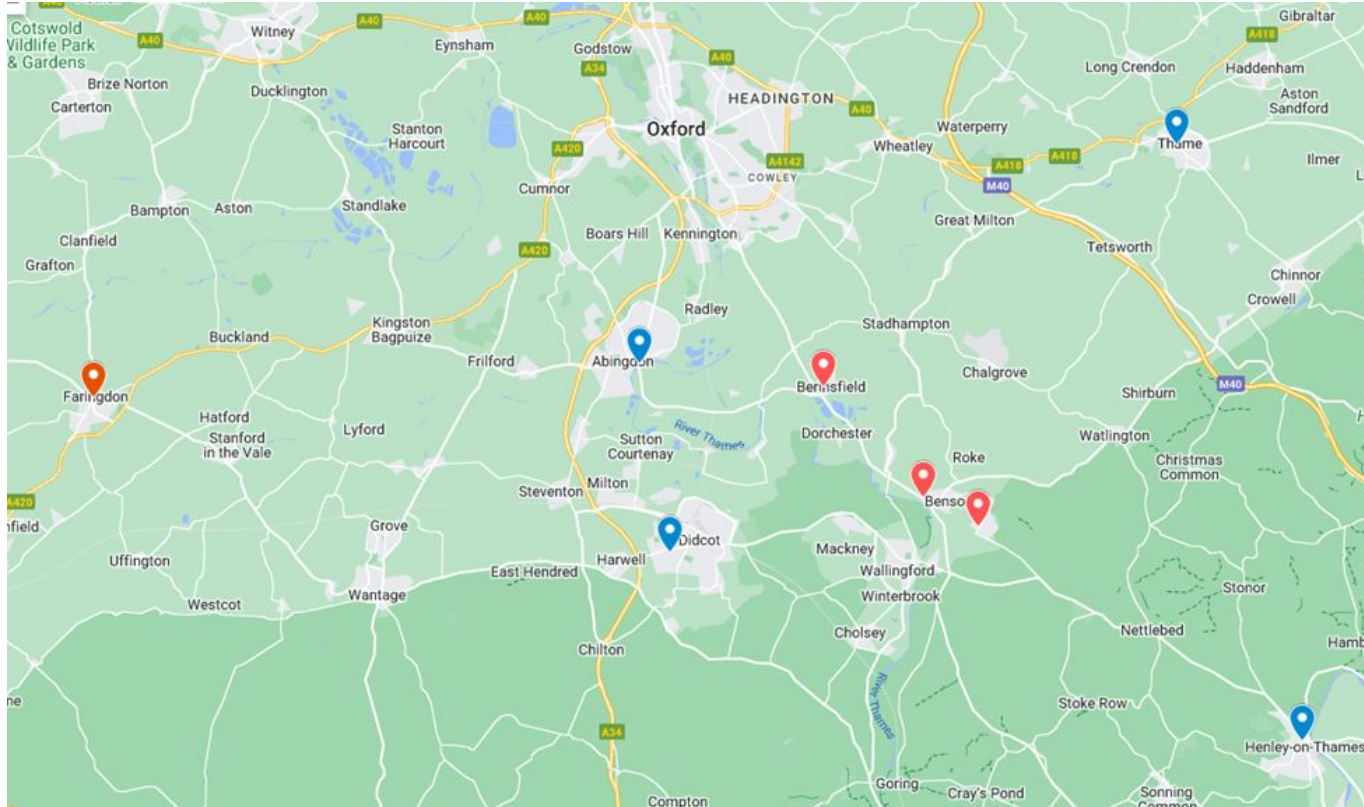


The difference we make to Thame

Tricia Hook
Advice Service Manager
27th February 2024



Citizens Advice Oxfordshire South & Vale



Offices (Blue)

Abingdon

Didcot

Henley

Thame

Outreaches (Red)

Berinsfield

Faringdon

RAF Benson

Wallingford

Citizens Advice Thame

In the year 2023, advisers in Thame helped more than **903 unique individuals** with **1,898 issues**.

Some clients we will see multiple times throughout the year.

Last year, for residents in Thame ward, we facilitated over **£72k income gain**, with more than **£2.5k** of re-imbursements, services and loans and a further **£4k** recovered.



