

**citizens  
advice  
bureau**

Hamilton Citizens Advice Bureau

Annual Report 2022 / 2023

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## Chairperson and Chief Officer's Welcome

It is with pleasure that we present our 2022/2023 annual report, which celebrates our hard work, partnerships and achievements.

It has been a year of organisational change for Hamilton Citizens Advice Bureau. In December we welcomed our new Chair, Ian Todd, who took over from Rosemary Robinson. Thanks to Rosemary for the time she gave to Hamilton CAB.

This year also saw the retirement of Maureen Chalmers and the appointment of Jennifer Howdle as the new Chief Officer. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Maureen for her hard work and dedication to Hamilton CAB over the 17 years she was with us.

Whilst still recovering from the effects of the pandemic, our service then faced the impact of the 'cost of living' crisis. People in our local community saw their budgets stretched like never before, with many more having to choose between food and fuel. This crisis created an unprecedented need for our services, with overall demand increasing by 10% from the previous year.

The strong partnerships we have with other local organisations became even more vital to ensure we reached those that were struggling.

This year saw us work with Community Links (South Lanarkshire) to carry out a community consultation of our services. This helped us create our 2023 to 2026 Strategic Plan, which was finalised in March 2023. More on this later.

With a focus on returning to more face to face advice, we have been working hard to increase our volunteer numbers in order to ensure that we can continue to deliver the vital services to our community.

We would like to say a big thank you to all our volunteers, staff and our trustees for their hard work and dedication over the past year. We could not do this without you.

Please read on to learn more about the fantastic work we have carried out over the past year.

Ian Todd  
Chairperson

Jennifer Howdle  
Chief Officer

## About Hamilton Citizens Advice Bureau

Hamilton Citizens Advice Bureau is an independent organisation and a member of the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureau. We are a charity, which was established in 1970 and became a limited company in 2010.

### Trustees

Ian Todd

George Welsh

Andy Knox

Gary Stewart

Arlene Williams

### Chief Officer

Jennifer Howdle

We offer free, impartial and confidential advice and representation to residents of Hamilton and the wider South Lanarkshire Area. We provide practical support and guidance on a range of everyday topics, giving people the information they need to cope with any situation they may be facing. We offer advice across 15 areas of the law including welfare benefits, housing, employment, debt and utilities.



We are a volunteer led service and during the reporting period benefited from the input of 11 volunteers. As a charity we rely on our volunteers to deliver the important work we do.

### Our twin aims are:

To ensure that individuals do not suffer through lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, or of the services available to them, or through an inability to express their needs effectively.

**And equally:** To exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services, both locally and nationally.

### 12 Principles Guide Our Work:

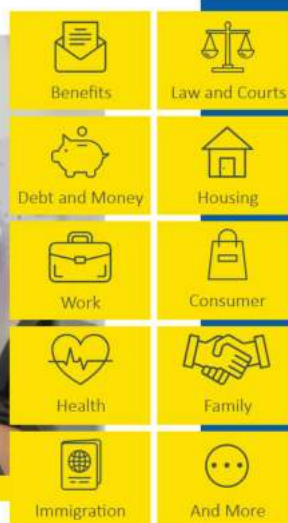
- Free
- Independent
- Accessible
- Accountable
- Voluntary
- Information retrieval
- Impartial
- Confidential
- Effective
- Client's Right to Decide
- Empowerment
- Generalist

Hamilton CAB provides its core services within Hamilton and district area consisting of the communities of Blantyre, Bothwell, Hamilton, Larkhall and Uddingston. Each week, we provide advice via drop-in face-to-face sessions, appointments, video and telephone calls, emails and home visits.

## Services, Projects, and Outreach

### Drop-in

Our drop-in service is provided by volunteer advisers and deals with both routine and emergency enquiries. We continue to operate a triage system for initial contacts. During this reporting period the service moved back to offering more face to face appointments. However, a large proportion of the advice was still delivered via telephone, due to space constraints within our public facing office. During the reporting period, the drop-in service provided advice to 1788 people. Of the advice provided, 49% related to welfare benefits issues.



### Specialist Services

The specialist services we deliver provide advice and representation on welfare benefits, multiple debts and housing and homelessness issues:

- Lay Representation Service
- Health & Welfare Service
- The Beacons Project
- Money Advice



### Outreach

Additional funding allowed us to establish new advice outreaches in Larkhall and Blantyre at the beginning of 2023. Prior to the pandemic, our outreaches were vital in helping us to reach the most vulnerable and those that struggled to access our main offices. The pandemic ceased these services and it became a priority to re-establish them in light of the cost of living crisis. Thank you to Larkhall & District Volunteer Group, Larkhall Trinity Church, The June Stewart Centre and Terminal One for accommodating our outreach sessions.

