



Citizens Advice Staffordshire South West

Annual Report

2024/2025

85
Years of

**citizens
advice**

A message from the Chair of Trustees

This year was my first as Chair of Citizens Advice, Staffordshire South West, and I want to thank our previous Chair, Elaine Robinson, for doing such a fantastic job over many years, and for handing the role over to me in such a good position.

After a recent short period where a number of changes of key people in the organisation occurred, it's good to be able to report that we have enjoyed a period of stability. The Trustee Board, strengthened last year by the addition of Sue, Judith, Stevie and Richard, has matured and works well and effectively, although we do say our farewells to John Davies this year after many years of service as a Trustee.

Our two key Board Subgroups, Quality & Performance lead by our vice chair Sue, and our Finance and Resources subgroup lead by our vice chair David continue to play a key role in supporting the governance of our work as a Board of Trustees.



Wayne Currie
Chair of Trustee Board

Our senior management team has had a very successful year, lead by our CEO Claire Davis. The whole team has delivered a very strong performance, helping clients manage their own futures better, fundraising, and managing our finances. This is of course only possible when they are in turn supported by our wonderful team of managers, supervisors, advisers and of course our amazing volunteers. I'm incredibly grateful for their hard work and dedication.

Whilst we have increased our resilience in performance and our financial stability during this period, we recognise that there are some very important challenges we will need to face up to in the coming years. These issues range from essential changes to the Local Service Offering from National Citizens Advice, to the potential for Local Authority restructuring and the ever-present threat of adequate funding. We are however confident that we will be able to navigate these changes, and continue to play our part in helping our local clients in all areas of our operations.

85 years of local advice

The very first local Citizens Advice Bureau opened its doors on the 4th September 1939 following the outbreak of the Second World War.

Our former Stafford Bureau was the first Staffordshire office to open, opening in early November 1939. Following on from this our other offices opened their doors in the 1960's and 1970's.

We have now been delivering a Citizens Advice service in Staffordshire for 85 years. We currently have 46 paid staff and 40 volunteers working across 5 offices alongside a number of outreach sites.

When we first started the service, this was run by local people on a voluntary basis, over the years our service has expanded to work with a number of agencies and partners delivering more specialist services.

This has enabled Citizens Advice Staffordshire South West to grow and develop, ensuring that the needs of our communities are met and providing access to services which are free of charge in a changing environment.

Throughout our 85 year history our charity has been well supported by local people including many staff, trustees, volunteers and donors over the years.

We are very grateful to all those who have helped in any way to ensure that we are here for all those in Staffordshire South West with free advice and information.

We celebrated this wonderful milestone and raised awareness of the great work that we do, raised funds and highlighted volunteer opportunities.

We've been tackling the issues that affect all of us and using our data to show decision-makers how to make life better for everyone.

We're a charity working for the whole of society.



How we celebrated our 85th birthday

To celebrate this special occasion and mark an exciting chapter in our journey, we invited everyone to join us and be part of our history. We organised several activities that were held during the months of September and November 2024.

These included:

September

A sponsored walk of 85 miles in 85 minutes

We enjoyed a picnic followed by a walk in Cannock Chase around the RAF trail.

November

We held open days in our offices in Stafford, Rugeley and Codsall

This was a chance for the public, partners and other agencies to see our offices, and the work that we do and a good opportunity to highlight volunteer recruitment.

Treasure hunt and birthday brunch

Colleagues were invited to join in teams and take part in a treasure hunt around Stafford town centre, and enjoy a brunch afterwards.



85th birthday walk

As part of our 85th birthday celebrations, staff, trustees, volunteers and their four-legged friends were invited to take part in a special commemorative walk around the RAF Hednesford Trail around a former RAF Second World War training camp.

RAF Hednesford trained essential ground crew like mechanics and riggers, playing a vital support role during the war. Thousands of RAF personnel, Fleet Air Arm members, WAAF women, and NAAFI staff passed through the camp. Post-war, it served as a National Service training site until 1956, and later housed Hungarian refugees fleeing Soviet invasion. It remains one of Cannock Chase's key military heritage sites.



The goal was ambitious but symbolic: to collectively cover 85 miles in just 85 minutes. Fortunately, the weather was on our side, with clear skies and mild temperatures setting the perfect backdrop for the day.

Before setting off, everyone gathered to enjoy a relaxed picnic, sharing food, stories, and laughter. The walk itself was filled with camaraderie, scenic views, and a strong sense of community spirit. The dogs of Citizens Advice also enjoyed themselves.



Open days

To mark the special occasion of our 85th anniversary, we proudly opened our doors to the public, inviting community members, stakeholders, and partners to step inside and discover what really happens behind the scenes.

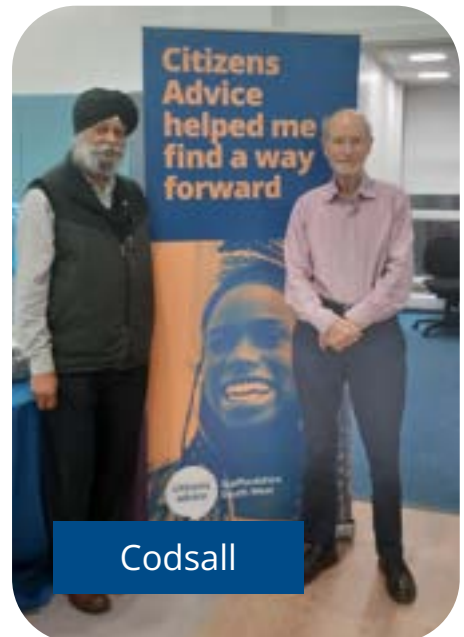
The event featured a variety of informative displays showcasing the breadth of our services, key milestones in our rich history, and the impact we've had over the years.



