COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE

England & Wales · Charity number 1015216

Details

Other names	WOOD END ADVICE AND INFORMATION CENTRE LIMITED, WOODEND ADVICE AND INFORMATION CENTRE LIMITED
Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	02761115
Registered	1992-11-13
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	Norton House Bird Street Coventry CV1 5FX
Phone	02476521100
Email	info@covadvice.org.uk
Website	https://covadvice.org.uk

Activities

Objects: To promote any charitable purpose for the public benefit of communities in Coventry and the surrounding areas, predominantly by providing information, advice, public education and other support to relieve poverty and hardship, reduce inequality and improve quality of life.

Activities: We offer free advice, information and support to residents of Coventry and surrounding areas. We hold the Advice Quality Standard for our debt and welfare benefits advice, a nationally recognised quality mark for public advice organisations. We are members of AdviceUK and our debt advice is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Our aim is to combat poverty and financial exclusion.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Economic/community Development/employment
- **Who:** The General Public/mankind

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Geography

- **Area of benefit:** NORTH AND EAST COVENTRY
- Coventry City
- Warwickshire

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£350,540	£375,973	-	-
2024-03-31	£506,829	£450,563	£168,680	13
2023-03-31	£415,093	£439,599	-	-
2022-03-31	£397,129	£454,160	-	-
2021-03-31	£498,075	£449,462	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Damon Swindell		2021-10-22
Dr Margaret O'Brien		2025-11-28
Lianne Payne		2025-10-03
Mark Anthony Monaghan		2019-07-26
Zainib Hussain		2022-10-24

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COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE

England & Wales - Charity number 1015216

Accounts

Charity registration number 1015216 (England and Wales)

Company registration number 02761115

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

TRUSTEES REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES/DIRECTORS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st March 2025

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purpose of the Companies Act 2006, present their report along with the financial statements of the Charity for the year ended 31st March 2025.

The Trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities' in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

Chair's introduction

I am delighted to present this year's Trustees Annual Report for Coventry Independent Advice Service.

Over the past year, our team of dedicated staff and volunteers has continued to provide vital support to people across the city, often at moments of real difficulty and uncertainty in their lives. Demand for advice and support has remained high, with many facing increasing financial pressures, cost of living concerns, and challenges in navigating complex systems. Despite these pressures, our service has helped many individuals and families to secure their rights, improve their circumstances, and regain a sense of stability.

I am especially proud of the way our organisation has adapted following a sudden loss of funding mid-way through the year. The huge shock of Coventry City Council cuts forced dramatic change. But whether through innovative outreach work, strengthening partnerships across Coventry, or ensuring that our advice remains accessible and high-quality, we have shown resilience and commitment. The positive outcomes we see for our clients are a testament not only to the skill and dedication of our team, but also to the value of having an independent advice service rooted in the community.

Looking ahead, we know that the challenges will not diminish. Rising living costs and ongoing social and economic pressures mean that our work will continue to be essential. Our focus will be on sustaining and developing the service so that everyone who needs advice and advocacy in Coventry and surrounding areas can find it. With the continued support of our funders, partners, volunteers, and staff, I am confident we are well placed to meet the future with determination and hope.

On behalf of the Board, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to our success over the past year. Together, we are making a real difference in people's lives and strengthening our communities.

Structure, Governance and Management

Coventry Independent Advice Service (CIAS) is a charitable company. The Memorandum of Association establishes the objects and powers of the charitable company which is governed by the Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up, members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Charity trustees are the people who share ultimate responsibility for governing the charity and directing how it is managed and run. During the past year the trustees have been meeting every 1-2 months to review performance and budgets as well as overseeing the broad strategy of CIAS.

CIAS operates in accordance with documented policies and procedures which are designed to ensure that these responsibilities are fully met. Day to day management of activities is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who reports directly to the trustee board.

Recruitment and appointment of directors

The trustees are appointed by ordinary resolution or by a decision of the existing trustees. Under the Articles of Association, one third of the directors are required to retire by rotation at each Annual General Meeting at which time they may seek re-election. Trustees who have served a total of nine years on the board must stand down for a period of not less than one year.[1]

CIAS has a recruitment process for new trustees which includes a written application form followed by an initial meeting with the Chair and CEO. Trustee vacancies are advertised on the CIAS website[2] and promoted through Voluntary Action Coventry, social media accounts and national advertising where appropriate. Officer roles may also be advertised on recruitment websites.

The induction process for new trustees comprises further meetings with the Chair and/or CEO and attendance at a trustee meeting as an observer. New trustees are given access to previous board papers, recent accounts and annual reports, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Charity Commission Guidance (CC3). New trustees also complete an NCVO e-learning module covering the roles and duties of trustees.[3]

Risk Management

CIAS annually reviews its risk register to ensure strategic, business, and operational risks are covered. CIAS has detailed Health and Safety, Risk Management and Safeguarding policies as well as other policies to ensure that risks are identified and managed. Public and professional liability insurance is held at a level recommended by our membership body, AdviceUK, along with appropriate levels of insurance against other identified risks such as trustee indemnity and theft.

Access to 24/7 human resources and health and safety support has been provided through a paid subscription to Croner HR. This support helps reduce exposure to risk in these key areas. The subscription also includes an Employee Assistance Programme aimed at promoting and supporting wellbeing. Governance support, through membership of professional bodies including AdviceUK and NCVO, is also in place.

Information Assurance and Data Protection

CIAS has policies to effectively manage compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which are reviewed and updated regularly. All staff receive GDPR training relevant to their

[1] A resolution at the 2024 AGM suspended the normal trustee retirement process for one year to ensure that the board remained functional and aligned with the charity's objectives, while safeguarding good governance processes, during a period of unforeseen financial challenges.
[2] Coventry Independent Advice Service at https://covadvice.org.uk
[3] NCVO E-learning 'Roles and Duties of Trustees' at https://booking.ncvo.org.uk/training/event_series/e-learning

role. Robust processes are in place to ensure that IT systems are secure and comply with recognised cyber security standards. These systems are supported by an external IT professional.

The secure Microsoft 365 cloud-based environment is used for day-to-day operations and the online case management system, AdvicePro, is used to secure all client information and case files. Both systems are fully assured and compliant with international data security standards. The Microsoft 365 system was upgraded in 2021 to take advantage of enhanced security and protection options as more people were regularly working from home. Client data held in AdvicePro is securely stored in the UK within a robust, secure operations centre compliant with Information Security Code of Practice ISO27001, and automatically backed up daily.

Equality and Diversity

CIAS recognises that a diverse board brings a wider range of perspectives and improves critical evaluation. A board that reflects the communities we serve can enhance our legitimacy and ability to connect with and serve our beneficiaries. We use open recruitment methods for trustees to help broaden the pool of candidates.

CIAS trustees answered the call from ACEVO to sign up to eight principles to address the diversity deficit in the charity sector[4] and to create an action plan. We are open to feedback on how we might take further steps towards increasing our reach.

Liabilities

CIAS main liabilities are for staffing costs, including pensions. Since losing our main source of core funding from Coventry City Council, we have strived to reduce our long-term liabilities. Most of our service contracts are on a monthly rolling basis, including our current premises costs. Appropriate insurance is maintained to cover all identified liabilities and we have a reserves policy in place to ensure adequate protection (see under 'Financial Review' below).

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the trustees should follow best practice and:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- State whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity and enable them to ascertain the financial position of the charity, and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act

[4] ACEVO at https://www.acevo.org.uk/eight-principles-to-address-the-diversity-deficit-in-charity-leadership/

2006. The trustees are responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Public Benefit Statement

In setting objectives and planning activities the trustees have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 by giving due consideration to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance. In particular, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set.

Objectives and Activities

CIAS charitable objectives are to promote any charitable purpose for the public benefit of communities in Coventry and the surrounding areas, predominantly by providing information, advice, public legal education, and other support to relieve poverty and hardship, reduce inequality and improve quality of life.

CIAS core activities focus on the provision of advice and casework on welfare benefits and debt plus general advice and casework on other social welfare issues. Business planning and strategic development keeps these core activities at heart with the aim of focusing work on the most disadvantaged and financially excluded sections of local communities. The services offered are free, confidential and independent.

The range of specific activities focus on helping individuals and families to identify and claim benefits, to challenge benefit decisions, to advise on strategies for dealing with problem debt, to negotiate with creditors and to provide information and support on a range of other social welfare issues.

The service model is focused on reaching people where they live, in their own neighbourhoods, and in areas of greatest need. Advice services are delivered using a mix of face-to-face work in community venues across and remote delivery via telephone and an online enquiry portal. CIAS recognises that its 'USP' is advice in communities and that remains the key focus of delivery.

In addition, we have developed a significant digital inclusion offer enabled through our ongoing volunteer programme. This activity focuses on one-to-one sessions in public libraries across Coventry, assisting people to get online, perform everyday tasks which are increasingly 'digital first' and to improve their social interaction with friends and families.

Over the past year a range of activities have been undertaken to help meet the charitable objectives, including:

- Working closely with community partners to ensure that our 'in person' services are targeted on those who need them most.
- Focusing on 'early help' and working with partners to help meet community need for advice and information before problems reach crisis point.
- Recruiting and supporting more volunteers to help increase service capacity in response to rising demand.
- Developing targeted advice clinics around Personal Independence Payment (PIP), utilising our own staff and trained students from Warwick University, to address an identified need within Coventry for help with claim forms and challenging decisions.

- Delivering a debt advice and casework service as part of a local Health Justice Partnership (HJP) alongside Central England Law Centre, Citizens Advice, Coventry University and local health professionals.
- Developing a new service offering online and telephone-based support to the foodbank network in Stratford Upon Avon.
- Undertaking new activity within communities focused on addressing digital exclusion, including links with Coventry City Council's '#CovConnects' initiative[5] to extend availability of IT and support end users to access essential online services.
- Developing our volunteer offer to include NVQ qualifications in Advice and Guidance alongside further support with their personal and professional development.
- Working with statutory and voluntary sector partners to produce resources in response to the continuing cost-of-living crisis and to help address wider poverty and inequality issues.
- Membership of the Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) in Coventry. This is a collaboration with the University of Warwick, Coventry University, University College London, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, the voluntary sector and local communities. The HDRC aims to establish a research infrastructure to reduce health inequalities and improve the health of Coventry residents.
- Part of the Marmot Partnership which brings together partners from the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors, statutory services, universities, health, emergency services, and the council, focussed on reducing health inequalities by working together on the Marmot Principles[6].
- Maintaining and developing accessible advice and information for communities via telephone, email, and online enquiry.
- Maximising the income of individuals and families through increased benefit take-up and support with problem debt.
- Maintaining and further developing a public website, including video advice resources and an enhanced 'self-help' section to enable people to find other sources of help locally and nationally.
- Working with students on the Public Legal Education module at the University of Warwick Law School, including an internship, to further enhance our public facing offer.
- Seeking opportunities to help enhance service offer and demonstrating a good return on investment for funders.
- Helping address poverty and inequality by increasing the take-up of benefits and by offering debt advice and casework.
- Playing a part in the life of the city through engagement with local initiatives, policy work and campaigns.

Financial review

Trustees agree a budget each year and a quarterly monitoring report is prepared by the treasurer. A detailed cashflow forecast is updated monthly.

The CEO and finance assistant deal with day-to-day financial matters in accordance with well established procedures. CIAS uses the Xero financial software package which allows trustee officers, the CEO and the financial administrator to carry out their respective roles in a hybrid working environment.

[5] https://www.coventry.gov.uk/cov-connects
[6] https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/taking-action/taking-action/what-is-a-marmot-place.pdf

Going concern statement

The Trustees have assessed the charity's financial position and are satisfied that it is a going concern. We have therefore adopted the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements. The following information summarises the assessment made by the Trustees.

Following the unforeseen loss of our core grant from Coventry City Council in October 2024, trustees undertook an immediate and comprehensive review of the charity's financial sustainability. This review identified a combination of cost-saving measures including strategic realignments and redoubled efforts to secure alternative funding. To allow the charity to continue to operate, the review also sadly resulted in the compulsory redundancies of three full-time advisers in January 2025.

Trustees acknowledge that the charity faces material uncertainties inherent to the charity's reliance on external funding. However, based on the steps taken and the current assessment of available resources, the trustees are confident that the charity will remain operational throughout the next 12 months for the following reasons:

- **Existing contracts:** The charity secured new contracts and service level agreements with Cadent Gas, Stratford Foodbanks, the local Health Justice Partnership and with the Money Advice and Pensions Service. These are due to expire at various points within the 12-month assessment period, but the charity anticipates that some of these agreements will be renewed. The outcome of these processes and the exact timing of the related funding cannot be guaranteed but the Trustees have mitigated this risk by preparing contingency plans.
- **Anticipated new funding:** The Trustees have considered the charity's pipeline of new funding and grant applications. This includes confirmation that a substantial bid to the National Lottery Reaching Communities fund has been progressed to the second stage along with positive feedback on applications.
- **Scenario analysis:** Cash flow forecasts have been prepared and reviewed, which indicate that the charity can meet its liabilities as they fall due. A reserves policy is in place and is kept under review (see below). The charity has no outstanding debts and maintains a focus on reducing costs where possible. Forecasts have been stress-tested for different scenarios, including potential delays in funding decisions, and demonstrate that the charity has sufficient resources to respond to challenges.

The Trustees will continue to closely monitor the charity's financial position and take appropriate actions as needed to address emerging challenges, ensuring that the charity remains focused on delivering its mission and objectives.

Reserves policy

The trustees have set a reserves policy that requires reserves to be maintained at a level which ensures that core activity could continue during a period of unforeseen difficulty and that a proportion of reserves be maintained in a readily realisable form. The reserves policy is calculated and reviewed annually by the trustees.

The intention of the policy is to cover liabilities including provision for redundancies, premises and other contractual costs, a reasonable level of urgent contingencies and the realistic costs that may be incurred if the charity were to be wound-up.

The trustees assess the required level of reserves on an annual basis, alongside the operating budget. The assessment takes account of the income and expenditure risk within the budget and the need to keep sufficient bank balances to be able to manage the day-to-day fluctuations of receipts and payments. Any significant changes in activities or financial obligations that could affect the level of reserves is closely monitored.