Services offered at Thame

- Office open on Monday, Tuesdays and Thursdays
- Booked appointments available on all three days
- Drop-in sessions available Tuesdays and Thursdays
- Telephone advice available Monday to Friday 9-5

Drop-in sessions are generally well attended, Tuesday is usually busier than Thursday

We intend to offer a drop-in session on Mondays as soon as we have enough trained advisers on board

Other local news

- We continue to work closely with Sharing Life Trust, pressure on Foodbank has increased significantly
- We successfully bid for a ‘food and warmth’ grant from SODC working collaboratively with SLT.
- We have three trainee volunteer advisers who started training in February this year.
- We managed to secure charitable funding to improve and upgrade IT systems.

Future Challenges

- The proposed refurbishment of the public toilets situated on the ground floor of Market House is causing us some concern.
- The work is likely to be very noisy and is likely to impact clients and volunteers.
- SODC have still not confirmed when the proposed external redecoration of the building will take place.

What we do

We help people with a range of problems including issues with housing, debt, benefits, employment, relationships and consumer rights. Often people have more than one issue they need help with.

Advice



Help to Claim



Debt



How we helped

People accessed us in different ways:



Alison, a volunteer adviser, helped George with his problem. She identified that he was entitled to claim Pension Credit to top-up his state pension and provided him with a fuel voucher to top-up his pre-payment meter.

George had been struggling with the rising cost of living.

£

* This is year to date within year 2022/23

Our volunteers

Our **25 volunteers** give their time, skills and experience to enable us to reach as many people as we do.

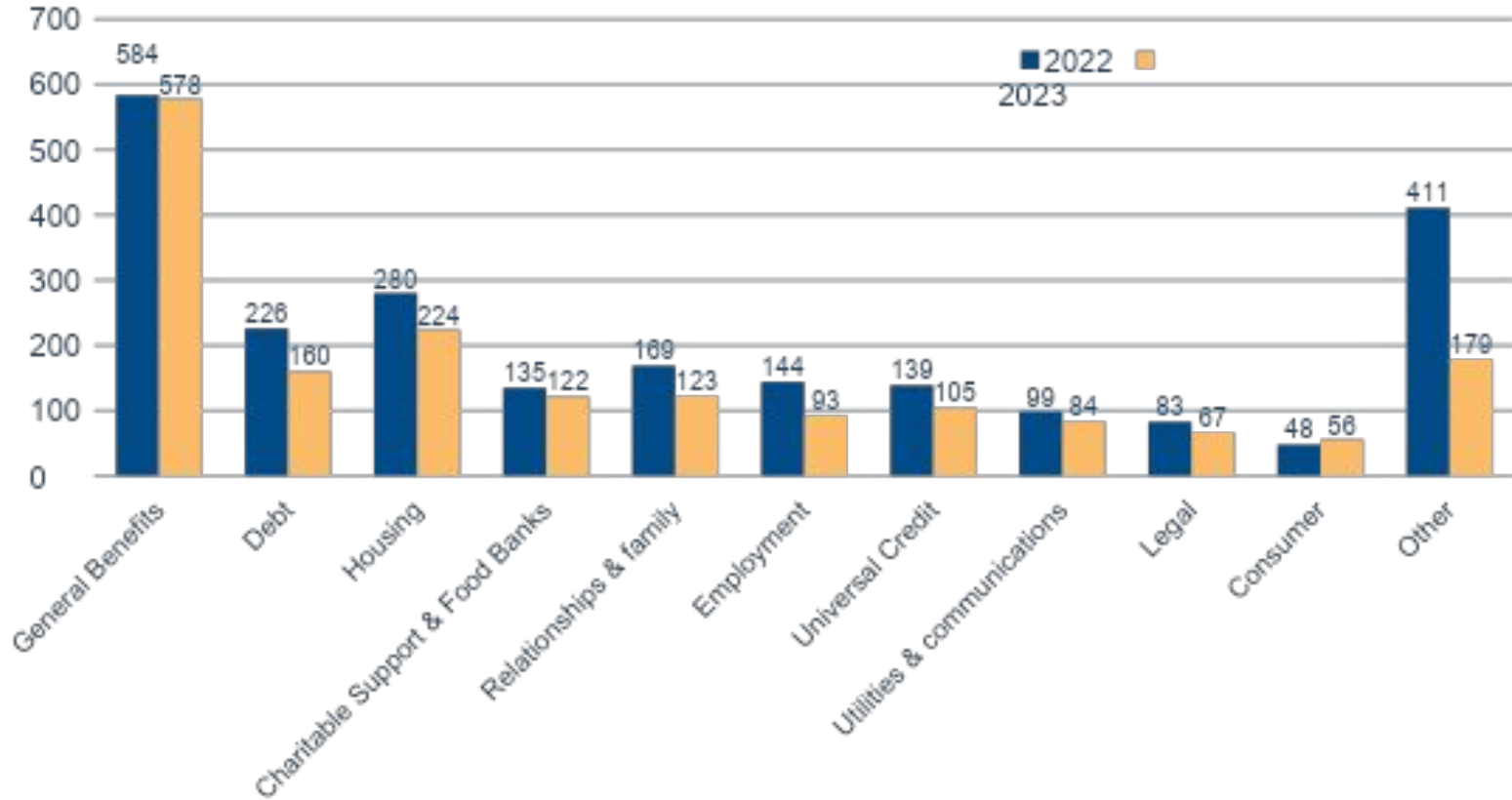
In 2023 our trained **Thame** volunteers gave **£136.154** worth of volunteering hours to help deliver our services.