Stafford



Rugeley



Codsall

Visitors had the opportunity to meet our dedicated team, ask questions, and gain a deeper understanding of our work.

Adding to the celebratory atmosphere, the local radio station broadcast live from our Stafford office, helping to share the excitement and spirit of the day with the wider community, and a visit from The Worshipful, the Mayor of Stafford Borough and Local Councillors.

Treasure hunt

As part of our ongoing 85th anniversary celebrations, colleagues, including staff, volunteers and trustees were invited to take part in a lively treasure hunt around Stafford town centre.

A huge thank you goes to Helen Stabler, whose creativity and hard work made the event such a success. Not only did she design the entire hunt, but she also had her family test it in advance to make sure everything ran smoothly.

Despite the freezing temperatures and icy conditions that morning, spirits remained high as we split into teams and set off on our adventure. Along the way, we uncovered fascinating facts about Stafford's rich history and enjoyed some friendly competition.

The morning concluded with a well-earned hot breakfast, where everyone warmed up and shared stories from the hunt. It was a fun, engaging way to bring people together and a brilliant time was had by all.



A new community project

In April 2024 Citizens Advice Staffordshire South West secured funding from Cannock Chase District Council (CCDC) for a period of 12 months via the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF).

The UKSPF-funding directly addresses the cost of living crisis in the Cannock Chase District by providing proactive, tailored, and accessible one-to-one financial support to the community's most vulnerable households, including families, sole parents, veterans, and the elderly.

We operate directly within community venues including children centres, warm spaces, food banks, and libraries. The aim of the project is to ensure CCDC residents are supported in claiming their full benefit entitlements, support with financial literacy including budgeting, debts and energy.

Working in the community has enabled me to ensure that clients who are not able to travel to an office are able to obtain the advice in a venue they are comfortable with which supports them to use other services within the venue.

An example of this is the food bank, where clients may come with their food voucher and I have been able to obtain a Household Support Vouchers for a supermarket voucher and apply for support with energy bills.

The core value of the project lies not only in the immediate relief it provides to families but in the long term financial stability and improved health and wellbeing.

The project supported an income gain of £933,529, and dealt with £96,089 worth of debt for the clients who accessed support.



Sam Hampton
Outreach Welfare Rights
Caseworker

To date, the project has achieved an income gain of £933,529 and addressed £96,089 in client debt.

Welfare Rights Case study

The client, a single male in his early 50's, had been living in a caravan on a piece of land for three years, as it was all he could afford. He was on the housing register and receiving Universal Credit, including Limited Capability for Work-Related Activity (LCWRA). He described himself as long-term sick, with conditions including PTSD, severe anxiety, depression, mobility issues, and incontinence.

He was referred to the UKSPF-funded caseworker following successful support with council tax arrears. During discussions about his income, it was identified that he may be eligible for Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The client attended a face-to-face appointment where practical support was provided to complete the PIP form. Due to his anxiety, the session included reassurance and breaks to ensure he felt comfortable and not overwhelmed.

He was also advised on what to expect from the PIP process, including timescales. The client said the support helped him feel more at ease. Given his needs, we requested additional support from the DWP for his assessment.

Following his assessment, the client was awarded Enhanced Daily Living (£72.65 per week), Standard Mobility (£28.70 per week), and a backdated payment of over £3,000. While pleased with the result, he disagreed with the mobility component, stating that the assessor's report contained inaccuracies. After discussing the risks and options, he chose to submit a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) and asked me to act as his representative.

A few weeks later, I spoke directly with the DWP decision maker to explain the client's concerns. Following this, the client received confirmation that he had been awarded Enhanced Mobility (£75.75 per week), a further backdated payment of over £2,000, and an extension of his award from 2 to 5 years.

The client expressed sincere thanks for the support provided, saying the outcome had changed his life and greatly improved his mental wellbeing. Additional help was given to obtain a Blue Badge, a bus pass, and evidence to support a housing application with the local authority, helping him move towards more suitable accommodation.

How we use our data to support services

Since the inception of Citizens Advice, our approach to statistics has continuously evolved. This year, in response to the sustained impact of the rising cost of living on our clients, we have significantly enhanced our data capabilities.

We now utilise sophisticated software to gather an extensive array of evidence, enabling us to demonstrate the comprehensive value of our services to funders and stakeholders. Our commitment to transparency and accountability means rigorously measuring both the economic and social returns of our work.

