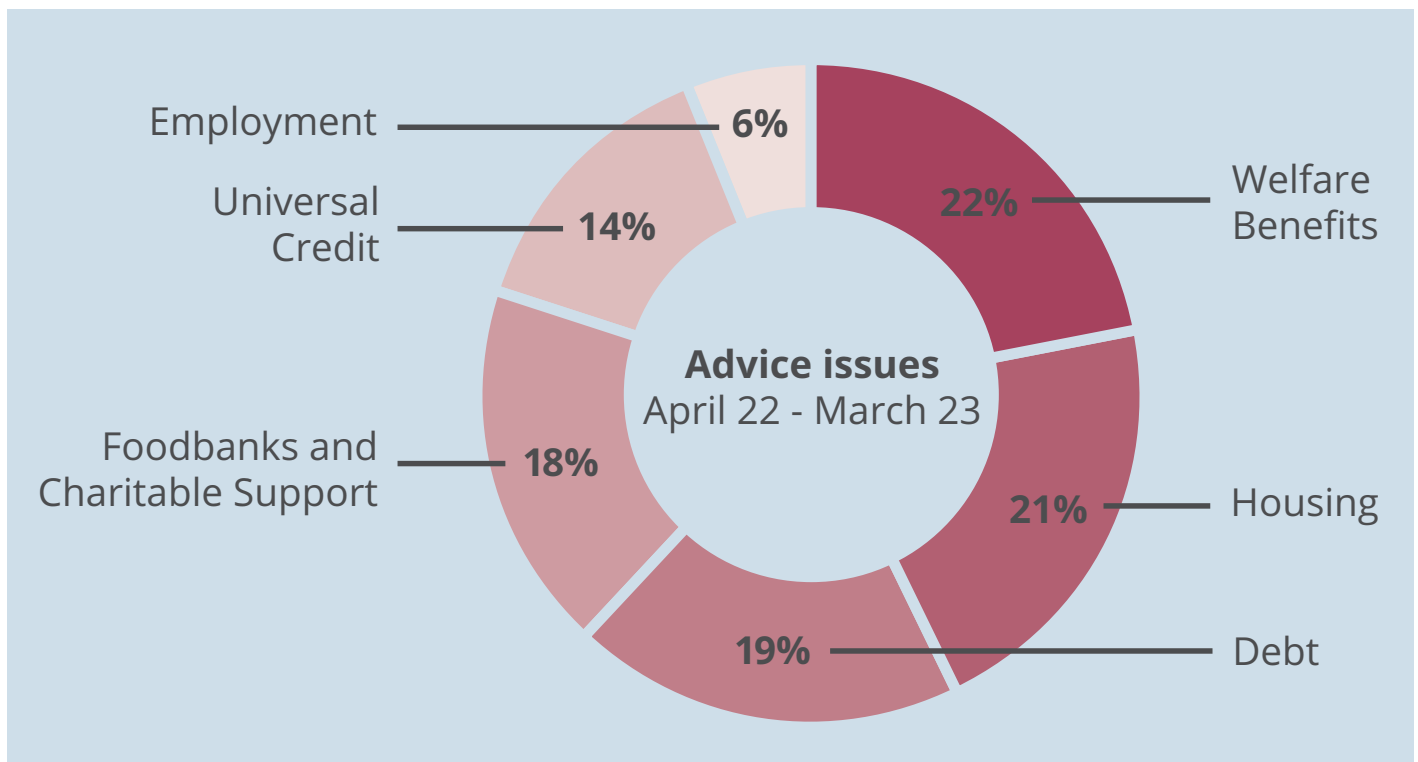
In many cases, we can resolve a client's problem with one phone call. If not, we refer the caller to Bromley Well's specialist

services, including our advisers and caseworkers.

People often come to us with a complex range of problems. These can include issues with housing, debt, benefits, employment and relationships.

Our main advice areas are:

In 2022-23, more people contacted us for housing advice (up 3%), and foodbanks and charitable support (up 4%) than they did in the previous year.



Specialist services

We continued with our face-to-face support at our outreach sites:


- Anerley Town Hall
- Cotmandene Resource Centre, Orpington
- The Walnuts, Orpington - delivering a foodbank project

We also provide a range of specialist projects, including:

Bromley Borough Foodbank - advising clients and administering vouchers to overcome food and fuel deprivation.

Foodbank Outreach - working exclusively with Bromley Borough Foodbank in one of the borough's highest deprived areas.

Debt Free London - providing specialist debt advice to vulnerable clients through multiple channels.

A man with short hair, wearing a patterned button-down shirt, is seated at a table. He is looking down at a white disposable cup in front of him. His right hand is near the cup, and his left hand is resting on the table. The background is blurred, showing other people seated at tables in what appears to be a dining area. The entire image has a reddish-pink color cast.