Based on risk analysis, unrestricted reserves equivalent to at least three months operating costs were agreed to be necessary (representing approximately £75,000 for 2025/26). Unrestricted reserves on 31st March 2025 were £119,295). Of this, we have designated £32,740 (2025/26) to cover potential redundancy costs if the charity needed to close.

Income and expenditure

Overall income reduced to £350,540 in 2024/25 (£506,829 in 2023/24), mainly due to the loss of funding from Coventry City Council following a competitive tendering process for advice services in the city. The competitive tendering process was completed in a short timescale, with little notice, and there was no transitional funding available or any period of adjustment.

A three-year grant from the National Lottery continues to support our Volunteer Programme but this is due to end in December 2025 (after being rescheduled following the loss of our council grant). We have recently learned that a new application to the National Lottery has been approved at stage one and now progresses to the second stage of the process, which is encouraging. The existing grant has helped to enhance our service capacity as well as providing continued financial security.

We successfully gained new funding from Cadent Gas and through the Stratford Foodbank network. This, alongside other project specific funding and smaller unrestricted grants, has enabled us to continue to deliver core services to our communities.

Staff costs represented around 85% of our total charitable expenditure in 2024/25. Following the loss of our main source of funding we implemented several cost saving measures, the most significant of which was a process to make some staff redundant. This enabled the charity to continue to operate, albeit at reduced capacity, in line with available resources

The need to diversify funding streams is recognised by trustees as critical to safeguarding the charity's future and building capacity to meet ever increasing demand from beneficiaries. This will continue to be our focus of activity in the coming months.

Investment Policy and Performance

CIAS continues to hold a current account with Unity Trust, an independent bank committed to supporting socially minded organisations across the UK. The charity no longer holds any investments, and all cash is held in the current account.

Finding a reasonable return on investment is still a major problem for the charity sector. Investments are regularly reviewed but, due to unattractive interest rates and the need to keep a level of reserves relatively liquid, potential income from investments is limited.

Acknowledgements

Trustees would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who have supported their work in the past year, specifically:

- The National Lottery Community Fund – for their continued support of our volunteer programme and for their flexibility in adjusting grant payments to help us navigate challenging financial circumstances.
- Cadent Gas – who stepped in to support our core advice service in Coventry at a time of uncertainty and who have shown a commitment to working with us in the longer term.
- Stratford Foodbanks – who contracted with us to provide a remote service to their users and who have demonstrated their support by extension of the contract.
- Warwick Law School – with whom we have maintained an excellent working relationship and who have endeavoured to unlock additional partnership opportunities.
- Money Advice and Pensions Service – who have funded a Debt Modernisation Project to help develop an AI tool and other resources to better support our beneficiaries.
- Coventry City Council – although our core funding from the council was withdrawn on 1st October 2024, following a competitive tender process, we would like to thank them for their support over the last 30 years.
- Individual donors – A small number of people who regularly donate in support of the charities work or who make one-off donations. The trustees are extremely grateful to every one of you.

Review of the Year

Our strongest indicators of success are the outcomes we help achieve for our clients, their families and for our city. These stories of change provide greater evidence of our impact than simple outputs and help demonstrate progress in tackling poverty and inequality within Coventry and the surrounding area.

A summary of our outputs for the 2024/25 financial year include:

- We helped put **over £3.5 million** into the pockets of local people in the form of benefit entitlements, debts managed or written off, charitable payments and other financial gains.
- We estimate this is worth **at least £5 million** to the local economy as this money circulates rather than being saved or taken out of the city. In turn, this additional money helps to create local jobs and services.
- Our two main enquiry areas continue to be **welfare benefits and welfare rights** (74% of new files opened) and **debt/money guidance** issues (13%). This breakdown has remained consistent for many years. However, many clients have multiple complex issues and so there is inevitable overlap between enquiry categories.
- We opened **1530 new cases** for 1211 individuals and families and had over **6300 direct engagements** with our beneficiaries.
- We **closed 1709 files** as work was concluded, and an outcome recorded.
- 63% of cases closed resulted in a **positive financial outcome**.
- Our advisers completed nearly **9800 packages of work**, including interviews, research casework, phone calls and other actions on behalf of our beneficiaries.
- 23% of clients told us they had a **disability or a long-term illness**.
- 58% of our clients are **female**.
- 46% of our clients identified an **ethnic origin** other than White British. This includes 20% from an Asian or British Asian background and 13% from a Black or Black British background.
- 48% of our clients were **over the age of 50**, with 17% over the age of 65. By contrast, only 9% were under the age of 25.

- Our public **website**[7] was viewed 16600 times by 7400 visitors. Approximately 7000 users had not visited our website before.
- 87% of people visiting our website have come to us directly or specifically searched for our service. 71% of visitors to our website are using a mobile device. [8]

The financial gains we have helped achieved for clients helps demonstrate the real value of our service to our clients, to the city and to our funders. Increased income and reduced indebtedness can be life-changing, having a positive impact on health and wellbeing as well as providing increased financial security and stability.

Our social return on investment cannot be understated. We estimate this year that our work is worth around £5 million to the city economy. We base this estimate on the local economic multiplier model[9] which recognises that people on lower incomes tend to spend their money locally, which in turn creates jobs and wealth for local businesses and other services. Additionally, financial security reduces pressure on health services and other social provision.

Staffing

A review of the past year would be incomplete without acknowledging our dedicated staff team. The last half of the 2024/25 financial year was the most difficult in the history of our charity. Losing our core funding with only a few weeks' notice out an incredible strain on all our staff and trustees. As Christmas approached, we were starting a redundancy consultation process which eventually resulted in us losing three full-time staff including our longest serving adviser, Magdelana Kolinska.

None of our staff wanted to leave us, and they all understood the pressure the charity was under to cuts costs to survive. At one point, because of the uncertainty, we nearly lost all our advice team as they had understandably started applying for alternative employment. While we could not retain all of them, the support from Cadent Gas and Stratford Foodbanks helped us to keep a core staff team in employment. Some of these staff had secured work elsewhere but rescinded those offers to stay with us. That level of commitment and dedication to our charity speaks volumes as to the value of our work and the culture we have maintained.

We are pleased to say that the staff who left us have all gone on to thrive in their new jobs, including Magdalena who is now working at a senior level within Citizens Advice.

Information, advice, and support

Advice is a powerful empowerment tool. We don't just 'do things' for clients, we work alongside them. For instance, when helping with a PIP claim, advisers explain eligibility criteria, necessary evidence, and how to prepare for assessments. In debt cases, clients are guided through budgeting, creditor negotiation, and debt management options, helping to build long-term financial confidence.

This hands-on approach helps people understand their rights and responsibilities, equipping them to advocate for themselves. Clients report increased confidence in dealing with future challenges and reduced anxiety about their financial situations. By demystifying complex systems, we help turn feelings of helplessness into knowledge and action.

[7] https://covadvice.org.uk
[8] Source: Google Analytics.
[9] https://www.nefconsulting.com/what-we-do/evaluation-impact-assessment/local-multiplier-3/

We hold the Advice Quality Standard[10] at the Advice with Casework level in Welfare Benefits and Debt advice. The board recognises the value of continuing to hold AQS as it gives confidence to clients, stakeholders, and funders that high standards of service and quality of advice are in place. Our next assessment is due in April 2026.

We currently offer a mix of face-to-face, phone and digital support, with clients increasingly choosing to use our new WhatsApp service and preferring some digital contact and text messaging. The loss of council funding and staff redundancies meant that we had to reduce our advertised service offer midway through the financial year. We now offer drop-in and appointments sessions in Tile Hill and Holbrooks and recently started an appointment session in Binley.

We are also running a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Clinic, in partnership with Warwick Law School, at Foleshill Community Centre following a successful pilot at Holbrooks Community Centre. We have helped 169 unique clients to date, supporting people with new PIP claims, reviews, and appeals. We have found that clients are grateful to see an adviser face to face to discuss their issues. They are often anxious and feel overwhelmed by the process. We help to reassure them and help them to feel more confident about their PIP journey.

PIP and health/disability related issues continue to be the biggest part of our work. It is a concerning time for sick and disabled people, considering the government's announcement earlier this year regarding reforms to benefits which could result in cuts for many. Although there was a change to the proposed PIP '4-point rule', the review into how PIP will be reformed (the Timms Review), and about the test to replace the current Work Capability Assessment for Universal Credit (UC) when the WCA is scrapped, is not expected until Autumn 2026.

Universal Credit migration is nearing the end of its roll out, with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to UC migration nearing completion. This is one of the trickiest client groups to migrate and CIAS is approached weekly for help with UC migration. While we do help clients we are already working with, we do not have capacity to help everyone that contacts us. The Government fund Citizen's Advice 'Help to Claim Service' to help clients migrate to UC but this is only via telephone. This doesn't work for many of the clients we speak to who prefer face to face advice. DWP visiting officers are (in theory) able to help clients claim, although anecdotally they do little more than visit to ensure the client knows they need to call to make the claim. It remains to be seen how many people on ESA may slip through the net.

Our project with Stratford Foodbanks has been extended until March 2026. Two of our advisers, Denis and Selena, provide fortnightly advice at The Fred Winter Centre and Denis provides support at an evening session once a fortnight. There have been some challenges with the quality of referrals and clients have sometimes been hard to contact and engage with. We hope to see improvement in this, following our recent training for all foodbank volunteers.

Our project with Coventry Law Centre's Health Justice Partnership has also been extended and we continue to support clients referred to us for debt advice. The Health Justice Partnership works across one of the Primary Care Networks in the city and allows GPs to make direct referrals for people whose health problems are often related to, or made worse by, financial difficulty.

We have taken on 10 Warwick Law Student volunteers who will be supporting our PIP Clinic and our Holbrooks and Tile Hill outreach for two terms, helping them gain valuable experience and helping us deliver more support to Coventry residents. This will allow us to continue the work we started over the summer, when our intern from Warwick Law School helped clients with council tax

[10] Advice Quality Standard, at https://asauk.org.uk/advice-quality-standard/

discounts and exemptions, signing up to the Priority Service Register, charity grant support, Big Difference Scheme applications, Blue Badge applications and other support.

For such a small staff team, supported by a handful of dedicated volunteers, the Board is proud of the charity's achievements for individuals and families in Coventry. CIAS is very much embedded in the life of the city and initiatives to tackle poverty and exclusion.

The trustees would like to thank Diane, our Advice Service Manager, along with the advice team for their continued commitment and hard work on behalf of the charity and our beneficiaries.

Volunteer programme and Community Digital

The second year of our volunteer programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund has brought growth and diversity in our volunteers and opportunities to support local people. We have seen a marked increase in volunteer numbers, noting the increase in volunteers who are seeking support to develop essential work skills and an increase in the number of volunteers holding degrees and post graduate qualifications.

The project continues to focus on disadvantaged communities across the city of Coventry, with the Community Digital project expanding to two new locations and growth from monthly to weekly sessions in addition to targeted sessions with local community groups. This preventative and empowering work has focused on giving people essential digital skills to navigate information, services and access education and work opportunities. Participants have reported that they have learnt a wide range of skills from basic computer use, email, CV writing, and Excel to online safety and using government services. Some participants reported getting jobs, help with benefits, and increased confidence.

Our partnership with community libraries and funding from the Good Things Foundation has enabled us to develop the project. Through the Coventry City Council #CovConnects device bank we have been able to tackle digital exclusion by giving people a range of devices from Chromebooks to Echo devices and SIM cards through the National Databank.

Our volunteers continue to provide valuable support to our core service, saving valuable adviser time through form filling, money advice support and grants support, and facilitating more support for our clients, development of skills, confidence and expertise in our volunteers and our ability to add value to our services through their knowledge about neighbourhoods and cultures.

Volunteers tell us that they are more confident, volunteering with us has inspired their career and educational plans, they have learnt digital skills, communications skills, advice and guidance skills and teamwork. We received thanks for our clear communication, flexible scheduling and welcoming environment.

As one volunteer said, "I have helped improve people's quality of life while learning how to complete applications, it makes me feel amazing."

Along with offering a NVQ qualifications in Advice and Guidance, our volunteers receive training on communication skills, health and safety, safeguarding, diversity and inclusion and data protection. The project has developed the ethos that everyone can contribute, and we are seen locally as an organisation that can provide volunteering opportunities to people who may be perceived as furthest away from the jobs market, providing coaching and mentoring to help volunteers move forward with their lives.

We are looking forward to expanding our volunteer programme, providing more structured coaching and mentoring for volunteers and working closely with our third sector partners to drive improvements in volunteering across the city and sharing of best practice. We hope to increase our ability to empower more local people through our Community Digital project and to train more volunteers to support our core service.

The trustees would like to thank Daksha, our Volunteer Programme Manager, along with our current and former volunteers, for their dedication and commitment to our charity. We recognise that you give your time for free, and your support is invaluable.

Looking forward

As stated in the finance section above, we are working with regularly updated cashflow forecasts and adapting service delivery based on new income streams. These include our core work in Coventry supported by Cadent Gas and other smaller pots of money, our project supporting Foodbanks in Stratford Upon Avon, our disability-advice clinics alongside students from Warwick Law School, the Health Justice Partnership and our Debt Modernisation Project supported by the Money and Pensions Service.

Our key priorities are now:

- To consolidate our existing services as far as possible and retain valuable, highly skilled, staff within the advice sector.
- To redouble our fundraising efforts and seek diversification of income to help secure the future of our charity.
- To seek additional partnerships and other opportunities to share the costs of service delivery.
- To continue to build our volunteering activity and digital inclusion work. This includes training and development activity to support our core advice work.
- Continuing to support our staff and volunteer wellbeing, including work towards the West Midlands Combined Authority 'Thrive at Work' Bronze award.[11]
- To work on a sustainable succession strategy. We know there is a national shortage of experienced advisers and our CEO continues to work with colleagues across the UK on the development of initiatives to tackle this national challenge as well as looking internally.

Trustees and our CEO are committed to remain focused on our mission and objectives, and to pursue all opportunities that will continue to help us meet the needs of our beneficiaries.