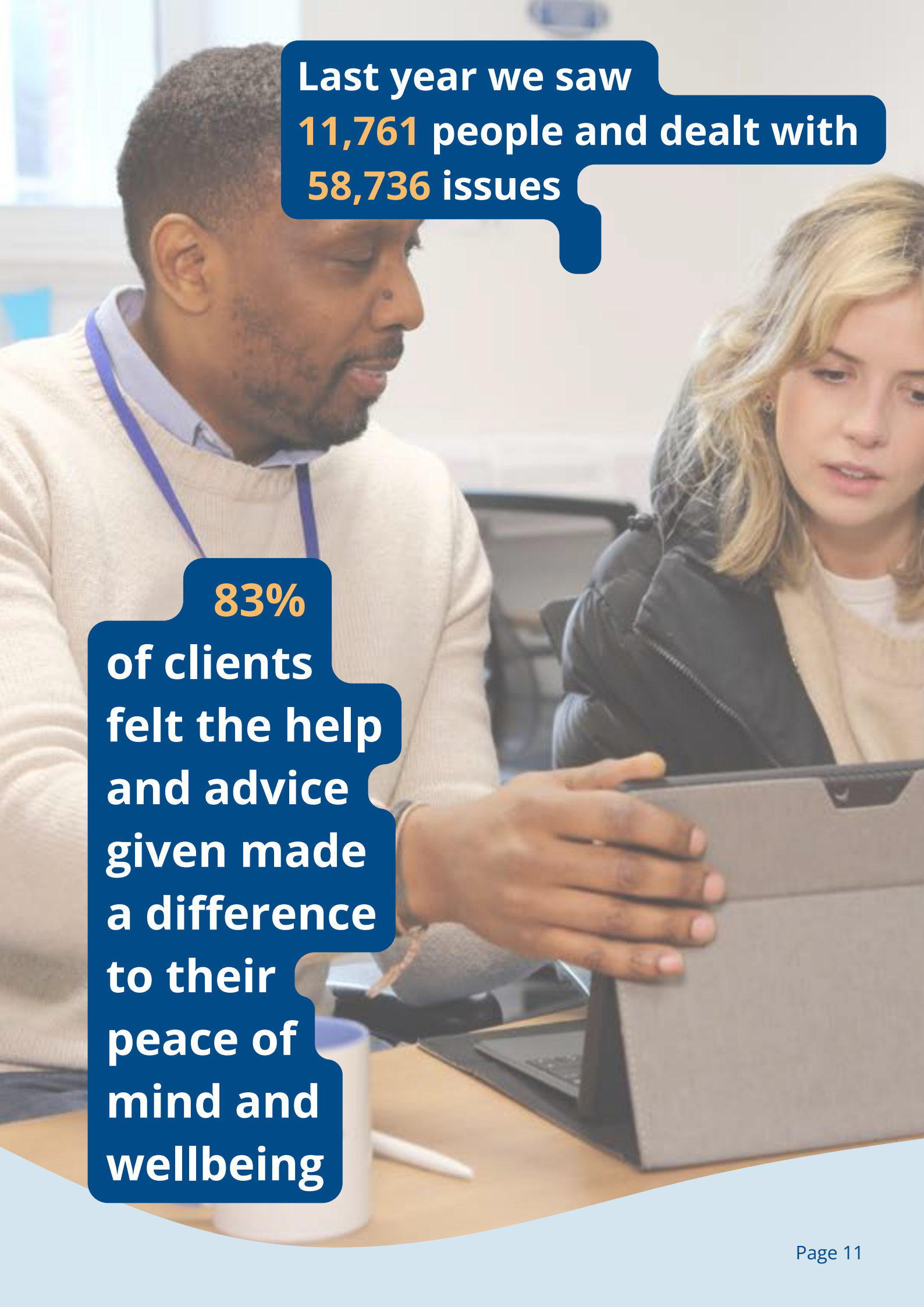
As the Data Performance & Monitoring Officer, my priority is to ensure our reporting moves beyond simple financial metrics. While we use a Treasury-approved model to meticulously quantify the fiscal benefits (maximising client income and calculating savings to the public purse), I also ensure we capture the deeper, vital social outcomes that cannot be assigned a simple price tag.

This holistic data perspective reveals our wider impact on the community, including:

- **Resilience:** Enhancing mental well-being and strengthening family relationships.
- **Economic Stability:** Helping individuals maintain employment or assist them in returning to work; and achieving a stable financial outlook through stabilised debt.
- **Public Service Demand Reduction:** Preventing housing evictions and homelessness, and decreasing the demand for mental health and general practitioner services.