**“I am so grateful to you today
for your help and support.
Thank you very much for the
wonderful package of food.”**

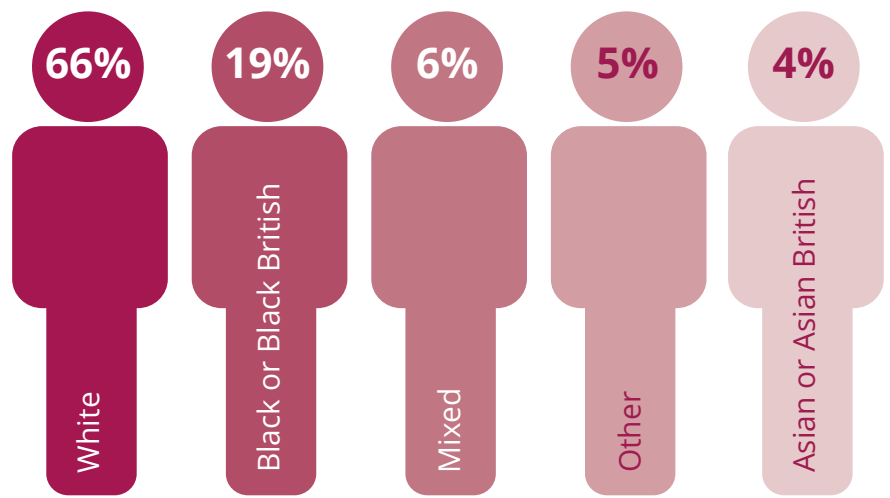
Who we help

Our goal is to help residents to find a way forward, whatever problem they face.

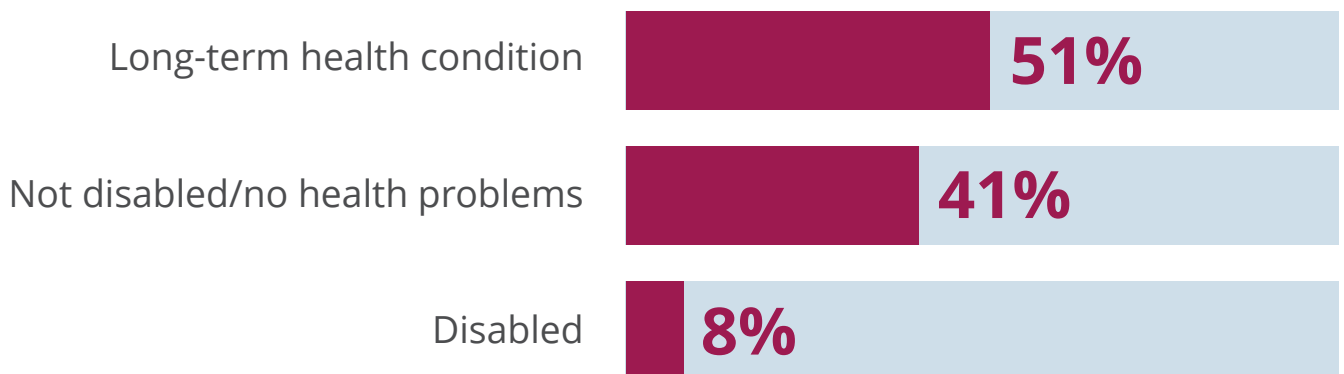
Our service is open to everyone, irrespective of ability, age, gender, gender identity, race, religion, belief, sexual orientation and social or economic status.

The majority of our clients (70.2%) are aged 30-60 years. Two thirds of them (66%) are female and 59% of clients are disabled or have long term health issues.

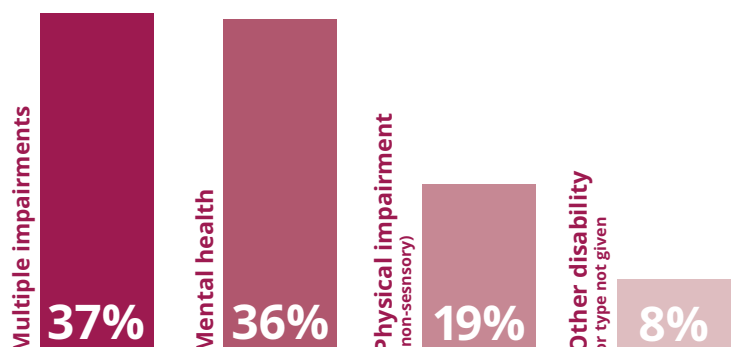
Ethnicity



Disability/Long-term health



Type of Disability



Our impact

from April 2022 – March 2023

£ Every **£1 of funding** to Citizens Advice Bromley generates **£12.52** benefit per client

Solving problems improves lives, meaning better wellbeing, participation and productivity for the people we help.

£1,511,960 savings to government and public spending

By helping stop problems occurring or escalating, we reduce pressure on public services like health, housing or out-of-work benefits.

£5,126,254 value to the people we helped

As part of our advice, we can increase people's income, through debts written-off, taking up benefits and solving consumer problems.

 **3** outreach sites



11,673 number of calls to our Bromley Well advice line



8,204 emails received from local residents and professionals



30,638 number of issues and activities we helped with



9,230 individual clients helped.



63 volunteers gave **18,174** hours of their time, worth over **£485,000**



22 new volunteers recruited throughout the year, including advice line advisers and trustees

97%

of people would recommend us to a friend.