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on 28th November 2025 and signed on its behalf by:

Damon Swindell
Director & Chair of CIAS Trustee Board

[11] 'Thrive at Work: About the programme' at https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/thrive/thrive-at-work/about-the-programme/

Charity registration number 1015216 (England and Wales)

Company registration number 02761115

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Chairperson	Damon Swindell
Trustees	Cllr Rachel Lancaster Isabelle Osbourne Mark Monaghan Damon Swindell Zainib Hussain
Secretary	Alan Markey
Charity number	1015216
Company number	02761115
Principal address	Norton House Bird Street Coventry CV1 5FX
Registered office	Norton House Bird Street Coventry CV1 5FX
Independent examiner	Amanda Asbury 16 Emily Allen Road Whitmore Park Coventry CV6 2PN

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Bankers

Unity Trust
Nine Brindley Place
4 Oozells Square
Birmingham
B1 2HB

Redwood Bank
The Nexus Building
Broadway
Letchworth Garden City
SC6 3TA

Cambridge and Counties Bank
Charnwood Court
5B New Walk
Leicester
LE1 6TE

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

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COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of Coventry Independent Advice Service Limited (the charity) for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity (and also its directors for the purposes of company law), you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Having satisfied myself that the financial statements of the charity are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006 and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000, the independent examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of Association of Accounting Technicians, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 386 of the Companies Act 2006.

2 the financial statements do not accord with those records; or

3 the financial statements do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 other than any requirement that the financial statements give a true and fair view, which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or

4 the financial statements have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Amanda Asbury (Dec 3, 2025 07:56:42 GMT)

Amanda Asbury FCCA

16 Emily Allen Road
Whitmore Park
Coventry
CV6 2PN

Dated: .Dec.3,.2025...

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	3	209,630	140,133	349,763	326,642	129,167	455,809
Other trading activities	4	-	-	-	50,068	-	50,068
Investments	5	777	-	777	952	-	952
Total income		210,407	140,133	350,540	377,662	129,167	506,829
Expenditure on:							
Charitable activities							
Advice service	6	266,872	109,101	375,973	337,133	113,430	450,563
Total expenditure		266,872	109,101	375,973	337,133	113,430	450,563
Net income/(expenditure)		(56,465)	31,032	(25,433)	40,529	15,737	56,266
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	22,817	(22,817)	-
Net movement in funds	8	(56,465)	31,032	(25,433)	63,346	(7,080)	56,266
Reconciliation of funds:							
Fund balances at 1 April 2024		175,760	(7,080)	168,680	112,414	-	112,414
Fund balances at 31 March 2025		119,295	23,952	143,247	175,760	(7,080)	168,680

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MARCH 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £	2024 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**12**		1,082		2,054
Current assets					
Debtors	**13**	-		2,491	
Cash at bank and in hand		149,085		176,662	
		149,085		179,153	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**14**	(6,920)		(12,527)	
Net current assets			142,165		166,626
Total assets less current liabilities			143,247		168,680
The funds of the charity					
Restricted income funds	**16**		23,952		(7,080)
Unrestricted funds			119,295		175,760
			143,247		168,680

The company is entitled to the exemption from the audit requirement contained in section 477 of the Companies Act 2006, for the year ended 31 March 2025.

The director acknowledges her responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of financial statements.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on Dec 2, 2025

Damon Swindell
Trustee

Company registration number 02761115 (England and Wales)

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Coventry Independent Advice Service Limited is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is Norton House, Bird Street, Coventry, CV1 5FX.

The charity is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England and Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees are liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charity in the event of liquidation.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the charity's governing document, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)". The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The charity has taken advantage of the provisions in the SORP for charities not to prepare a statement of cash flows.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, [modified to include the revaluation of freehold properties and to include investment properties and certain financial instruments at fair value]. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements. With regard to after 31st March 2025, the most significant area of uncertainty of the Charity is the level of grants to be received from Coventry City Council, which at the balance sheet has not been agreed beyond 31st March 2025.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors or grantors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the charity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known, and receipt is expected. If the amount is not known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

1.5 Expenditure

All expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to that expenditure, it is probable settlement is required and the amount can be measured reliably. All costs are allocated to the applicable expenditure heading that aggregate similar costs to that category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of resources, with central staff costs allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use. Other support costs are allocated based on the spread of staff costs.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Office equipment	straightline method over three years

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.7 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the charity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.8 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the charity's balance sheet when the charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors and bank loans are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Debt instruments are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the charity's contractual obligations expire or are discharged or cancelled.

1.10 Taxation

The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

1.11 Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

1.12 Retirement benefits

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

1.13 Governance costs

These include the costs attributable to the charity's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees' meetings and reimbursed expenses.

1.14 Government Grants

Government grants are recognised based on the accrual model and are measured at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are classified as relating either to revenue or to assets. Grants relating to revenue are recognised in income over the period in which the related costs are recognised. Grants relating to assets are recognised over the expected useful life of the asset. Where part of a grant relating to an asset is deferred, it is recognised as deferred income.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

3 Donations, legacies and grants

	Unrestricted funds	**Restricted funds**	**Total**	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2025	**2025**	**2025**	2024	2024	2024
	£	**£**	**£**	£	£	£
Donations and gifts	24,496	-	24,496	1,355	-	1,355
Grants received	185,134	140,133	325,267	325,287	129,167	454,454
	209,630	140,133	349,763	326,642	129,167	455,809
Grants receivable for core activities						
Coventry City Council	171,043	-	171,043	325,287	-	325,287
Stratford Upon Avon Food Banks	-	7,897	7,897	-	-	-
Good Things Foundation	-	6,000	6,000	-	-	-
National Lottery Awards For All Grant	-	19,865	19,865	-	-	-
VAC Healthcheck	-	3,568	3,568	-	-	-
National Lottery Community Fund	-	75,797	75,797	-	57,836	57,836
Health Justice Partnership	-	21,052	21,052	-	13,110	13,110
Money & Pensions Service (MaPS) (2025)/National Grid Community Matters (2024)	-	5,954	5,954	-	8,100	8,100
Feeding Britain	-	-	-	-	50,121	50,121
Other Unrestricted Grants	14,091	-	14,091	-	-	-
	185,134	140,333	325,267	325,287	129,167	454,454

4 Income from other trading activities

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £
Full recovery cost	-	50,068

5 Income from investments

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £
Interest receivable	777	952

6 Charitable activities

	Advice Service 2025 £	Advice Service 2024 £
Staff costs	324,018	336,903
Depreciation and impairment	1,124	1,511
Recruitment	-	1,368
Training and conferences	1,980	1,783
Rent, service charge and storage fees	12,193	17,804
Repairs and maintenance	-	339
Telephone	5,903	5,280
Printing, postage and stationery	3,239	5,316
Sundry expenses	3,532	54,557
Legal and professional fees	4,054	6,605
Volunteer expenses	4,011	1,269
Insurance, subscriptions and licences	4,239	4,843
Computer software and maintenance costs	11,530	12,835
	375,823	450,413
Share of governance costs (see note 7)	150	150
	375,973	450,563
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	266,872	337,133
Restricted funds	109,101	113,430
	375,973	450,563

7 Support costs

	Support costs £	Governance costs £	2025 £	Support costs £	Governance costs £	2024 £
Independent examiners fee	-	150	150	-	150	150
	-	150	150	-	150	150
Analysed between Charitable activities	-	150	150	-	150	150

8 Net movement in funds

	2025	2024
	£	£
The net movement in funds is stated after charging/(crediting):		
Fees payable for the independent examination of the charity's financial statements	-	-
Depreciation of owned tangible fixed assets	1,124	1,511

9 Trustees

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the charity during the year.

10 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2025	2024
	Number	Number
Charitable activities	8	9
Administration	4	4
Total	12	13

Employment costs	2025	2024
	£	£
Wages and salaries	289,731	300,051
Social security costs	17,817	20,901
Other pension costs	16,470	15,951
	324,018	336,903

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000 during the year.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £51,286 (2024 - £49,751).

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000.

Remuneration of key management personnel

11 Taxation

The charity is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

12 Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment
	£
Cost	
At 1 April 2024	13,617
At 31 March 2025	13,617
Depreciation and impairment	
At 1 April 2024	11,411
Depreciation charged in the year	1,124
At 31 March 2025	12,535
Carrying amount	
At 31 March 2025	1,082
At 31 March 2024	2,054

13 Debtors

	2025	2024
Amounts falling due within one year:	£	£
Other debtors	-	2,491

14 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Other taxation and social security	2,664	6,111
Trade creditors	1,396	3,129
Other creditors	63	109
Accruals and deferred income	2,797	3,178
	6,920	12,527

15 Retirement benefit schemes

	2025	2024
Defined contribution schemes	£	£
Charge to profit or loss in respect of defined contribution schemes	16,470	15,951

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the charity in an independently administered fund.

16 Unrestricted and restricted funds

Unrestricted funds

					Movement in funds		
	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2024	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Balance at 31 March 2025
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
General funds	490,076	(337,133)	22,817	175,760	210,407	(266,872)	119,295
	490,076	(337,133)	22,817	175,760	210,407	(266,872)	127,634

16 Unrestricted and restricted funds **(Continued)**

Restricted funds

The income funds of the charity include restricted funds comprising the following unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust for specific purposes:

					Movement in funds		
	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2024	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Balance at 31 March 2025
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Feeding Britain	50,121	(28,125)	(21,996)	-	-	-	-
Health Justice Partnership	13,110	(13,110)	-	-	21,052	(612)	20,440
National Grid Community Matters	8,100	(7,279)	(821)	-	-	-	-
National Lottery Community Fund	57,836	(64,916)	-	(7,080)	75,797	(70,602)	(1,885)
Good Things Foundation	-	-	-	-	6,000	(6,000)	-
'Money and Pensions Service (MaPS)	-	-	-	-	5,954	(8,454)	(2,500)
Stratford Upon Avon Foodbanks	-	-	-	-	7,898	-	7,898
National Lottery Awards For All Grant	-	-	-	-	19,865	(19,865)	-
VAC/Healthwatch Grant	-	-	-	-	3,568	(3,568)	-
	129,167	(113,430)	(22,817)	(7,080)	140,133	(109,101)	23,952

16 Unrestricted and restricted funds **(Continued)**

Coventry City Council - A grant to support our core advice service in the city.

Feeding Britain – this grant supports advice and support work across three of the social supermarkets in the city.

National Lottery Community Fund – this grant supports our Volunteer Programme, including the salary of our Volunteer Manager and administrative support.

National Grid Community Matters - funding helped provide holistic support and tailored packages for individuals and households. It offered guidance and practical support on energy issues and, by helping families and individuals to maximise their income and reduce fuel costs, has a direct impact on fuel poverty and financial security.

The Health Justice Partnership - this is a collaboration between us, Central England Law Centre, and Coventry University. Working with health professionals within the Primary Care Network, the project provides a pathway for health professionals to direct their patients for specialist, legal support in everyday legal matters that threaten their health and stability. Our role focuses on providing debt advice to people referred through local GP practices.

Good Things Foundation - supported the extension of our digital inclusion work in libraries across the city and with community groups, It enabled us to extend our volunteer team, register and support people with online learning and distribute SIM cards to people in need.

National Lottery Awards for All - supported the salary of a part-time adviser focusing on tackling food poverty in Coventry neighbourhoods.

VAC/Healthwatch - The funding supported a small research project, using our volunteers, capturing peoples experience of using health and social care services.

17 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £
At 31 March 2025:			
Tangible assets	1,082	-	1,082
Current assets/(liabilities)	118,213	23,952	142,165
	119,295	23,952	143,247

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
At 31 March 2024:			
Tangible assets	2,054	-	2,054
Current assets/(liabilities)	173,706	(7,080)	166,626
	175,760	(7,080)	168,680

18 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2024 - none).

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE

England & Wales - Charity number 1015216

Accounts

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES/DIRECTORS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st March 2024

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purpose of the Companies Act 2006, present their report along with the financial statements of the Charity for the year ended 31st March 2024.

The Trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities' in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

Structure, Governance and Management

Coventry Independent Advice Service (CIAS) is a charitable company. The Memorandum of Association establishes the objects and powers of the charitable company which is governed by the Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up, members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Recruitment and appointment of directors

The trustees are appointed by ordinary resolution or by a decision of the existing trustees. Under the Articles of Association, one third of the directors are required to retire by rotation at each Annual General Meeting at which time they may seek re-election.

Charity trustees are the people who share ultimate responsibility for governing the charity and directing how it is managed and run. During the past year the trustees have been meeting every 1-2 months to review performance and budgets as well as overseeing the broad strategy of CIAS.

CIAS operates in accordance with documented policies and procedures which are designed to ensure that these responsibilities are fully met. Day to day management of activities is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who reports directly to the trustee board.

Trustee induction and training

CIAS has a recruitment process for new trustees which includes a written application form followed by an initial meeting with the Chair and CEO. Trustee vacancies are advertised on the CIAS website[1] and promoted through Voluntary Action Coventry and social media accounts. Officer roles may also be advertised on recruitment websites.

The induction process for new trustees comprises further meetings with the Chair and/or CEO followed by attending a trustees meeting as an observer. New trustees are given access to previous board papers, recent accounts and annual reports, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Charity Commission Guidance (CC3). New trustees also complete an NCVO e-learning module covering the roles and duties of trustees.[2]

[1] Coventry Independent Advice Service at https://covadvice.org.uk
[2] NCVO E-learning 'Roles and Duties of Trustees' at https://booking.ncvo.org.uk/training/event_series/e-learning

Risk Management

CIAS agrees a three-year strategic plan and annually reviews its risk management plan to ensure strategic, business, and operational risks are covered. CIAS has detailed Health and Safety, Risk Management and Safeguarding policies as well as other policies to ensure that risks are identified and managed. Public and professional liability insurance is held at a level recommended by our membership body, AdviceUK, along with appropriate levels of insurance against other identified risks such as fire and theft.

Access to 24/7 human resources and health and safety support is provided through a paid subscription to Croner HR. This support helps reduce exposure to risk in these key areas. The subscription also includes an Employee Assistance Programme aimed at promoting and supporting wellbeing. Governance support, through membership of professional bodies including AdviceUK and NCVO, is also in place.