Louise Randall
Data Performance & Monitoring Officer



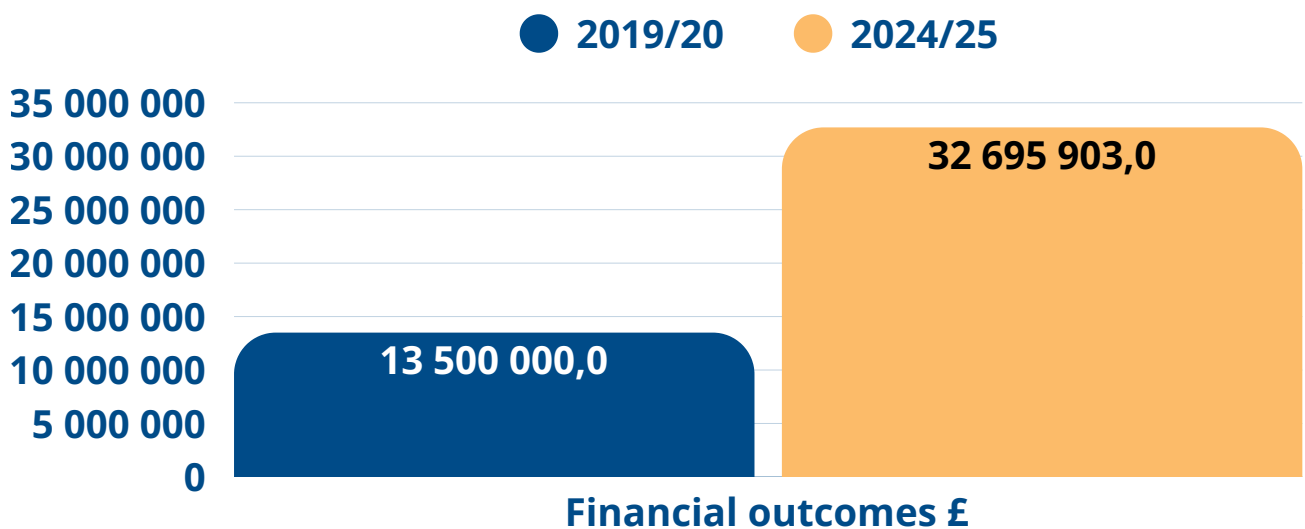
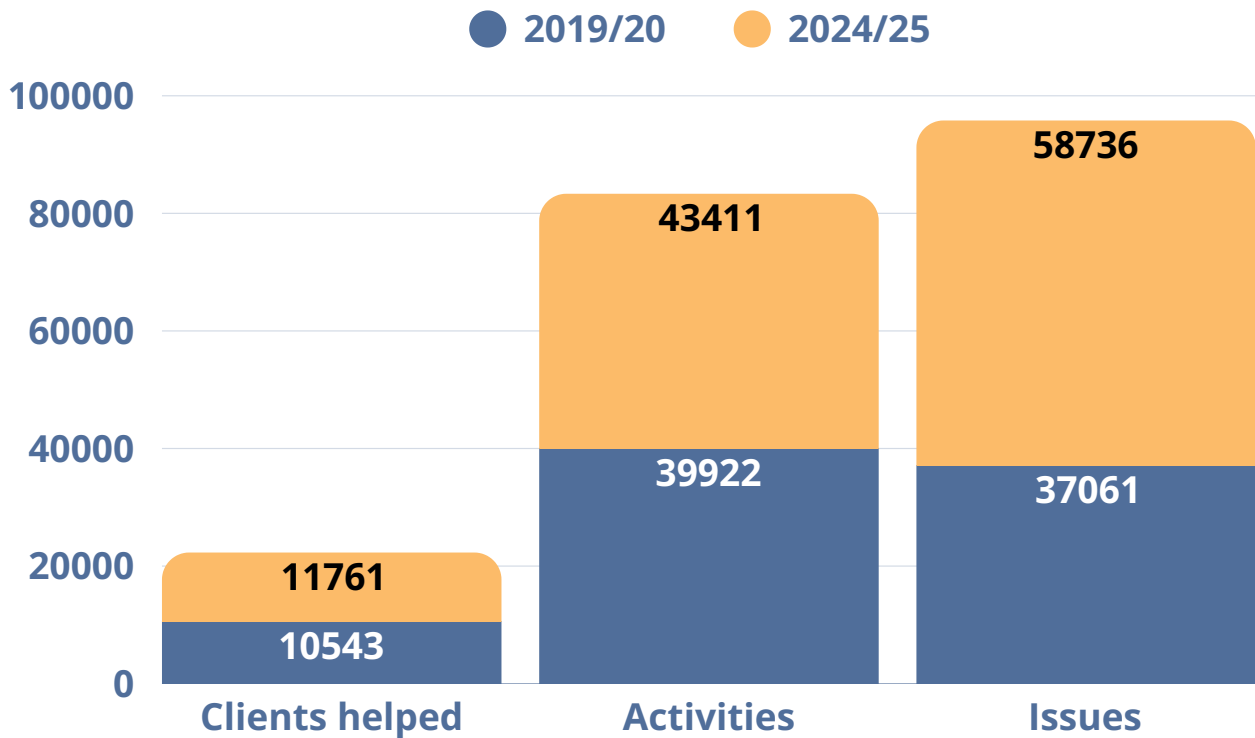
A man and a woman are sitting at a desk, looking at a tablet. The man is on the left, wearing a white sweater and a blue lanyard. The woman is on the right, wearing a black jacket over a white top. They are both looking at the tablet with interest. The background is a blurred office environment.