Across our region we have over 130 volunteers providing nearly £620k worth of volunteering hours.

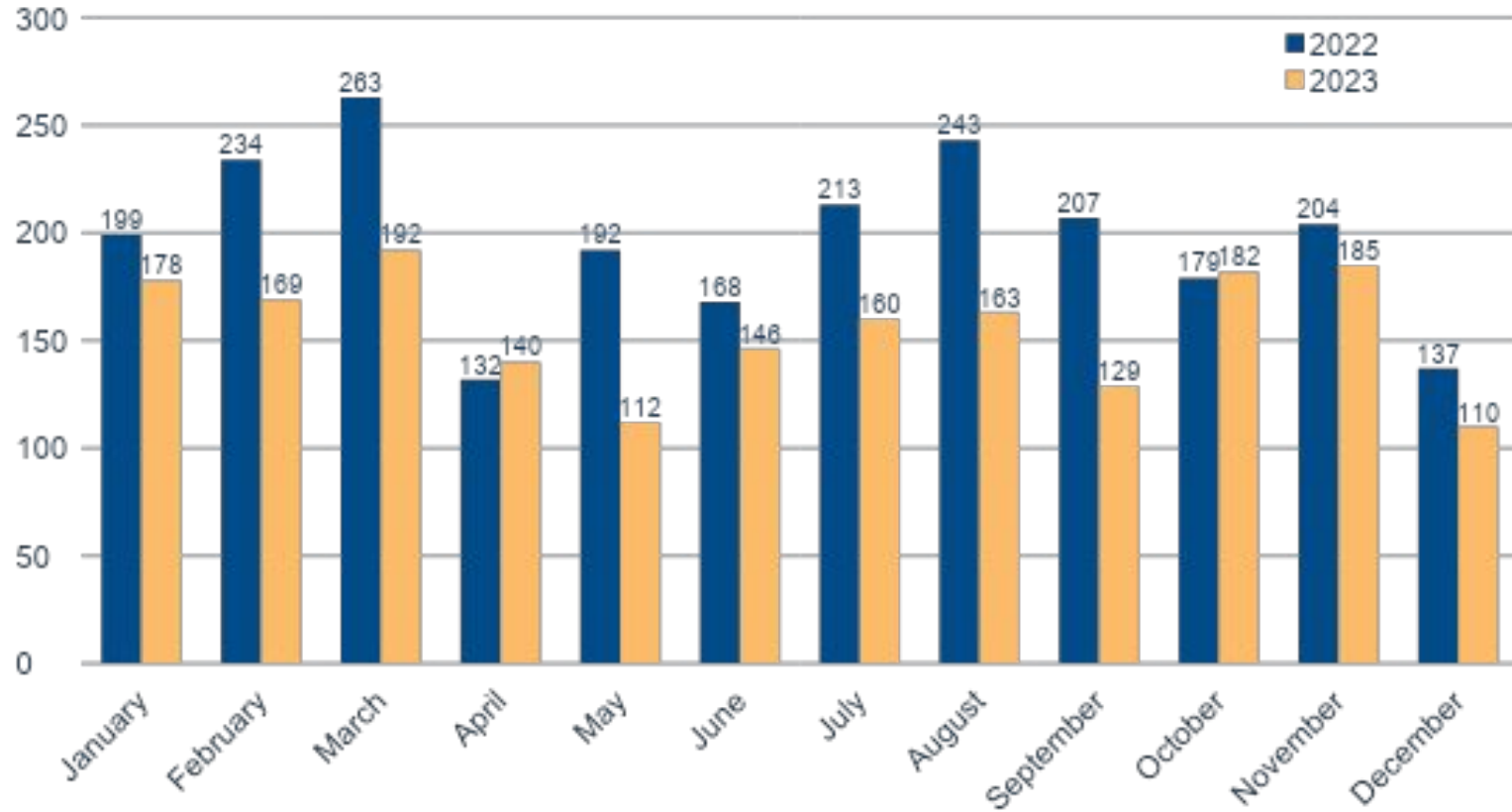
We are continually recruiting volunteers to meet the demand for our service.