Information Assurance and Data Protection

CIAS has policies to effectively manage compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which are reviewed and updated regularly. All staff receive GDPR training relevant to their role. Robust processes are in place to ensure that IT systems are secure and comply with recognised cyber security standards. These systems are supported by an external IT professional.

The secure Microsoft 365 cloud-based environment is used for day-to-day operations and the online case management system, AdvicePro, is used to secure all client information and case files. Both systems are fully assured and compliant with international data security standards. The Microsoft 365 system was upgraded in 2021 to take advantage of enhanced security and protection options as more people were regularly working from home. Client data held in AdvicePro is securely stored in the UK within a robust, secure operations centre compliant with Information Security Code of Practice ISO27001, and automatically backed up daily.

Equality and Diversity

CIAS trustees answered the call from ACEVO to sign up to eight principles to address the diversity deficit in the charity sector.[3] Our action plan continues to be monitored by the trustees and we are open to feedback on how we might take further steps towards increasing our reach.

Liabilities

CIAS main liabilities are for staffing, pensions, and premises costs. Appropriate insurance is maintained to cover all identified liabilities and we have a reserves policy in place to ensure adequate protection (see under 'Financial Review' below).

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the trustees should follow best practice and:

[3] ACEVO at https://www.acevo.org.uk/eight-principles-to-address-the-diversity-deficit-in-charity-leadership/

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- State whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity and enable them to ascertain the financial position of the charity, and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees are responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Public Benefit Statement

In setting objectives and planning activities the trustees have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 by giving due consideration to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance. In particular, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set.

Objectives and Activities

CIAS charitable objectives are to promote any charitable purpose for the public benefit of communities in Coventry and the surrounding areas, predominantly by providing information, advice, public legal education, and other support to relieve poverty and hardship, reduce inequality and improve quality of life.

CIAS core activities focus on the provision of advice and casework on welfare benefits and debt plus general advice and casework on other social welfare issues. Business planning and strategic development keeps these core activities at heart with the aim of focusing work on the most disadvantaged and financially excluded sections of local communities. The services offered are free and confidential.

The range of specific activities focus on helping individuals and families to identify and claim benefits, to challenge benefit decisions, to advise on strategies for dealing with problem debt, to negotiate with creditors and to provide information and support on a range of other social welfare issues.

The service model is focused on reaching people where they live, in their own neighbourhoods, and in areas of greatest need. Advice services are delivered using a mix of face-to-face work in community venues across and remote delivery via telephone and an online enquiry portal. CIAS recognises that its 'USP' is advice in communities and that remains the key focus of delivery.

Over the past year a range of activities have been undertaken to help meet the charitable objectives, including:

- Working closely with community partners, particularly Family Hubs and Social Supermarkets/Grub Hubs, to ensure that 'in person' services are targeted on those who need them most.

- Focusing on ‘early help’ and working with partners to help meet community need for advice and information before problems reach crisis point.
- Recruiting and supporting more volunteers to help increase service capacity in response to rising demand.
- Undertaking new activity within communities focused on addressing digital exclusion, including links with Coventry City Council’s ‘CovConnects’ initiative to extend availability of IT and support end users to access essential online services.
- Developing our volunteer offer to include NVQ qualifications in Advice and Guidance alongside further support with their personal and professional development.
- Working with statutory and voluntary sector partners to produce resources in response to the continuing cost-of-living crisis and to help address wider poverty and inequality issues.
- Membership of the Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) in Coventry. This is a collaboration with the University of Warwick, Coventry University, University College London, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, the voluntary sector and local communities. The HDRC aims to establish a research infrastructure to reduce health inequalities and improve the health of Coventry resident
- Maintaining and developing accessible advice and information for communities via telephone, email, and online enquiry.
- Maximising the income of individuals and families through increased benefit take-up and support with problem debt.
- Maintaining and further developing a public website, including video advice resources and an enhanced ‘self-help’ section to enable people to find other sources of help locally and nationally.
- Working with students on the Public Legal Education module at the University of Warwick Law School, including an internship, to further enhance our public facing offer.
- Seeking opportunities to help enhance service offer and demonstrating a good return on investment for funders.
- Helping address poverty and inequality by increasing the take-up of benefits and by offering debt advice and casework.
- Playing a part in the life of the city through engagement with local initiatives, policy work and campaigns.

Financial review

CIAS trustees have prepared financial statements on a going concern basis, notwithstanding the significant challenges posed by the recent loss of our core grant from Coventry City Council (see ‘The Future’ section below). This substantial reduction in income has necessitated an immediate and comprehensive review of the charity’s financial sustainability.

This review has identified a combination of cost-saving measures including staff redundancies, strategic realignments and efforts to secure alternative funding sources. The trustees have developed cash flow forecasts and conducted stress tests to evaluate the charity’s ability to meet its liabilities as they fall due. These forecasts assume the successful execution of planned measures, including reductions in operational expenditure and anticipated new income streams.

Trustees acknowledge that the charity faces material uncertainties regarding the timing and success of these initiatives, which may cast significant doubt on the charity’s ability to continue as a going concern in the longer term. However, based on the steps being taken and the current assessment of available resources, the trustees are confident that the charity will remain operational throughout the next 12 months, from the date the balance sheet as been signed off. Therefore, the financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

The Trustees will continue to closely monitor the charity's financial position and take appropriate actions as needed to address emerging challenges, ensuring that the charity remains focused on delivering its mission and objectives.

Trustees agree a budget each year and a monitoring report is submitted to each board meeting. Trustees also receive a more detailed quarterly finance report prepared by the treasurer, which includes a cashflow forecast.

The CEO and finance assistant deal with day-to-day financial matters in accordance with well established procedures. A Finance and General Purposes sub-committee, involving the Chair, Treasurer and CEO, meets at least quarterly to review progress against budget and prepare reports to the wider Trustee membership.

CIAS uses the Xero financial software package which allows trustee officers, the CEO and the financial administrator to carry out their respective roles in a hybrid working environment.

Income and expenditure

Overall income increased to £506,829 in 2023/24 (£415,093 in 2022/23). This was largely due to an increased level of restricted funding for specific projects.

Coventry City Council continued to be the main funder, but their grant-in-aid was frozen for the sixth year in succession, representing a significant reduction in real terms particularly as interest rates are historically high. We also recently learned that our grant would be withdrawn from 1st October 2024 following a competitive tendering process for advice services in the city, with future grants only awarded to Citizens Advice Coventry and Central England Law Centre.

A three-year grant from the National Lottery continues to support our Volunteer Programme. This has helped to enhance our service capacity as well as providing continued financial security. Feeding Britain also awarded additional funding to support our work in social supermarkets/grub hubs beyond 31st March 2024.

Charitable expenditure continues to rise, resulting in a further reduction in the charities unrestricted reserves this year. This was significantly mitigated, however, by the documented restructure in the previous financial year.

Staff costs represented around 75% of our total charitable expenditure in 2023/24, and with the withdrawal of Coventry City Council funding at short notice, this is the main area where savings need to be made in the 2024/25 financial year. As we prepare this report, we are working through a redundancy exercise with staff, and it is likely that we will reduce our staffing significantly before the end of the 2024 calendar year to help balance our budgets.

The need to diversify funding streams is recognised by trustees as critical to safeguarding the charity's future and building capacity to meet ever increasing demand from beneficiaries. This will be the focus of activity in the coming months.

Reserves policy

The trustees have set a reserves policy that requires reserves to be maintained at a level which ensures that core activity could continue during a period of unforeseen difficulty and that a

proportion of reserves be maintained in a readily realisable form. The reserves policy is calculated and reviewed annually by the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee.

The intention of the policy is to cover liabilities including provision for redundancies, premises and other contractual costs, a reasonable level of urgent contingencies and the realistic costs that may be incurred if the charity were to be wound-up.

The trustees assess the required level of reserves on an annual basis, alongside the operating budget. The assessment takes account of the income and expenditure risk within the budget and the need to keep sufficient bank balances to be able to manage the day-to-day fluctuations of receipts and payments. Any significant changes in activities or financial obligations that could affect the level of reserves is closely monitored.

Based on risk analysis, unrestricted reserves equivalent to at least three months operating costs were agreed to be necessary (representing approximately £97,000 for 2024/25). Unrestricted reserves on 31st March 2024 were £112,414.

Investment Policy and Performance

CIAS continues to bank with Unity Trust, an independent bank committed to supporting socially minded organisations across the UK. Investments have been held in 120 day notice accounts with Cambridge & Counties Bank and with Redwood Bank during the last financial year but these investments are now being withdrawn and held in our main bank account to increase liquidity.

Finding a reasonable return on investment is still a major problem for the charity sector. Investments are regularly reviewed but, due to unattractive interest rates and the need to keep a level of reserves relatively liquid, potential income from investments is limited.

Acknowledgements

The trustee would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who have supported their work in the past year, specifically:

- Coventry City Council – although our core funding from the council has been withdrawn from 1st October 2024, following a competitive tender process, we would like to thank them for their support over the last 30 years.
- The National Lottery Community Fund – for their continued support of our volunteer programme.
- Feeding Britain – who have continued to support our work to embed advice services within Social Supermarkets and community hubs in the city.
- Individual donors – A small number of people who regularly donate in support of the charities work or who make one-off donations. The trustees are extremely grateful to every one of you.

Review of the Year

Our strongest indicators of success are the outcomes we help achieve for our clients, their families and for our city. These stories of change provide greater evidence of our impact than simple outputs and help demonstrate progress in tackling poverty and inequality within Coventry and the surrounding area.

A summary of our outputs for the 2023/24 financial year include:

- We helped individuals and families to realise reported **financial gains of nearly £3.2 million.**
- We estimate this is worth **at least £5 million** to the local economy as this money circulates rather than being taken out of the city.
- In addition, we helped clients to manage over **£500,000 of unsecured debt** of which £85,000 was written off.
- We **opened 2074 new cases** for 1549 individuals and families.
- We **closed 1950 files** over the same period as an outcome was achieved.
- Our advisers completed **over 11400 items of work** including client interviews, research, correspondence, phone calls and other actions on behalf of our beneficiaries.
- Our public **website[4] was viewed 21587 times** by 8471 visitors in the past financial year (18932 times by 8099 visitors in 2022/23).
- Our two main enquiry areas continue to be **welfare benefits** (72% of new files opened) and **debt/money guidance** issues (14%). This is almost identical to the proportion of cases in 2022/23. Many enquiries cover multiple issues and there is often overlap between enquiry areas.
- 57% of clients were **women** (59% last year).
- 43% of clients who supplied information identified as being from a **minority ethnic community** (44% last year).
- 13% of clients told us they had a **disability** and 27% said they had a long-term illness.

The financial gains we have helped achieved for clients helps demonstrate the real value of our service to our clients, to the city and to our funders. Increased income and reduced indebtedness can be life-changing, having a positive impact on health and wellbeing as well as providing increased financial security and stability.

Our social return on investment cannot be understated. We estimate this year that our work is worth around £5 million to the city economy. We base this estimate on the local economic multiplier model[5] which recognises that people on lower incomes tend to spend their money locally, which in turn creates jobs and wealth for local businesses and other services. Additionally, financial security reduces pressure on health services and other social provision.

Information, advice, and support

We offer a face-to-face holistic debt and welfare benefits advice and casework service. This approach is unique within Coventry and not widely replicated outside the city. Delivering this service in the community has never been more important or in demand.

Our charity was re-evaluated against the Advice Quality Standard (AQS)[6] in January 2024 and, once again, we passed with flying colours! We hold the AQS at the Advice with Casework level in Welfare Benefits and Debt advice. The board recognises the value of continuing to hold the AQS as it gives confidence to clients, stakeholders, and funders that high standards of service and quality of advice are in place. Our next assessment is due in January 2026.

Demand continued to be high. In addition to our face-to-face work in the community, we also received an average of 28 enquiries each week via our web enquiry form. This remote aspect of the

[4] https://covadvice.org.uk
[5] https://www.nefconsulting.com/what-we-do/evaluation-impact-assessment/local-multiplier-3/
[6] https://asauk.org.uk/advice-quality-standard/

service continues to be popular with many residents along with third party agencies, including family hub staff and NHS social prescribers.

Our advisers are flexible in their approach to contacting and helping clients, increasingly using WhatsApp and email to gather information and offer advice. Our web-based casework management system allows us to text clients directly from their case. It also allows us to create digital forms of authority, which clients can receive and sign via their smart phone. This allows us to help people more quickly when we are negotiating with third parties on their behalf.

While requests for help with disability related benefits remain one of our highest areas of demand, continuing cost-of-living pressures has seen steady demand for help accessing the local authority Household Support Fund (HSF) as well as support from charities and trust funds.

Our work in social supermarkets and community grub-hubs, supported by Feeding Britain, has continued to be successful. This project has seen us embed advice services within local food provision, providing advice at an early stage and focusing on solutions to financial difficulties. By working closely with the volunteers at each location we can build trust and engage with service users at an early stage, thereby helping to prevent future problems. The success of the project saw Feeding Britain providing additional funding through to the end of March 2024.

Our Senior Debt Adviser/Supervisor, Caroline, moved on during the year to take up a fantastic opportunity to join Trussell Trust. Her legacy remains, however, in terms of the quality standards that she helped to implement and in the staff who benefited from hear leadership over recent years. Our clients usually present with benefit issues alongside their financial difficulties and debts. Deficit budgets are a growing concern in the debt advice sector and organisations that provide holistic advice are essential to ensuring income is maximised.

Most of our clients present with priority debts with council tax, rent and utilities being the most common. Many also have benefit overpayments (relating to DWP and the city council) resulting in direct deductions that can cause financial hardship. We work closely with partners locally and nationally addressing debt related matters. We are an integral member of the local Council Tax Liaison Group where we discuss issues such as affordable payments and enforcement.

For such a small staff team, supported by a handful of dedicated volunteers, the Board is proud of the charity's achievements for individuals and families in Coventry. The profile of CIAS has risen enormously and is very much embedded in the life of the city and initiatives to tackle poverty and exclusion.

<u>Volunteer programme and Community Digital</u>

We have successfully completed the first year of this three-year programme, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. Our Volunteer Manager, Daksha, has made extraordinary progress in growing our volunteer team, equipping them with essential skills and knowledge, and widening the reach of our service.