Last year we saw
11,761 people and dealt with
58,736 issues

83%
of clients
felt the help
and advice
given made
a difference
to their
peace of
mind and
wellbeing

Service in numbers

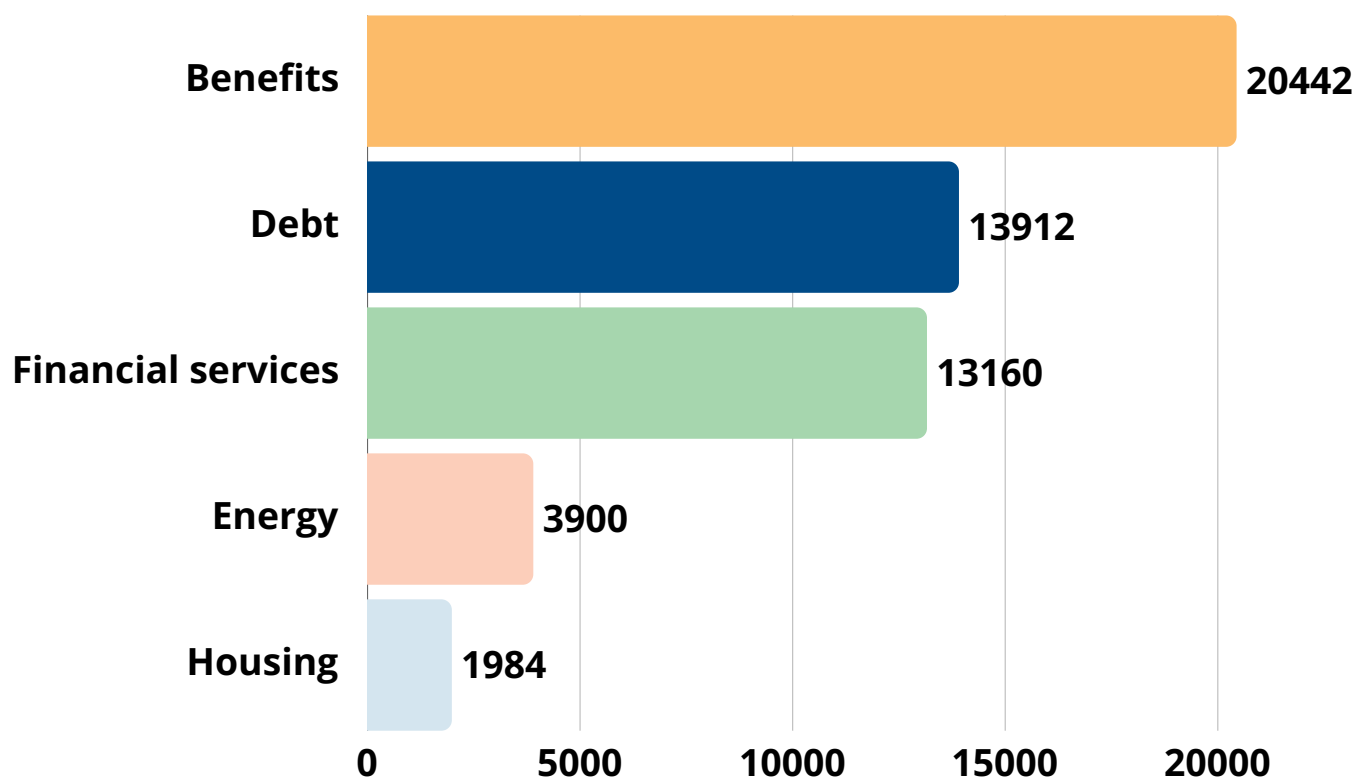
The demand for our service is ever increasing and since we celebrated our last milestone birthday, five years ago pre-Covid- 19 we can see how the demand has increased. This shows just how important the role of Citizens Advice still is within our communities.



How we help our clients

Whether it's by phone, email, webchat or face-to-face, we've supported our clients to get the advice they need in a way that works for them.

In 2024/25, we advised on **58,736** advice issues. The top advice issues were:



Achievements we accomplished



**£32,695,903 in
total
outcomes**

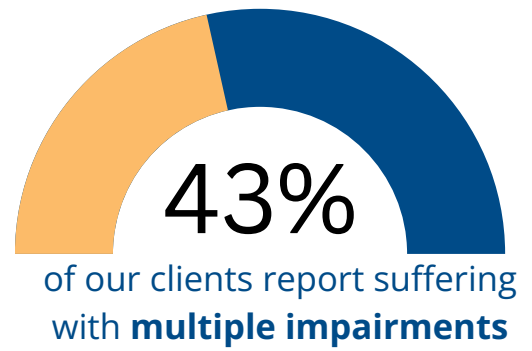
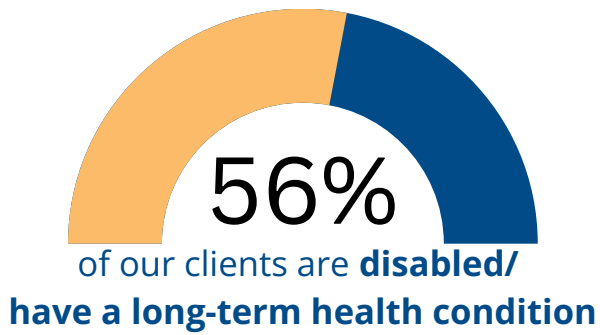