Issues supported by Thame



Issues by month supported by Thame



The Bigger Picture

- Never more needed, never been more difficult to help
- Crisis support increased 20% on last year
- Nationally we distributed more fuel vouchers in first 9 months of this year than the whole of last year and more than the whole decade combined
- 50% clients in negative budget – even after work with our money advisers
- Being sustainable isn't an end in itself – it's so we can stay in our communities offering an invaluable service

Our advice is effective & is a health intervention – albeit undervalued

Problems don't happen in isolation and can have a severe consequences. Solving them stops these situations escalating.

The wider impact of advice – what we achieve as a result of solving problems and providing support – is just as important.

66% of those interviewed said that the advice they had received from Citizens Advice Oxfordshire South & Vale had made them feel **less stressed, depressed and anxious**

50% of those interviewed said the advice they had received from Citizens Advice Oxfordshire South & Vale had helped their **physical health improve**.

We improve people's lives

Our advice:

keeps people in employment or helps them
back to work

prevents housing evictions and statutory
homelessness

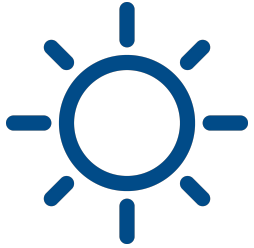
reduces demand for mental health and GP
services

Improves mental wellbeing

improves family relationships

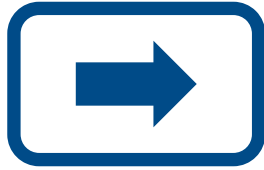


What our clients told us on 22/23



87%

said they were likely to recommend Citizens Advice*



86%

said that they had been helped to find a way forward*



74%

said that their problem had been resolved*



75%

said that they had found the service easy to access*

* Based on independent phone survey of clients 13-18 weeks after advice 2022/23

Client Feedback

Honestly couldn't thank enough the lady, who sorted my white goods out through finding services available to me. Friendly, on top of things and even looked at other help for me that I didn't know was there. The staff are in the right jobs they're lovely and more than helpful

Thame CAB have been very helpful in finding solutions to my issues and the staff are incredibly professional and non judgmental

I am very happy with the service. Thank you very much for the help. I felt more confident after the consultation with the staff and my problem was solved completely.

I have had the sincere pleasure of interacting and being advised by many of the superb team at Citizens Advice in Thame, Oxfordshire. All of the service that I was provided was truly outstanding, highly professional and they so kindly assured me with everything as I have severe short term memory problems caused by a serious illness that I had called Encephalitis. In addition I have PTSD caused from my time in the armed forces where I served in 4 operational tours of 'Active Service'. Each of my tours lasted for at least six months and they were located all around the world. I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone at Thame.

Research and campaigns

No one else sees so many people with so many different kinds of problems, and that gives us a unique insight into the challenges people are facing today.

We submit local evidence to the national office which is used to influence policy makers in government and utility companies to make things better for people.

As a result of the charity's campaigning, the government paused evictions and bailiff activity during the height of the pandemic.



Citizens Advice Thame

Tricia Hook, Advice Services Manager Thame
tricia.hook@citizensadvicesav.org.uk.



February 2024