The project targets delivery within disadvantaged communities across the city of Coventry. Through grassroots partnerships to reach people at an early stage we aim to prevent problems from escalating into crises. Volunteers play a key role by providing practical assistance, helping complete benefit forms, providing 'low level' but essential support with correspondence and digital access, and helping with administrative support and translation. This helps triage the needs of users

allowing us to focus our efforts most effectively. Furthermore, volunteer input saves our paid advisers considerable time which they can spend on more complex work.

Local volunteers are well-placed to assist clients. Not only do they help to build organisational capacity, but they also add enormous value through their local knowledge and cultural awareness.

We wanted to empower volunteers to offer valuable support within communities and to help individuals and families to gain valuable experience, confidence and skills that will help them in their life journey. By growing our Volunteer Programme, we have started to enhance the volunteer experience. We have partnered with local colleges and other providers to offer NVQ qualifications in Advice and Guidance, alongside training in core skills such as IT and Health and Safety.

We have now moved into the second phase of our programme, which has recruited a new cohort of volunteers to help address digital exclusion in the city. Volunteers deliver regular sessions at community libraries aimed at heling get people online and provide them with necessary skills for life. Activities commonly include helping people undertake job searches, maintain Universal Credit journals and send emails. As part of this activity, we have also distributed Chromebooks, Facebook Portals, MiFi devices and SIM cards to individuals and families in need.

The trustee would like to thank Daksha, and all our existing and previous volunteers, for their dedication and commitment to our charity. We recognise that you give your time for free, and your support is invaluable.

The Future

In late September 2024 we learned that we were losing support from our main funder, Coventry City Council, after 30 years. The council decided to withdraw our funding following a competitive tendering process that was announced as part of a package of measures to help the council address its budget deficit and reduce the risk of a Section 114 notice (as had happened in neighbouring Birmingham).

While we understand the pressure that local government finance is under, we believe the decision to withdraw our funding to be shortsighted. We maintain that the decision will ultimately lead to increasing levels of unmet need as other advice providers in the city already have issues with capacity. We have argued that saving money by cutting funding for advice is a false economy as prevention is cheaper than crisis intervention further down the line.

Although we were aware that a review of advice service funding was being undertaken, the scale of the decision and the short timescale were unexpected. We had considered various scenarios for a reduction in funding but had been unprepared for a 100% cut with less than 4 weeks' notice.

As we prepare this report, we are completing a redundancy exercise with staff that will result in our advice team being significantly reduced. We have had some early success in attracting some smaller pots of funding which, when combined with our unrestricted reserves, will enable us to retain some core staff into 2025.

As stated in the finance section above, we are working with regularly updated cashflow forecasts and adapting service delivery based on new income streams. These include an exciting new project supporting Foodbanks in neighbouring South Warwickshire, work with Warwick Law School on a pilot to develop law clinics for Coventry communities, and the existing Health Justice Partnership.

Our key priorities are now:

- To consolidate our existing services as far as possible and retain valuable, highly skilled, staff within the advice sector.
- To review our staff roles, resources and core advice offer as we move forward in a new funding environment.
- To redouble our fundraising efforts and seek diversification of income to help secure the future of our charity. This includes work to identify potential partnerships and other opportunities.
- To continue to build our volunteering activity and digital inclusion work. This includes training and development activity to support our core advice work.
- Continuing to support our staff and volunteer wellbeing. This builds on our achievement of the West Midlands Combined Authority 'Thrive at Work' Foundation award[7] and recognises the disruption that can result from restructuring the charity.
- To work on a succession strategy. We know there is a national shortage of experienced advisers and our CEO continues to work with colleagues across the UK on the development of initiatives to tackle this national challenge as well as looking internally.

Trustees and our CEO are committed to remain focused on our mission and objectives, and to pursue all opportunities that will continue to help us meet the needs of our beneficiaries.

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on……and signed on its behalf by:

……

Damon Swindell
Director & Chair of CIAS Trustee Board

[7] 'Thrive at Work: About the programme' at https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/thrive/thrive-at-work/about-the-programme/

Charity registration number 1015216

Company registration number 02761115 (England and Wales)

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Chairperson	Damon Swindell
Trustees	Cllr Rachel Lancaster Isabelle Osbourne Mark Monaghan Damon Swindell James Rose Zainib Hussain
Secretary	Alan Markey
Charity number	1015216
Company number	02761115
Principal address	Oakwood House Cheylesmore Coventry West Midlands United Kingdom CV1 2HL
Registered office	Oakwood House Cheylesmore Coventry West Midlands United Kingdom CV1 2HL
Independent examiner	Amanda Asbury 16 Emily Allen Road Whitmore Park Coventry CV6 2PN

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Bankers

Unity Trust
Nine Brindley Place
4 Oozells Square
Birmingham
B1 2HB

Redwood Bank
The Nexus Building
Broadway
Letchworth Garden City
SC6 3TA

Cambridge and Counties Bank
Charnwood Court
5B New Walk
Leicester
LE1 6TE

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

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COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of Coventry Independent Advice Service Limited (the charity) for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 (the 2006 Act).

Having satisfied myself that the financial statements of the charity are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). In carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of Association of Accounting Technicians, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or

2 the financial statements do not accord with those records; or

3 the financial statements do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or

4 the financial statements have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Amanda Asbury (Jan 25, 2025 17:10 GMT)

Amanda Asbury FCCA

16 Emily Allen Road
Whitmore Park
Coventry
CV6 2PN

Dated: Jan 25, 2025

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	**3**	326,642	129,167	455,809	336,788	39,791	376,579
Other trading activities	**4**	50,068	-	50,068	37,500	-	37,500
Investments	**5**	952	-	952	1,014	-	1,014
Total income		377,662	129,167	506,829	375,302	39,791	415,093
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	**6**	-	-	-	7,200	-	7,200
Charitable activities							
Advice service	**7**	337,133	113,430	450,563	383,322	49,077	432,399
Total expenditure		337,133	113,430	450,563	390,522	49,077	439,599
Net income/(expenditure)		40,529	15,737	56,266	(15,220)	(9,286)	(24,506)
Transfers between funds		22,817	(22,817)	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds	**9**	63,346	(7,080)	56,266	(15,220)	(9,286)	(24,506)
Reconciliation of funds:							
Fund balances at 1 April 2023		112,414	-	112,414	127,634	9,286	136,920
Fund balances at 31 March 2024		175,760	(7,080)	168,680	112,414	-	112,414

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2024 £	2023 £	2023 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**13**		2,054		3,565
Current assets					
Debtors	**14**	2,491		7,598	
Cash at bank and in hand		176,662		118,170	
		179,153		125,768	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**15**	(12,527)		(16,919)	
Net current assets			166,626		108,849
Total assets less current liabilities			168,680		112,414
Net assets excluding pension liability			168,680		112,414
The funds of the charity					
Restricted income funds	**17**		(7,080)		-
Unrestricted funds			175,760		112,414
			168,680		112,414

The company is entitled to the exemption from the audit requirement contained in section 477 of the Companies Act 2006, for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of financial statements.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on Jan 24, 2025

.....

Damon Swindell

Trustee

Company registration number 02761115 (England and Wales)

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Coventry Independent Advice Service Limited is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is Oakwood House, Cheylesmore, Coventry, West Midlands, CV1 2HL, United Kingdom.

The charity is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England and Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees are liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charity in the event of liquidation.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the charity's [governing document], the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 “The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland” (“FRS 102”) and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019). The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The charity has taken advantage of the provisions in the SORP for charities not to prepare a Statement of Cash Flows.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, [modified to include the revaluation of freehold properties and to include investment properties and certain financial instruments at fair value]. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements. With regard to after 31st March 2024, the most significant area of uncertainty of the Charity is the level of grants to be received from Coventry City Council, which at the balance sheet has not been agreed beyond 31st March 2024 .

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors or grantors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the charity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known, and receipt is expected. If the amount is not known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

1.5 Expenditure

All expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to that expenditure, it is probable settlement is required and the amount can be measured reliably. All costs are allocated to the applicable expenditure heading that aggregate similar costs to that category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of resources, with central staff costs allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use. Other support costs are allocated based on the spread of staff costs.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Office equipment	straightline method over three years

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.7 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the charity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.8 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the charity's balance sheet when the charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors and bank loans are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Debt instruments are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the charity's contractual obligations expire or are discharged or cancelled.

1.10 Taxation

The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

1.11 Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

1.12 Retirement benefits

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

1.13 Governance costs

These include the costs attributable to the charity's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees' meetings and reimbursed expenses.

1.14 Government Grants

Government grants are recognised based on the accrual model and are measured at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are classified as relating either to revenue or to assets. Grants relating to revenue are recognised in income over the period in which the related costs are recognised. Grants relating to assets are recognised over the expected useful life of the asset. Where part of a grant relating to an asset is deferred, it is recognised as deferred income.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

3 Donations, legacies and grants

	Unrestricted funds	**Restricted funds**	**Total**	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2024	**2024**	**2024**	2023	2023	2023
	£	**£**	**£**	£	£	£
Donations and gifts	1,355	-	1,355	14,501	-	14,501
Grants received	325,287	129,167	454,454	322,287	39,791	362,078
	326,642	129,167	455,809	336,788	39,791	376,579
Grants receivable for core activities						
Coventry City Council	325,287	-	325,287	322,287	-	322,287
National Lottery Community Grant	-	57,836	57,836	-	-	-
Health Justice Partnership	-	13,110	13,110	-	-	-
National Grid Community Matters	-	8,100	8,100	-	-	-
Feeding Britain	-	50,121	50,121	-	37,500	37,500
Other	-	-	-	-	2,291	2,291
	325,287	129,167	454,454	322,287	39,791	362,078

4 Income from other trading activities

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Full recovery cost	50,068	37,500

5 Income from investments

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Interest receivable	952	1,014

6 Expenditure on raising funds

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Fundraising and publicity		
Fundraising agents	-	7,200

7 Charitable activities

	Advice Service 2024 £	Advice Service 2023 £
Staff costs	336,903	339,773
Depreciation and impairment	1,511	1,079
Recruitment	1,368	1,098
Training and conferences	1,783	1,375
Rent, service charge and storage fees	17,804	14,990
Repairs and maintenance	339	43
Telephone	5,280	6,357
Printing, postage and stationery	5,316	5,760
Sundry expenses	54,557	39,848
Legal and professional fees	6,605	4,012
Volunteer expenses	1,269	925
Insurance, subscriptions and licences	4,843	7,248
Computer software and maintenance costs	12,835	9,741
	450,413	432,249
Share of governance costs (see note 8)	150	150
	450,563	432,399
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	337,133	383,322
Restricted funds	113,430	49,077
	450,563	432,399

8 Support costs

	Support costs £	Governance costs £	2024 £	Support costs £	Governance costs £	2023 £
Independent examiners fee	-	150	150	-	150	150
	-	150	150	-	150	150
Analysed between Charitable activities	-	150	150	-	150	150

9 Net movement in funds

	2024	2023
	£	£
The net movement in funds is stated after charging/(crediting):		
Depreciation of owned tangible fixed assets	1,511	1,079

10 Trustees

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the charity during the year.

11 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2024	2023
	Number	Number
Charitable activities	9	13
Administration	4	2
Total	13	15

Employment costs	2024	2023
	£	£
Wages and salaries	300,051	300,257
Social security costs	20,901	23,260
Other pension costs	15,951	16,256
	336,903	339,773

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000 during the year.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £49,751 (2023 - £53,901).

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000.

Remuneration of key management personnel
The remuneration of key management personnel was as follows:

12 Taxation

The charity is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

13 Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment
	£
Cost	
At 1 April 2023	13,617
At 31 March 2024	13,617
Depreciation and impairment	
At 1 April 2023	10,052
Depreciation charged in the year	1,511
At 31 March 2024	11,563
Carrying amount	
At 31 March 2024	2,054
At 31 March 2023	3,565

14 Debtors

	2024	2023
Amounts falling due within one year:	£	£
Other debtors	2,491	2,291
Prepayments and accrued income	-	5,307
	2,491	7,598

15 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024	2023
	£	£
Other taxation and social security	6,111	5,314
Trade creditors	3,129	8,428
Other creditors	109	111
Accruals and deferred income	3,178	3,066
	12,527	16,919

16 Retirement benefit schemes

	2024	2023
Defined contribution schemes	£	£
Charge to profit or loss in respect of defined contribution schemes	15,951	16,256

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the charity in an independently administered fund.

17 Unrestricted and restricted funds

Unrestricted funds

				Movement in funds				
	Balance at 1 April 2022	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Balance at 1 April 2023	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 31 March 2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
General funds	130,575	393,804	(368,594)	158,330	348,169	(379,435)	569	127,634
	130,575	393,804	(368,594)	158,330	348,169	(379,435)	569	127,634

17 Unrestricted and restricted funds **(Continued)**

Restricted funds

The income funds of the charity include restricted funds comprising the following unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust for specific purposes:

					Movement in funds			
	Balance at 1 April 2022	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Balance at 1 April 2023	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 31 March 2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
The Henry Smith Charity Grant	-	20,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orbit Grant	-	24,856	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tampon Tax Community Fund	-	5,795	-	-	-	-	-	-
Feeding Britain	-	37,500	(37,500)	-	50,121	(28,125)	(21,996)	-
TNL Community Fund 2	9,286	-	(9,286)	-	-	-	-	-
TNL Community Fund 3	-	2,291	(2,291)	-	-	-	-	-
Health Justice Partnership	-	-	-	-	13,110	(13,110)	-	-
National Grid Community Matters	-	-	-	-	8,100	(7,279)	(821)	-
National Lottery Community Fund	-	-	-	-	57,836	(64,916)	-	(7,080)
	9,286	90,442	(49,077)	-	129,167	(113,430)	(22,817)	(7,080)

17 Unrestricted and restricted funds **(Continued)**

Feeding Britain – this grant supports advice and support work across three of the social supermarkets in the city.

National Lottery Community Fund – this grant supports our Volunteer Programme, including the salary of our Volunteer Manager and administrative support.