**£426,024 debts
successfully
written off**

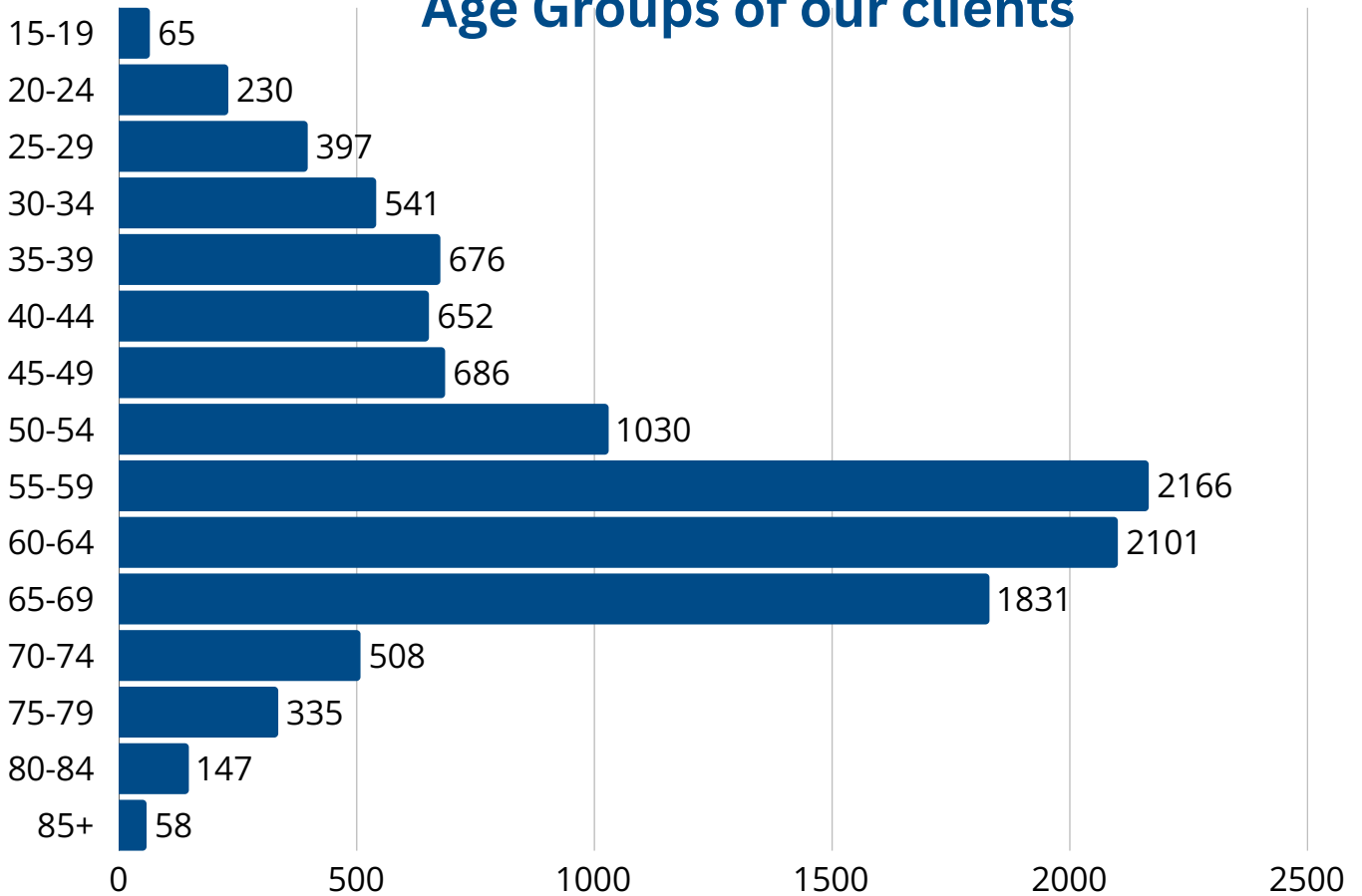


**£15,328,469 in
income gained**

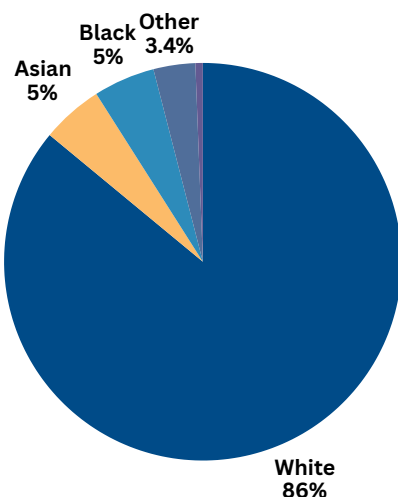
Health of our clients



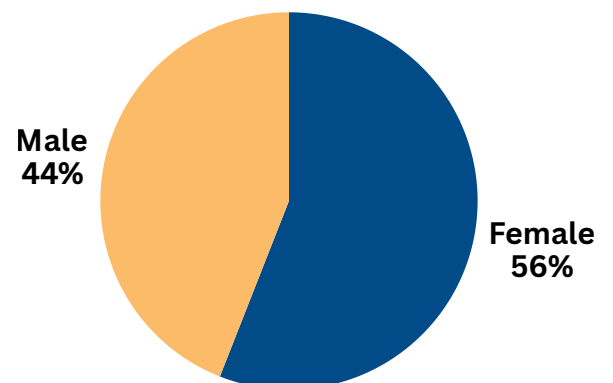
Age Groups of our clients



Ethnicity of our clients



Gender of our clients



The importance of volunteering

Our volunteers come from all walks of life and choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons. They include students, people getting back into work after career breaks, people with part-time jobs, carers, and people who have retired.

The value of volunteering

£291,110

value of hours

240 weeks

average 6 hours per day

£91,321

time, skill,
well being,
employment

Total: £382,431



Focus on some of our long serving colleagues

Jayne Rowley, Administrator

It's hard to believe I've been part of this organisation for nearly 28 years. Time really does fly when you're working with good people and doing meaningful work.