98%

said they are happy with our service.

97.5%

would use our services again in future.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated team of staff and volunteers, who work tirelessly to support the community we serve.

Highlights of our year

Many of our achievements are more than statistics. Here are just a few examples of projects and initiatives that make us proud to be Citizens Advice Bromley.

Through our **partnership with the National Grid**, we had a **corporate volunteer** placement.

We gained funding for **more staff to support the foodbank project** and help clients in crisis.

Staff and volunteers **raised £2,128** by taking part in the London Legal Walk.

We delivered **100 energy advice appointments** from January to March 2023.

Our new **Amazon Connect phone system launched** and all teams were **successfully trained** on how to use it.

Our CEO was **interviewed by the News Shopper** on the cost of living crisis. She raised the need for foodbanks and charitable support.

We launched a brand **new online referral form** for professionals, to speed up support for residents.

We delivered **two outreach pop-ups** in The Glades shopping centre, covering the cost of living, and self-care week.

By **meeting with local councillors** from the Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Chislehurst Matters parties, we discussed joined-up approaches to support clients, increasing our reach and impact.

We now have a **regular feature** in the National Citizens Advice *'Start of the Week'* newsletters about our clients' successes.

We produced **newsletters covering all five cost of living indicators**, looking at local and national trends.

Our welfare benefits caseworker was **featured on BBC Radio London Live**, discussing the rising cost of living.

Our debt team scored **more than 90% for the quality of their advice** during the 2022-23 year.

We formed part of the wider London Citizens Advice partnership **delivering advice across South East London**, under a new Greater London Authority (GLA) funded project.

Our clients' stories

These client stories show some of the ways we can help.

Case study: advice on employment rights and options



“Thank you kindly for all your help. I honestly couldn't have done it without you. I'm so very grateful that there are people like yourself in the community that can assist people like me.”

The client was told by their employer that they would be moved to another company within 6 months. They'd been working at the company since 2008 but the employer said that the new company would not apply TUPE regulations to their role. This was because the new employer would risk a large redundancy payment if the job didn't work out.

Concerned, the client contacted us for advice on their employment rights and options. Our adviser worked with them and was able to support the client to receive a total of £16,000 which covered, redundancy payment, notice pay, holiday pay and unpaid wages. They were very grateful for our help.

Case study: debt and benefits advice

“Thank you for supporting me through my crisis. Without Citizens Advice Bromley, I would not have been able to deal with my problems.”



A housing association tenant was referred to us for debt advice. They had debts of £32,000, mostly from unpaid parking fines, which they'd accrued after suffering a mental health crisis caused by a racially provoked incident at home.

With a history of extensive trauma and anxiety, the client suffers from panic attacks. They'd tried to appeal their parking tickets several times, but the appeals were refused.

Our case worker gave debt advice and supported the client with a benefit check. They were given information about Severe Mental Impairment and Council Tax exemptions they might be eligible for, due to their health conditions.

They were also advised about setting up ongoing payments to avoid increasing their debts.

Thanks to our advice and support, the client was able to apply for grants to clear their arrears, maximise their income with benefits they're entitled to and manage their existing debt much better. The case worker also applied for a Debt Relief Order to help them clear the remainder of their debt.

The client is now debt free and grateful that they are more capable of managing their finances better.

Vision for the future



Sadly, the ongoing cost of living crisis has continued to put enormous pressure on our clients. Through our work with Bromley Borough Foodbank, we know that the number of people needing access to foodbank support has increased significantly.

In addition, the situation is taking an even greater toll on the mental wellbeing of many of our clients, increasing demand and pressure on an already stretched sector.

As we move into 2024, we will continue our work within the community, adding more outreach centres, so that we can help more people who need us. We will also continue our collaborative partnership, working towards a more seamless journey for those who need us most.

There's no doubt that the demand for our services has increased significantly in the last 12 months. Yet, at the same time, our resources have decreased. Some volunteers have needed to return to paid work, while other staff and volunteers have had to re-evaluate their life choices due to family circumstances or long-term health issues.

At Citizens Advice Bromley, we will continue to adapt to these changes, so that we are able to work more efficiently and deliver an effective service for those most vulnerable in our society.

Thanks to our funders

None of our work could happen without the support of our funders.
Our thanks go to all of them, especially our core funder,
Bromley Third Sector Enterprise:



SUPPORTED BY
MAYOR OF LONDON



Citizens Advice helps people find a way forward.

We provide free, confidential and independent advice to help people overcome their problems. We are a voice for our clients and consumers on the issues that matter to them.

We value diversity, champion equality, and challenge discrimination and harassment.

We're here for everyone.



Scan the QR code for more information

www.bromleycab.org.uk

 @CAB_Bromley

Telephone: **0808 278 7898** (freephone), Mon-Sat 9am-5pm.

Or enquire via Bromley Well: www.bromleywell.org.uk/make-a-referral

To find out more about the information in this Impact Report, please contact: Loraine Whittaker, Chief Officer, at CEO@citizensadvicebromley.org.uk

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