National Grid Community Matters - funding helped provide holistic support and tailored packages for individuals and households. It offered guidance and practical support on energy issues and, by helping families and individuals to maximise their income and reduce fuel costs, has a direct impact on fuel poverty and financial security.

The Health Justice Partnership - this is a collaboration between us, Central England Law Centre, and Coventry University. Working with health professionals within the Primary Care Network, the project provides a pathway for health professionals to direct their patients for specialist, legal support in everyday legal matters that threaten their health and stability. Our role focuses on providing debt advice to people referred through local GP practices.

18 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2024	Restricted funds 2024	Total 2024
	£	£	£
At 31 March 2024:			
Tangible assets	2,054	-	2,054
Current assets/(liabilities)	173,706	(7,080)	166,626
	175,760	(7,080)	168,680

	Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total 2023
	£	£	£
At 31 March 2023:			
Tangible assets	3,565	-	3,565
Current assets/(liabilities)	108,849	-	108,849
	112,414	-	112,414

19 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2023 - none).

Coventry Independent Advice Service Limited - Trustees Report and Charity accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2024

Final Audit Report 2025-01-25

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COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE

England & Wales - Charity number 1015216

Accounts

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES/DIRECTORS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st March 2023

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES/DIRECTORS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st March 2023

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purpose of the Companies Act 2006, present their report along with the financial statements of the Charity for the year ended 31st March 2023.

The Trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities' in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

Structure, Governance and Management

Coventry Independent Advice Service (CIAS) is a charitable company. The Memorandum of Association establishes the objects and powers of the charitable company which is governed by the Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up, members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Recruitment and appointment of directors

The trustees are appointed by ordinary resolution or by a decision of the existing trustees. Under the Articles of Association, one third of the directors are required to retire by rotation at each Annual General Meeting at which time they may seek re-election.

Charity trustees are the people who share ultimate responsibility for governing the charity and directing how it is managed and run. During the past year the trustees have been meeting every 1-2 months to review performance and budgets as well as overseeing the broad strategy of CIAS.

CIAS operates in accordance with documented policies and procedures which are designed to ensure that these responsibilities are fully met. Day to day management of activities is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who reports directly to the trustee board.

Trustee induction and training

CIAS has a recruitment process for new trustees which includes a written application form followed by an initial meeting with the Chair and CEO. Trustee vacancies are advertised on the CIAS website[1] and promoted through Voluntary Action Coventry and social media accounts. Officer roles may also be advertised on recruitment websites.

The induction process for new trustees comprises further meetings with the Chair and/or CEO followed by attending a trustees meeting as an observer. New trustees are given access to previous board papers, recent accounts and annual reports, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Charity Commission Guidance (CC3). New trustees also complete an NCVO e-learning module covering the roles and duties of trustees.[2]

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[1] Coventry Independent Advice Service at https://covadvice.org.uk

[2] NCVO E-learning 'Roles and Duties of Trustees' at https://booking.ncvo.org.uk/training/event_series/e-learning

Risk Management

CIAS agrees a three-year strategic plan and annually reviews its risk management plan to ensure strategic, business, and operational risks are covered. CIAS has detailed Health and Safety, Risk Management and Safeguarding policies as well as other policies to ensure that risks are identified and managed. Public and professional liability insurance is held at a level recommended by our membership body, AdviceUK, along with appropriate levels of insurance against other identified risks such as fire and theft.

Access to 24/7 human resources and health and safety support is provided through a paid subscription to Croner HR. This support helps reduce exposure to risk in these key areas. The subscription also includes an Employee Assistance Programme aimed at promoting and supporting wellbeing. Governance support, through membership of professional bodies including AdviceUK and NCVO, is also in place.

Information Assurance and Data Protection

CIAS has policies to effectively manage compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which are reviewed and updated regularly. All staff receive GDPR training relevant to their role. Robust processes are in place to ensure that IT systems are secure and comply with recognised cyber security standards. These systems are supported by an external IT professional.

The secure Microsoft 365 cloud-based environment is used for day-to-day operations and the online case management system, AdvicePro, is used to secure all client information and case files. Both systems are fully assured and compliant with international data security standards. The Microsoft 365 system was upgraded in 2021 to take advantage of enhanced security and protection options as more people were regularly working from home. Client data held in AdvicePro is securely stored in the UK within a robust, secure operations centre compliant with Information Security Code of Practice ISO27001, and automatically backed up daily.

Liabilities

CIAS main liabilities are for staffing, pensions, and premises costs. Appropriate insurance is maintained to cover all identified liabilities and we have a reserves policy in place to ensure adequate protection (see under 'Financial Review' below).

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the trustees should follow best practice and:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and;
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity and enable them to ascertain the financial position of the charity, and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees are responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

CIAS trustees continue to scrutinise the organisation's finances in detail and financial statements are presented at each board meetings. All financial decisions are based on a full understanding of the charity's reserves position and the impact that future income and expenditure has on the overall financial situation.

Public Benefit Statement

In setting objectives and planning activities the trustees have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 by giving due consideration to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance. In particular, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set.

Objectives and Activities

CIAS charitable objectives are to promote any charitable purpose for the public benefit of communities in Coventry and the surrounding areas, predominantly by providing information, advice, public legal education, and other support to relieve poverty and hardship, reduce inequality and improve quality of life.

CIAS core activities focus on the provision of advice and casework on welfare benefits and debt plus general advice and casework on other social welfare issues. Business planning and strategic development keeps these core activities at heart with the aim of focusing work on the most disadvantaged and financially excluded sections of local communities. The services offered are free and confidential.

The range of specific activities focus on helping individuals and families to identify and claim benefits, to challenge benefit decisions, to advise on strategies for dealing with problem debt, to negotiate with creditors and to provide information and support on a range of other social welfare issues.

The service model is focused on reaching people where they live, in their own neighbourhoods, and in areas of greatest need. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, advice services have been delivered using a mix of face-to-face work in community venues across and remote delivery via telephone and an online enquiry portal. CIAS recognises that its 'USP' is advice in communities and that remains the key focus of delivery.

Over the past year a range of activities have been undertaken to help meet the charitable objectives, including:

- Working closely with community partners, particularly Family Hubs and Social Supermarkets/Grub Hubs, to ensure that 'in person' services are targeted on those who need them most.
- Focusing on 'early help' and working with partners to help meet community need for advice and information before problems reach crisis point.

- Recruiting and supporting more volunteers, with a new Volunteer Manager role, to help increase service capacity in response to rising demand.
- Developing our volunteer offer to include NVQ qualifications in Advice and Guidance alongside further support with their personal and professional development.
- Working with statutory and voluntary sector partners to produce resources in response to the cost-of-living crisis and to help address wider poverty and inequality issues.
- Engagement with city-wide initiatives around digital inclusion, public health and financial capability.
- Maintaining and developing accessible advice and information for communities via telephone, email, and online enquiry.
- Maximising the income of individuals and families through increased benefit take-up and support with problem debt.
- Maintaining and further developing a public website, including video advice resources and an enhanced 'self-help' section to enable people to find other sources of help locally and nationally.
- Working with students on the Public Legal Education module at the University of Warwick Law School, including an internship, to further enhance our public facing offer.
- Seeking opportunities to help enhance service offer and demonstrating a good return on investment for funders.
- Helping address poverty and inequality by increasing the take-up of benefits and by offering debt advice and casework.
- Playing a part in the life of the city through engagement with local initiatives, policy work and campaigns.

Financial review

Trustees agree a budget each year and a monitoring report is submitted to each board meeting. Trustees also receive a more detailed quarterly finance report prepared by the treasurer.

The CEO and finance assistant deal with day-to-day financial matters in accordance with well established procedures. A Finance and General Purposes sub-committee, involving the Chair, Treasurer and CEO, meets at least quarterly to review progress against budget and prepare reports to the wider Trustee membership.

CIAS uses the Xero financial software package which allows trustee officers, the CEO and the financial administrator to carry out their respective roles in a hybrid working environment.

Income and expenditure

Overall income increased from £397,124 in 2020/21 to £415,093 in 2022/23. This was largely due to an increased level of unrestricted donations secured through fundraising activity. Coventry City Council continue to be the main funder, but their grant-in-aid was frozen for the fifth year in succession, representing a significant reduction in real terms particularly as interest rates are historically high.

A three-year grant from the National Lottery has been secured to support the charities Volunteer Programme. This will bring additional financial security and enhance service capacity. Feeding Britain have also confirmed they will continue to support our work in social supermarkets/grub hubs through to 31st March 2024.

Charitable expenditure continues to rise, resulting in a further reduction in the charities reserves this year. In response to a higher predicted overspend, the trustees implemented a service review. This resulted in a staff restructure that included a reduction of the CEOs working hours, reorganisation of other management/supervisory roles, a lower than inflation pay settlement and the deletion of a vacant adviser role.

While the restructure reduced overall staff costs, these still represent around 80% of total charitable expenditure. With inflation still high, and news that our core grant from the city council will be frozen for another year, a further review of budget lines has been undertaken when setting the budget for 2023/24. Savings have been identified that will not have significant impact on service delivery, but it is anticipated that reserves will be further stretched. The need to diversify funding streams is recognised by trustees as critical to safeguarding the charity's future and building capacity to meet ever increasing demand from beneficiaries.

Reserves policy

The trustees have set a reserves policy that requires reserves to be maintained at a level which ensures that core activity could continue during a period of unforeseen difficulty and that a proportion of reserves be maintained in a readily realisable form. The reserves policy is calculated and reviewed annually by the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee.

The intention of the policy is to cover liabilities including provision for redundancies, premises and other contractual costs, a reasonable level of urgent contingencies and the realistic costs that may be incurred if the charity were to be wound-up.

The trustees assess the required level of reserves on an annual basis, alongside the operating budget. The assessment takes account of the income and expenditure risk within the budget and the need to keep sufficient bank balances to be able to manage the day-to-day fluctuations of receipts and payments. Any significant changes in activities or financial obligations that could affect the level of reserves is closely monitored.

Based on risk analysis, unrestricted reserves equivalent to at least three months operating costs were agreed to be necessary (representing approximately £99,000 for 2023/24). Unrestricted reserves at 31st March 2023 are £112,414.

The trustees took a deliberate decision to invest reserves in core service delivery during recent years in recognition of the increasing need within local communities. When project funding has ended, we have endeavoured to maintain delivery and to refocus resources as necessary. After undertaking a budget review, the board have again set a deficit budget for the coming year. This will allow beneficiary need to be met while pursuing opportunities for additional resource.

Investment Policy and Performance

CIAS continues to bank with Unity Trust, an independent bank committed to supporting socially minded organisations across the UK. Investments are held with Cambridge and Counties Bank and Redwood Bank. Investments are held in the form of notice accounts so that funds can be accessed within a maximum of 120 days.

Finding a reasonable return on investment is still a major problem for the charity sector. Investments are regularly reviewed but, due to unattractive interest rates and the need to keep a level of reserves relatively liquid, potential income from these investments is limited.

Acknowledgements

The trustee would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who have supported their work in the past year, specifically:

- Coventry City Council – for their continued support of the core advice service.
- The National Lottery Community Fund – for their grant in support of our volunteer programme.
- Coventry General Charity and Coventry Church (Municipal) Charities for their one-off grants to help with running costs.
- Feeding Britain – who are supporting work to embed advice services within Social Supermarkets and community Grub Hubs in the city.
- Individual donors – A small number of people who regularly donate in support of the charities work or who make one-off donations. The trustees are extremely grateful to every one of you.

Review of the Year

Some facts and figures

Our strongest indicators of success are the outcomes we help achieve for our clients, their families and for our city. These stories of change provide greater evidence of our impact than simple outputs and help demonstrate progress in tackling poverty and inequality within Coventry and the surrounding area.

In our annual report we want to show both. So firstly, a summary of our outputs for the 2022/23 financial year include:

- We helped individuals and families to realise **reported financial gains of over £3.5 million** (up from £2.4 million in 2021/22) which we estimate is **worth at least £7 million** to the local economy as this money circulates rather than being taken out of the city.
- We **opened 2473 new files** for 2270 individuals and families. This represents an increase of over 30% on the previous financial year, even though our resources have reduced in real terms.
- We **closed 2375 files** over the same period as work was concluded.
- Our advisers completed over 11000 items of work including client interviews, research, correspondence, phone calls and other actions on behalf of our beneficiaries.
- Our public **website[3] was viewed 18392 times** by 8099 visitors in the past financial year.
- Our two main enquiry areas continue to be **welfare benefits** (73% of new files opened) and **debt/money guidance** issues (14%). Many enquiries cover multiple issues.
- 46% of clients who supplied information identified as being from a minority ethnic community.
- 59% of clients were women.
- 29% of clients told us they had a long-term illness and/or disability.

The financial gains we have helped achieved for clients helps to demonstrate the real value of our service to our clients, to the city and to our funders. Increased income and reduced indebtedness

[3] https://covadvice.org.uk

can be life-changing, having a positive impact on health and wellbeing as well as providing increased financial security and stability.

We recognise that the reported financial gains are likely to be significantly less the actual amounts realised. We base our reporting on a 52-week income projection, whereas the real impact can last for a significantly longer period and often for life. Additionally, some clients do not report outcomes to us.

The social return on investment can also not be understated. We estimate this year that our work is worth around £7 million to the city economy. We base this estimate on the local economic multiplier model[4] which recognises that people on lower incomes tend to spend their money locally, which in turn creates jobs and wealth for local businesses and other services. Additionally, financial security reduces pressure on health services and other social provision.

Information, advice, and support

Demand continues to be high, with open cases standing at 300 across the service (August 2023). Many enquiries are now received via our web enquiry form, and this has proved particularly popular with third party agencies, including family hub staff and NHS social prescribers.

Our advisers are flexible in their approach to contacting and helping clients, increasingly using WhatsApp and email to gather information and offer advice. Our web-based casework management system allows us to text clients directly from their case. It also allows us to create digital forms of authority, which clients can receive and sign via their smart phone. This allows us to help people more quickly when we are negotiating with third parties on their behalf.

However, we are not 'digital by default' and our offer of face-to-face appointments in local communities continues to be our unique selling point. We acknowledge this remains a lifeline for many people who struggle with accessing statutory agencies and their often-rigid contact methods.