I started work as an Admin Assistant with Rugeley Citizens Advice Bureau back in 1998. We first merged with Cannock and became Chase Citizens Advice Bureau and then with Stafford to where we are today.

It's been quite the journey. I still remember back in those early days, when we were always chasing funding. There were moments when we weren't sure how we would keep things going and a few redundancies had to be made along the way.

Fast forward to now and we've come a long way. We're completely paperless, which is a huge shift from the days of filing cabinets, bulging client files and boxes of client paperwork. Client case records were all hand written when I first started, which made the client files extremely large.

Moving on digitally has helped us work faster, files are more secure and more accessible – plus not having to move boxes of shredding around has been a bonus.

We also now have 5 great offices, offering a variety of drop ins and outreach services

Covid hit us hard with regards to volunteers, many did not return.

We are gradually building up our volunteer numbers again, and are very happy to see new faces coming in to the service, we cannot do what we do without them.

I have seen many changes over those 28 years, but despite these changes, one thing has stayed the same – our commitment to helping people. Whether its face to face, over the phone, or online, everyone who has joined us over the years have had the same dedication to help our community, be they volunteers or paid staff.

I am a proud member of the Admin Team and find it rewarding that I have helped in some small way to find a way forward for our clients.



I always feel proud telling people where I work, we do a really worthwhile job,

Chris Murphy volunteer administrator

I began volunteering in administration at the Stafford Eastgate Street office ten years ago. At that time, everything was still very traditional—client files were stored in paper folders, and every desk had its own landline phone. It was a different pace and style of working, where handwritten notes and face-to-face conversations were the norm.

Since then, a lot has changed. After navigating the challenges of a global pandemic and relocating to our current office at St Mary's, the way we work has become almost entirely digital. All records are now kept online, and instead of desk phones, staff and volunteers use mobiles.

Although much of my administrative work may seem routine, I take pride in contributing to the smooth running of the office. By handling the background tasks, I help free up time for the advisers, allowing them to focus fully on supporting the clients who need us most. It's a role I value, and I'm proud to be part of a team that makes a real difference in people's lives.



Andy McNaughton volunteer adviser

My application form is dated 24 January 2017, and since then, a lot has changed—though in some ways, much has stayed the same. We've moved offices, switched from Microsoft to Google, gained a more accurate benefits checker, and adapted to remote working during and after COVID. The core of the work remains unchanged: helping people with a wide variety of issues. If anything, there are now more clients, and the pace has intensified.



What connects my experience to the 85 years theme is how the service has continued to move with the times and stay relevant. Even with all the change, the commitment to helping people remains constant. Volunteering keeps my mind active and is great for my mental wellbeing—it's hard to dwell on age when your brain is busy problem-solving. I get to mix with people of all ages and backgrounds, and there's a real sense of community, with the occasional social event too.

There's also a strong sense of satisfaction in contributing to something worthwhile. As a volunteer, you can work at your own pace—there's flexibility when you need time off—but professionalism and dedication are still key. I feel proud to be part of a service that continues to evolve, while staying true to its purpose.

Research & Campaigns

Throughout the years Citizens Advice is not only a frontline support service helping millions of people each year with free, confidential advice—it is also a powerful voice for social change through its Research & Campaigns work.

What is Research & Campaigns?

The Research & Campaigns (R&C) function of Citizens Advice focuses on identifying the root causes of the problems clients face and working to influence change at both local and national levels.

Our clients provide us with a unique insight into the problems faced by people across Staffordshire South West today. Research & Campaigns involves analysing this information to gain deeper insight into issues we have identified as systemic and discriminatory. We then use this research to campaign for positive change on behalf of our clients. The goals of Research & Campaigns are to:

- Improve policies and practices that impact people's lives.
- Empower communities through awareness and advocacy.

Campaigns often involve getting decision makers to change unfair policies and practices, but they can take a number of forms. By raising issues through evidence forms we can highlight issues to improve policies and practices that impact people's lives.

We can also raise public awareness of particular issues to empower communities through awareness and advocacy, giving people the tools and confidence to exercise their rights.

Local Campaigns

We have engaged with local MPs in relation to abolishing the two child limit and the benefit cap on benefits to prevent financial hardship for families in the local areas.

We also wrote to MPs regarding the UCPIP Bill to vote against the bill and vote in favour of any amendments that halt the legislation that they were proposing to support our vulnerable and disabled clients.

We attended several local community events to raise awareness and used social media to highlight issues such as food poverty, housing conditions, or access to mental health services. We met with Sir Gavin Williamson MP and Leigh Ingham MP as part of our work.



Raising awareness



Pension Credit workshops

During December we worked with Leigh Ingham, MP for Stafford to promote and provide advice for clients around Pension Credit update.

Sessions were prior to the application deadline date to be able to access the Winter Fuel Payment. Four sessions were attended by Lianne, Laura and Eileen throughout Stafford Borough.

Quarterly pop up sessions at Kinver Library

We continue to provide quarterly drop in sessions at Kinver Community Library. This means that our clients who live in the more rural areas of South Staffordshire have more access to our service. We also accept any direct urgent referrals for support from Kinver Community Library in between these outreach sessions.