## Statistics



**3,963** people received advice (3603 in 2012/22)

**2,493** never used the service before (2511 in 2021/22)

## Our Clients



**10,464** total contacts with clients (10,361 in 2021/22)

**15,072** issues we provided advice on (15,818 in 2021/22)



## Support Provided



- Welfare Benefits
- Debt
- Utilities and Communications
- Finance and Charitable Support
- Housing



Face-to-face **22%**



Telephone **65%**



Email **8%**



Letter **2%**



**£1,381,363** client financial gain (£942,343 in 2021/22)

we generated **£25** for every £1 of South Lanarkshire Council grant funding (£16 in 2021/22)



## Income and Expenditure



Free reserves, i.e. those not tied up in fixed assets, nor relating to restricted funds, as of 31st March 2023, amounted to £30,187.

**Auditor:** John Di Mambro & Co. Chartered Accountants, 16 Muir Street, Hamilton, ML3 6EP

**Bank:** Unity Trust Bank PLC, PO Box 7193, Planetary Road, Willenhall, WV19DG



- Scottish Legal Aid Board - £135,106      ● South Lanarkshire Council - £104,654
- Citizens Advice Scotland - £95,226      ● ICF / HWA - £79,946
- Bank of Scotland Foundation - £50,000
- Scottish Legal Aid Board Debt - £47,722      ● NHS Lanarkshire - £42,400
- SCVO - £29,394      ● Sense Scotland - £18,957      ● CORRA Foundation - £3,597

## Volunteer Spotlight

### Fiona - Trainee Adviser

"In short, I found myself in a job in which I didn't feel challenged.

I knew I could be doing far more.

In June this year, this became more of an issue for me, so I approached Hamilton Citizens Advice Bureau and asked about volunteering opportunities.

After interviewing, I was very quickly enrolled onto the Generalist Adviser training course, and started volunteering in the Bureau.

The considerable pressures on the Bureau due to the after-effects of Covid and the cost-of-living crisis were clear to see, so I opted to take a break from paid employment to give more of my time to volunteering. I honestly couldn't see why, in this context, I shouldn't dedicate more time and energy into supporting the work of the Bureau.

I do get a lot out of it, of course, excellent training, amazing support from Team Leaders, staff and other volunteers, and its great meeting people from across the community of Hamilton and beyond.

I think it's maybe the best thing I've ever done, and I couldn't be more grateful."



**VOLUNTEER  
ADVISERS**

**Build your SKILLS  
and EXPERIENCE  
while helping your  
community  
... and give  
something back?**

**" I knew I could be doing more "**

## Community Consultation and Strategic Plan

During the reporting period we worked with Community Links (South Lanarkshire) to carry out a community consultation. The aim of this consultation was to help us understand:

- Awareness levels and perceptions of Hamilton CAB within our local community
- Community views on the accessibility and impact of Hamilton CAB and how this might be maximised
- Community views on the priority areas of development work for Hamilton CAB

The consultation results were clear that while awareness of the service was high (81% had heard of Hamilton CAB), nearly 1 in 5 of respondents had not heard of our service. It was very apparent from the consultation that our service needed to be more accessible in the places people live and not just function from one main office.

Respondents were also clear that our service needs to be more pro-active and preventative in our provision, rather than being a reactive, crisis-based service.



The results of our community consultation fed into the development of our 2023 to 2026 Strategic Plan, which was finalised in March 2023. Our Chief Officer will be responsible for taking forward the plan over the next three years.

The plan objectives are as follows:

- Enhance our service delivery
- Stay resilient
- Build the brand

We look forward to reporting our progress in our annual reports over the next three years.

## Client Testimonials

“ Just to say thank you for all the help you gave me. I was awarded the top rate of Attendance Allowance and couldn't have done it without you. ”

“ A very big thank you for the help you gave me with my blue badge application, it was very much appreciated. ”

“ Thank you for all your help with my heating issue, it was truly wonderful! ”

“ Thank you so much for all your help and the kindness you showed me. ”

“ Thank you for all your help with our benefits application. We wouldn't have received it without you. ”

Thank You!

We would like to thank our funders and partners. Without your support we would not be able to carry out our vitally important work.

## Our Funders



## Our Partners

Larkhall & District Volunteer Group | Hamilton District Foodbank

Clyde, Avon & Nethan Foodbank | Fuel Bank Foundation | Liber8 | The Beacons

Community Links (South Lanarkshire) | South Lanarkshire Council | Terminal One

Trinity Church Larkhall | Our neighbouring CABs | VASlan | NHS Lanarkshire

PAMIS | South Lanarkshire Health & Social Care Partnership | Lanarkshire Carers Centre

Covey | Scottish Courts Administration | Blantyre Miners Welfare | The Machan Trust



Hamilton Citizens Advice Bureau

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