While requests for help with disability related benefits remain high (PIP, child DLA and work capability assessments), the cost-of-living crisis has meant an increase in applications to the local authority Household Support Fund (HSF) as well as to charities and trust funds. In response, our Debt Advice Supervisor arranged for all staff to become 'trusted referrers' making it easier and quicker for us to help our clients. We also have support from our volunteers who can apply for HSF and charity applications on behalf of clients.

We have continued to work with Warwick University Law School. Their Public Legal Education (PLE) module has enabled us to work with two groups of students this year. Students produced a guide to help people manage their Universal Credit journal and an information video on precarious work aimed at those with unpredictable earnings (zero-hour contracts and those working in the gig economy). Both will be available on our website and distributed to partners.

For the second year running we have also welcomed an intern from the Law School. This is an opportunity for the intern to gain valuable real-life skills in an advice setting and for our charity to receive some extra support across the Summer. We look forward to this successful partnership with Warwick Law School continuing.

Our work in social supermarkets and community grub-hubs, supported by Feeding Britain, has continued to be successful. This project has seen us embed advice services within local food

[4] https://www.nefconsulting.com/what-we-do/evaluation-impact-assessment/local-multiplier-3/

provision, providing advice at an early stage and focusing on solutions to financial difficulties. By working closely with the volunteers at each location we can build trust and engage with service users at an early stage, thereby helping to prevent future problems. The success of the project has seen Feeding Britain offer additional funding through to the end of March 2024 with the hope of longer term support beyond that.

For such a small staff team, supported by a handful of dedicated volunteers, the Board is proud of the charity's achievements for individuals and families in Coventry, many of whom are faced with the real challenge of heating or eating daily. The profile of CIAS in the city has risen enormously during the years of the pandemic and is very much embedded in the life of the city and initiatives to tackle poverty and exclusion.

Our people

Our charity has seen several staff changes in the last year. We recruited a new Volunteer Manager, Daksha, thanks to funding from the National Lottery. She has already made great progress recruiting volunteers to enhance our service capacity and developing opportunities for members of our community to build skills and experience.

We also said farewell to two of our colleagues, Gillian and Uzo, who were both experienced debt advisers. Both left to pursue opportunities elsewhere. Uzo was one of our longest serving employees, coming over to us from the former Wood End advice service. We wish them both well and will miss them, along with the knowledge and expertise they brought to the service.

Recruitment of new staff has been difficult and is a common theme within the advice sector. After several rounds we took on three new advisers, two of whom were appointed in trainee and development roles; a first for our charity. All three have fitted in well and we are excited to get to know them better.

Our charity also undertook a service review this year, largely driven by increasing costs but also focusing on improving team structure and opportunities for development. Change is often unsettling, but we are now in a stronger position to continue to deliver advice in the heart of communities. We are currently offering advice in eight locations across the city, including two social supermarkets, a community centre, and several family hubs (formerly Childrens Centres). Our partners in these host organisations have told us how much they value our advisers being on hand to help clients and their own staff.

Equality and Diversity

CIAS trustees answered the call from ACEVO to sign up to eight principles to address the diversity deficit in the charity sector.[5] An action plan was produced (available on our website)by a working group of trustees, staff and volunteers and progress is monitored by the trustees.

Debt advice

We offer a face-to-face holistic debt and welfare benefits advice and casework service. This approach is unique within Coventry and not widely replicated outside the city. Delivering this service in the community has never been more important or in demand than it is now. The Money Advice

[5] ACEVO at https://www.acevo.org.uk/eight-principles-to-address-the-diversity-deficit-in-charity-leadership/

Trust reported[6] that 3.7 million more households are behind with Households bills in March 2023 compared to March 2022 and an extra 3.3 million have gone without heating over the same period.

2022/23 has been a very challenging year as we have seen increased demand and increased complexity. Demand for debt advice exceeds the capacity of our small team, and this experience is consistent with other community-based debt advice organisations across the country[7] .

As highlighted earlier, we recently lost two caseworkers both of whom were Debt Relief Order (DRO) approved intermediaries and held the Certificate in Money Advice Practice (CMAP). Fortunately, we have recently been able to recruit a new DRO intermediary and CMAP accredited adviser, Denis, and one of our existing caseworkers, Lorelle, has recently achieved her CMAP qualification. We also have a much appreciated and dedicated Volunteer Debt Caseworker, Jeremy, who has also now achieved his CMAP. These staff are working closely with our Senior Debt Caseworker, Caroline, to offer much needed casework and our two new trainee caseworkers are working through a comprehensive debt advice training programme.

Our clients usually present with benefit issues alongside their financial difficulties and debts. Deficit budgets are a growing concern in the debt advice sector[8] and organisations that provide holistic advice are essential to ensuring income is maximised. The Money Advice and Pensions Service (MAPS) have not always been explicitly supportive of this holistic approach but are beginning to recognise why this is so fundamental.

Most of our clients present with priority debts with council tax, rent and utilities being the most common. Many also have benefit overpayments (relating to DWP and the city council) resulting in direct deductions that can cause financial hardship. In recent months we have also seen an increase in clients needing help with mortgage payments as interest rates continue to rise.

A high proportion of our debt clients also have difficulties with their mental health which is statistically consistent with UK data[9]. However, without additional funding or partnership support, this can make progress challenging and sometimes overwhelming for our advisers.

We work closely with partners locally and nationally addressing debt related matters. We are an integral member of the local Council Tax Liaison Group where we discuss issues such as affordable payments and enforcement. We work closely with the family hubs and have been a central part of developing local financial wellbeing strategy. Our Senior Debt Caseworker has developed and delivered a series of 'Getting Early Help with Money Problems' webinars to statutory and community agencies across Coventry alongside partners from Citizens Advice and Central England Law Centre.

At a national level, our Senior Debt Caseworker is now part of the MAPS Expert Adviser Panel which puts us at the centre of UK discussions around debt advice challenges and opportunities. The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Poverty are due to consult with this panel shortly which we hope will result in raised awareness of issues that impact on Coventry residents and improves the chance of more positive outcomes.

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[6] https://moneyadvicetrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Money_Advice_Trust_-_Under_Pressure_report_-_June_2023-2.pdf

[7] https://wearedebtadvisers.uk/news/debt-advice-services-lack-the-capacity-to-cope-with-the-cost-of-living-crisis

[8] https://www.i-m-a.org.uk/other-services/social-policy/maps-should-help-address-causes-not-just-symptoms-of-deficit-budgets/

[9] https://www.moneyandmentalhealth.org/money-and-mental-health-facts/

Volunteer programme

Funding from the National Lottery Community Fund was secured for a three-year programme. With the support of a new volunteer manager our intention is to grow the volunteer team and reach more people who need our support. Targeting disadvantaged communities across the city, strengthening our partnerships, and reaching people at early stages to prevent issues escalating. Increasing the capacity for practical assistance, such as form filling, money advice support and grants support and so save caseworker time to focus on complex work.

Our programme will be split into two distinct phases, the first to increase the capacity of our existing volunteer programme, updating and streamlining our volunteer processes and procedures. The second phase, looking at emerging trends in volunteering, and the latest research and design a programme that can deliver: Flexible volunteer opportunities, use volunteer expertise to tackle the common issues such as digital exclusion. We will focus on volunteer retention and create more opportunities to socialise, target individuals who face barriers to volunteering and create a pipeline of trained volunteers who could progress into paid positions.

Our targets include increasing the size of our volunteer team who will give us approximately 50 hours every week. We have already made inroads to achieving this increase in capacity. We will introduce a new visual communications volunteer, who will support the development of our branding around volunteering.

In our second phase we will recruit community digital volunteers, to deliver our community events to help local residents to develop their skills to find the information, advice and support they need online, in essence helping people to help themselves.

We look forward to embedding best practice in volunteer management and being innovative in the way we work with volunteer resources. The Board would like to thank all our existing and previous volunteers for their dedication and commitment to our charity. We recognise that you give your time for free, and your support is invaluable.

Community Digital

We have delivered 3 community digital days at Foleshill Library and supported approximately 25 people with a range of queries including how to use MS Word to produce a letter related to passport renewal through to 4 older Asian women just starting their digital journey. There is high demand for support from very basic skills through to more complex queries. We will be delivering 2 more events before the end of December.

We received 10 tablet devises from the #CovConnect device bank, all 10 devices have been allocated to people who are digitally excluded. Recipients shared a variety of reasons why they need a device from being able to do online training, homework, and job searches to people being unable to use a phone because the screen is too small. We have allocated 5 Facebook Portals to Age UK who will be using them Dementia Day activities for music (past and present), games such as musical bingo, birthday reminders for members, getting in touch with family members whilst at the day centres.

We have trained 5 new Community Digital volunteers and 3 existing volunteers to support the community digital sessions. The feedback after volunteering has been positive, 'My confidence has improved, and I feel great to achieve this.'

The Future

Strategy

The Board continues to focus on the longer-term development of the charity. Entering the third year of our strategy, the key priorities are:

- **To refresh our commitment to delivering face to face (F2F) advice in the community**. Although Covid taught us that remote services are valuable, we acknowledge that our USP is community-based advice. In the coming year we aim to expand our outreach offer and roll back some of our telephone offer to ensure capacity. Other advice providers (notably Citizens Advice) have focused on a 'telephone first' model, and so we intend to use our own telephone lines as a point of access rather than the main route for advice delivery. Our online enquiry service remains popular, largely with third-party referrers, and so we will maintain this within our integrated advice model.
- **To further develop our volunteer programme**. As three years of funding have now been secured from the National Lottery, we are able to expand our programme in line with our ambitions. We now offer a range of opportunities for volunteering alongside access to NVQ qualifications and other learning opportunities.
- **Ensure that we are ready for Advice Quality Standard (AQS) re-evaluation in January 2024.** The board recognises the value of continuing to hold the AQS as it gives confidence to clients, stakeholders, and funders that high standards of service and quality of advice are in place.
- **Consider how best to deliver debt advice going forward**. We recognise the huge importance of community-based debt advice, but funding has been difficult to obtain. We already work closely with advice partners and the city council, among others, to highlight the importance of accredited debt advice in the city and will seek further opportunities for our own, and partnership, activity as the cost-of-living crisis continues.
- **To identify and implement actions to improve diversity and inclusion within the charity.** This is an ongoing activity based on the ACEVO diversity and inclusion principles[10]. Progress against identified actions is kept under review by the Board.
- **Improving focus on wellbeing.** We achieved the Foundation Level of the West Midlands Combined Authority 'Thrive at Work' programme[11] last year. We aim to achieve the Bronze Level award by the end of 2023/24 and to also improve our 'informal' wellbeing activities, including team building and engagement events.
- **Redevelop and relaunch the Advice Services Coventry public website**. Progress on this has stalled as Coventry City Council announced a review of advice provision in the city during the past year. A public website was identified as part of a city council review of advice provision in the city but, at the time of writing, this review has been 'paused'.
- **Review staff roles, resources and core advice offer.** An internal service review took place during the first six months of this financial year which resulted in a limited-service restructure and plans for a refocus on community advice, as mentioned earlier.
- **Review fundraising strategy.** We worked with Michael Mogan MBE, of Mogan & Mogan consultancy[12], to develop our strategy and support fundraising activity during the past year. This helped us to focus on what matters most and was successful in bringing in the Lottery

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[10] 'Eight principles to address the diversity deficit in charity leadership' at https://www.acevo.org.uk/eight-principles-to-address-the-diversity-deficit-in-charity-leadership/.

[11] 'Thrive at Work: About the programme' at https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/thrive/thrive-at-work/about-the-programme/

[12] https://moganandmogan.co.uk/our-people/

funding and some other smaller pots. The current climate for fundraising, particularly in the advice sector, is difficult but we continue to pursue appropriate opportunities and identify potential partnerships.

- **To consider and develop a succession strategy** - a national shortage of experienced advisers raises the question of how best to 'bring people through' as roles emerge. Our CEO is working with colleagues across the UK on the development of initiatives to tackle this national recruitment challenge as well as looking internally. The internal restructure created new 'senior roles, giving opportunities for development, and our volunteer programme will feed into this too.

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on Nov 28, 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Damon Swindell
Director & Chair of CIAS Trustee Board

Charity registration number 1015216

Company registration number 02761115 (England and Wales)

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Chairperson	Damon Swindell	
Trustees	Cllr Joseph Clifford	
	Cllr Rachel Lancaster	
	Isabelle Osbourne	
	Mark Monaghan	
	Damon Swindell	
	James Rose	(Appointed 24 October 2022)
	Zainib Hussain	(Appointed 24 October 2022)
Secretary	Alan Markey	
Charity number	1015216	
Company number	02761115	
Principal address	Oakwood House Cheylesmore Coventry West Midlands United Kingdom CV1 2HL	
Registered office	Oakwood House Cheylesmore Coventry West Midlands United Kingdom CV1 2HL	
Independent examiner	Amanda Asbury 16 Emily Allen Road Whitmore Park Coventry CV6 2PN	

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Bankers

Unity Trust
Nine Brindley Place
4 Oozells Square
Birmingham
B1 2HB

Redwood Bank
The Nexus Building
Broadway
Letchworth Garden City
SC6 3TA

Cambridge and Counties Bank
Charnwood Court
5B New Walk
Leicester
LE1 6TE

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

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COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of Coventry Independent Advice Service Limited (the charity) for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 (the 2006 Act).

Having satisfied myself that the financial statements of the charity are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). In carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of Association of Accounting Technicians, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or

2 the financial statements do not accord with those records; or

3 the financial statements do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or

4 the financial statements have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Amanda L Asbury (Nov 28, 2023 16:09 GMT)

Amanda Asbury FCCA

16 Emily Allen Road
Whitmore Park
Coventry
CV6 2PN

Dated: Nov 28, 2023

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total 2022 £
Income from:							
Donations, legacies and grants	3	336,788	39,791	376,579	330,892	48,960	379,852
Other trading activities	4	37,500	-	37,500	16,197	-	16,197
Investments	5	1,014	-	1,014	1,080	-	1,080
Total income		375,302	39,791	415,093	348,169	48,960	397,129
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	6	7,200	-	7,200	2,561	-	2,561
Charitable activities							
Advice Service	7	383,322	49,077	432,399	376,873	74,726	451,599
Total charitable expenditure		383,322	49,077	432,399	376,873	74,726	451,599
Total expenditure		390,522	49,077	439,599	379,434	74,726	454,160
Gross transfers between funds		-	-	-	569	(569)	-
Net expenditure for the year/ Net movement in funds		(15,220)	(9,286)	(24,506)	(30,696)	(26,335)	(57,031)
Fund balances at 1 April 2022		127,634	9,286	136,920	158,330	35,621	193,951
Fund balances at 31 March 2023		112,414	-	112,414	127,634	9,286	136,920

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities also complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 2006.