A selection of other community events

Collaborative work with Stafford Jobcentre Plus to better understand and address the impact of managed migration on clients currently receiving Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

With Staffordshire County Council Family Hubs we have attended Blue Monday Event and also Financial Wellbeing Events.

Energy advice sessions to residents of Lodgefield Park, Over 55's Mixer Club, Women's Aid and NHS Carer's Cafe.

Sue Nicholls MBE

Sue has always been a true professional and an inspiring leader and is well respected by all who work with her.

We celebrated our 85th anniversary not so long ago and it is amazing that Sue led the organisation for almost half of the time our organisation has been in existence.

Citizens Advice Staffordshire South West has grown and developed so much since Sue began work as Organiser in 1984. At that time she was the only paid member of staff and she worked with a small group of volunteers to provide an advice service in the Stafford area. From that we have grown to become one of the largest charity organisations in Staffordshire with 46 paid staff and 40 volunteers.



Sue didn't just manage; she led from the front. Her reliability and capability were matched by her unwavering honesty and integrity with clients, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders alike.

As Chief Executive of Citizens Advice Staffordshire South West, Sue led transformative changes during some of the sector's most demanding periods—from policy upheavals and funding challenges to the more recent pressures brought by the pandemic and the cost of living crisis. Her leadership was instrumental in ensuring that Citizens Advice remained a trusted, accessible, and effective source of help and advocacy for the residents of Stafford Borough, Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire.

Sue's selfless dedication had a massive impact not only to the organisation but to the wider community. Happily her retirement from the service wasn't the end, Since October 2024 Sue continues to work as a Trustee and is still on hand to support wherever needed. Sue's work for the organisation was recognised when she was awarded an MBE for her outstanding service to the community in Staffordshire! After nearly 40 years of unwavering dedication, Sue received the honour from HRH The Princess Royal at St. James's Palace on June 15, 2024. This was a special moment, as HRH The Princess Royal had previously visited us in 2009 to help celebrate our 70th birthday.

Chief Executive's report

This year has been a very special one for us as we celebrated our 85th Birthday – an incredible milestone for our organisation and a chance to reflect on the impact Citizens Advice has had in our communities across the decades.

We marked the occasion with a series of events which brought together clients, staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters. These celebrations were not just about looking back at our history, but also about recognising the continued importance of our services today and our commitment to being here for future generations.

Alongside these celebrations, it has been another extremely busy year. Demand for our services continues to rise, with more clients than ever needing advice and support on issues such as debt, housing, and the ongoing cost of living crisis. Our teams have worked tirelessly to ensure that people across Stafford, Stone, Rugeley, Cannock and Codsall could access the help they need when they need it most.

We have achieved some amazing outcomes for our clients, and a true reflection of the hard work and commitment of our staff and volunteers. The stability we have now established in our Stafford offices has made a real difference. Having completed our move last year and settled into St. Mary's Place, we are now seeing the benefits of being in a central, accessible location. The refurbished Rugeley office is also going from strength to strength, thanks to the support of our Lottery grant, and has become a welcoming base for clients and volunteers alike.

This year, our focus has been on strengthening our services, recruiting and training new volunteers, and building resilience into the way we work. Our collaborations with local councils and partner organisations remain central to what we do, helping us to reach even more people in need and to offer joined-up support to families facing complex challenges.

As always, none of this would be possible without our incredible staff and volunteers. Their dedication, energy, and compassion are at the heart of everything we achieve. I want to extend my thanks to our Management team for their leadership and for their ongoing support, and to Wayne, our Chair, who took on his new role a year ago, for his guidance and commitment.

Looking back on 85 years of Citizens Advice locally, it is clear how much our service has evolved – yet our purpose has never changed: to help people find a way forward. The challenges our communities face are significant, but I am confident that with the dedication of our teams, the support of our partners, and the trust of our clients, we will continue to meet them head on.

Claire Davis, CEO



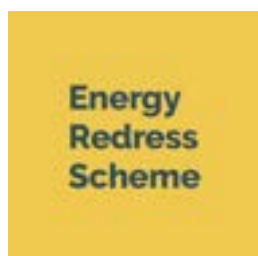
We are extremely grateful to our funders, partners and stakeholders whose generosity and support enables us to deliver our much needed services.

We couldn't continue to do what we do without you - thank you.

Thank you to everyone helping us in our communities



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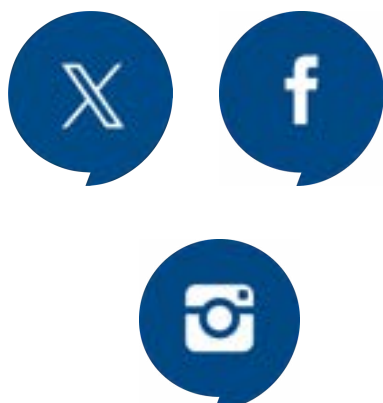


We are a charity working for the whole of society

Helping to build a fairer society for
everyone.

#WeAreCitizensAdvice.

We are the people's champion.



Citizens Advice Staffordshire South West is a registered charity and a member of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Registered office: 1a 1b St Mary's Place, Stafford, ST16 2AR

Charity registration no: 1150796

Company limited by guarantee in England and Wales

Registered number: 8261002

Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority: FRN: 617752

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October 2025