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Notes	2023 £	£	2022 £	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	12		3,565		4,644
Current assets					
Debtors	13	7,598		-	
Cash at bank and in hand		118,170		147,283	
		125,768		147,283	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	(16,919)		(15,007)	
Net current assets			108,849		132,276
Total assets less current liabilities			112,414		136,920
Income funds					
Restricted funds	16		-		9,286
Unrestricted funds			112,414		127,634
			112,414		136,920

The company is entitled to the exemption from the audit requirement contained in section 477 of the Companies Act 2006, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of financial statements.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on Nov 28, 2023

Damon Swindell
Trustee

Company registration number 02761115

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Coventry Independent Advice Service Limited is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is Oakwood House, Cheylesmore, Coventry, West Midlands, CV1 2HL, United Kingdom.

The charity is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England and Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees are liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charity in the event of liquidation.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the charity's [governing document], the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" ("FRS 102") and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019). The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The charity has taken advantage of the provisions in the SORP for charities not to prepare a Statement of Cash Flows.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, [modified to include the revaluation of freehold properties and to include investment properties and certain financial instruments at fair value]. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements. With regard to after 31st March 2024, the most significant area of uncertainty of the Charity is the level of grants to be received from Coventry City Council, which at the balance sheet has not been agreed beyond 31st March 2024 .

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the charity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known, and receipt is expected. If the amount is not known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

1.5 Expenditure

All expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to that expenditure, it is probable settlement is required and the amount can be measured reliably. All costs are allocated to the applicable expenditure heading that aggregate similar costs to that category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of resources, with central staff costs allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use. Other support costs are allocated based on the spread of staff costs.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Office equipment	straightline method over three years

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.7 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the charity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.8 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the charity's balance sheet when the charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors and bank loans are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Debt instruments are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the charity's contractual obligations expire or are discharged or cancelled.

1.10 Taxation

The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

1.11 Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

1.12 Retirement benefits

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

1.13 Governance costs

These include the costs attributable to the charity's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees' meetings and reimbursed expenses.

1.14 Government Grants

Government grants are recognised based on the accrual model and are measured at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are classified as relating either to revenue or to assets. Grants relating to revenue are recognised in income over the period in which the related costs are recognised. Grants relating to assets are recognised over the expected useful life of the asset. Where part of a grant relating to an asset is deferred, it is recognised as deferred income.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

3 Donations, legacies and grants

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2023	2023	2023	2022	2022	2022
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Donations and gifts	14,501	-	14,501	1,205	-	1,205
Grants received	322,287	39,791	362,078	329,687	48,960	378,647
	336,788	39,791	376,579	330,892	48,960	379,852
Grants receivable for core activities						
Coventry City Council	322,287	-	322,287	322,287	-	322,287
The Henry Smith Grant	-	-	-	-	21,500	21,500
Orbit Grant	-	-	-	-	8,285	8,285
29th May 1961 Charity	-	-	-	5,000	-	5,000
National Lottery Community Grant	-	-	-	-	9,800	9,800
Feeding Britain	-	37,500	37,500	-	9,375	9,375
Government Grants and other gramts	-	-	-	2,400	-	2,400
Other	-	2,291	2,291	-	-	-
	322,287	39,791	362,078	329,687	48,960	378,647

4 Other trading activities

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Unrestricted funds 2022 £
Full recovery cost	37,500	16,197

5 Investments

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Unrestricted funds 2022 £
Interest receivable	1,014	1,080

6 Raising funds

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Unrestricted funds 2022 £
Fundraising and publicity		
Fundraising agents	7,200	2,561
	7,200	2,561

7 Charitable activities

	Advice Service 2023 £	Advice Service 2022 £
Staff costs	339,773	374,420
Depreciation and impairment	1,079	2,101
Recruitment	1,098	705
Training and conferences	1,375	3,994
Rent, service charge and storage fees	14,990	14,782
Repairs and maintenance	43	20
Telephone	6,357	5,716
Printing, postage and stationery	5,760	4,414
Sundry expenses	39,848	18,021
Legal and professional fees	4,012	9,095
Volunteer expenses	925	2,061
Insurance, subscriptions and licences	7,248	5,638
Computer software and maintenance costs	9,741	10,482
	432,249	451,449
Share of governance costs (see note 8)	150	150
	432,399	451,599
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	383,322	376,873
Restricted funds	49,077	74,726
	432,399	451,599

8 Support costs

	Support costs £	Governance costs £	2023 £	Support costs £	Governance costs £	2022 £
Independent examiners fee	-	150	150	-	150	150
	-	150	150	-	150	150
Analysed between Charitable activities	-	150	150	-	150	150

9 Trustees

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the charity during the year.

10 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2023 Number	2022 Number
Charitable activities	13	11
Administration	2	2
Total	15	13

Employment costs	2023 £	2022 £
Wages and salaries	300,257	339,010
Social security costs	23,260	17,248
Other pension costs	16,256	18,162
	339,773	374,420

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000 during the year.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £53,901 (2022 - £56,733).

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000.

11 Taxation

The charity is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

12 Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment
	£
Cost	
At 1 April 2022	13,617
At 31 March 2023	13,617
Depreciation and impairment	
At 1 April 2022	8,973
Depreciation charged in the year	1,079
At 31 March 2023	10,052
Carrying amount	
At 31 March 2023	3,565
At 31 March 2022	4,644

13 Debtors

	2023	2022
Amounts falling due within one year:	£	£
Other debtors	2,291	-
Prepayments and accrued income	5,307	-
	7,598	-

14 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2023	2022
	£	£
Other taxation and social security	5,314	7,240
Trade creditors	8,428	2,673
Other creditors	111	-
Accruals and deferred income	3,066	5,094
	16,919	15,007

15 Retirement benefit schemes

Defined contribution schemes

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the charity in an independently administered fund.

The charge to profit or loss in respect of defined contribution schemes was £16,256 (2022 - £18,162).

16 Restricted funds

The income funds of the charity include restricted funds comprising the following unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust for specific purposes:

	Balance at 1 April 2021	Movement in funds: Incoming resources	Movement in funds: Resources expended	Movement in funds: Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2022	Movement in funds: Incoming resources	Movement in funds: Resources expended	Balance at 31 March 2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
The Henry Smith Charity Grant	8,798	21,500	(30,298)	-	-	-	-	-
Orbit Grant	9,416	8,285	(18,618)	917	-	-	-	-
TNL Community Fund	3,157	-	(2,402)	(755)	-	-	-	-
Heart of England Winter Well Being Grant	8,000	-	(7,269)	(731)	-	-	-	-
Heart of England and Coventry Building Society Grant	6,250	-	(6,250)	-	-	-	-	-
Feeding Britain	-	9,375	(9,375)	-	-	37,500	(37,500)	-
TNL Community Fund 2	-	9,800	(514)	-	9,286	-	(9,286)	-
TNL Community Fund 3	-	-	-	-	-	2,291	(2,291)	-
	35,621	48,960	(74,726)	(569)	9,286	39,791	(49,077)	-

Feeding Britain – this grant supports advice and support work across three of the social supermarkets in the city.
National Lottery Community Fund – this grant supports our Volunteer Programme, including the salary of our Volunteer Manager and administrative support.

17 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total 2023	Unrestricted funds 2022	Restricted funds 2022	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fund balances at 31 March 2023 are represented by:						
Tangible assets	3,565	-	3,565	4,644	-	4,644
Current assets/(liabilities)	108,849	-	108,849	106,500	25,776	132,276
	112,414	-	112,414	111,144	25,776	136,920

18 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2022 - none).

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE

England & Wales - Charity number 1015216

Accounts

Charity registration number 1015216

Company registration number 02761115 (England and Wales)

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Chairperson	John Lowe	
Trustees	John Lowe Cllr Joseph Clifford Cllr Rachel Lancaster Isabelle Osbourne Michael Fell Mark Monaghan Damon Swindell	 (Appointed 22 October 2021)
Secretary	Alan Markey	
Charity number	1015216	
Company number	02761115	
Principal address	Oakwood House Cheylesmore Coventry West Midlands United Kingdom CV1 2HL	
Registered office	Oakwood House Cheylesmore Coventry West Midlands United Kingdom CV1 2HL	
Independent examiner	McGlone Wardzynski Limited 14 Queens Road Eagle House Coventry CV1 3EG	

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Bankers

Unity Trust
Nine Brindley Place
4 Oozells Square
Birmingham
B1 2HB

Redwood Bank
The Nexus Building
Broadway
Letchworth Garden City
SC6 3TA

Cambridge and Counties Bank
Charnwood Court
5B New Walk
Leicester
LE1 6TE

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

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COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

TRUSTEES REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purpose of the Companies Act 2016, present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's (governing document), the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)".

Structure, Governance and Management

Coventry Independent Advice Service (CIAS) is a charitable company. The Memorandum of Association establishes the objects and powers of the charitable company which is governed by the Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up, members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Recruitment and appointment of directors

The trustees are appointed by ordinary resolution or by a decision of the existing trustees. Under the Articles of Association, one third of the directors are required to retire by rotation at each Annual General Meeting at which time they may seek re-election.

Charity trustees are the people who share ultimate responsibility for governing the charity and directing how it is managed and run. During the past year the trustees have been meeting every 1-2 months to review performance and budgets as well as overseeing the broad strategy of CIAS. CIAS operates in accordance with documented policies and procedures which are designed to ensure that these responsibilities are fully met. Day to day management of activities is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who reports directly to the trustee board.

Trustee induction and training

CIAS has a recruitment process for new trustees which includes a written application form followed by an initial meeting with the Chair and CEO. Trustee vacancies are advertised on the CIAS website (https://covadvice.org.uk) and promoted through Voluntary Action Coventry and social media accounts.

The induction process for new trustees comprises a further meeting with the Chair and CEO, followed by attendance at a meeting of the trustees as an observer. New trustees are given access to previous board papers, recent accounts and annual reports, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Charity Commission Guidance (CC3). We also ask new trustees to complete the NCVO e-learning module covering the roles and duties of trustees (https://booking.ncvo.org.uk/training/event_series/e-learning).

Risk Management

CIAS agrees a three-year strategic plan and annually reviews its risk management plan to ensure strategic, business, and operational risks are covered. CIAS has detailed Health and Safety, Risk Management and Safeguarding policies as well as other policies to ensure that risks are identified and managed. Public and professional liability insurance is held at a level recommended by our membership body, AdviceUK, along with appropriate levels of insurance against other identified risks, such as fire and theft.

Access to 24/7 human resources and health and safety support is provided through a paid subscription to Croner HR. This support helps reduce exposure to risk in these key areas. Access to governance support through membership of professional bodies including AdviceUK and NCVO is also in place.

Information Assurance and Data Protection

CIAS has policies to effectively manage compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which are reviewed and updated regularly. All staff receive GDPR training relevant to their roles, and processes are in place to ensure that IT systems are secure and comply with recognised cyber security standards.

The secure Office365 cloud-based environment is used for day-to-day operations and the online case management system, AdvicePro, is used to secure all client information and case files. Both services are fully assured and compliant with international data security standards. Office365 system was upgraded in 2021 to take advantage of enhanced security and protection options as more people were regularly working from home. Client data held in AdvicePro is securely stored in the UK within a robust, secure operations centre compliant with Information Security Code of Practice ISO27001, and automatically backed up daily.

Liabilities

The main liabilities are for staffing, pensions, and premises costs. Appropriate insurance is maintained to cover all identified liabilities and we have a reserves policy in place to ensure adequate protection (see under ‘Financial Review’ below).

Trustees’ responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the charity’s financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the trustees should follow best practice and:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and;
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity and enable them to ascertain the financial position of the charity, and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees are responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.
CIAS trustees continue to scrutinise the organisation’s finances in detail and financial statements are presented at each board meetings. All financial decisions are based on a full understanding of the charity’s reserves position and the impact that future income and expenditure has on the overall financial situation.

Public Benefit Statement

In setting objectives and planning activities the trustees have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 by giving due consideration to the Charity Commission’s public benefit guidance. In particular, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set.

The charity’s core activities are to provide information, advice and support around welfare benefits, debt, and other social welfare issues for the benefit of the community in Coventry and surrounding areas. Business planning and strategic development keeps these core activities at heart with the aim of focusing work on the most disadvantaged and financially excluded sections of local communities.

Objectives and Activities

CIAS charitable objectives are to promote any charitable purpose for the public benefit of communities in Coventry and the surrounding areas, predominantly by providing information, advice, public legal education, and other support to relieve poverty and hardship, reduce inequality and improve quality of life.

Main activities

Help individuals to identify and claim benefits, to challenge benefit decisions, to advise on strategies for dealing with problem debt, to negotiate with creditors and to provide information and support on a range of other social welfare issues. The service is free and confidential.

The service model is focused on reaching people where they live, in their own neighbourhoods, and in areas of greatest need. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, service was delivered from community outreach venues across the city via a mix of ‘drop-in’ sessions and pre-booked appointments. When pandemic restrictions were in place activities were focused on remote delivery, by telephone and digitally. Since restrictions were lifted, face-to-face offering has gradually increased focusing on meeting the needs of people who most need that type of support. A telephone advice line has been maintained and access to advisers via an online enquiry form.

Over the past year a range of activities have been undertaken to help meet the charitable objectives, including:

- Developing new face-to-face advice services, working closely with community organisations, including Family Hubs and emerging Social Supermarkets, to ensure these ‘in person’ services are targeted on those who need them most.
- Restating focus on ‘early help’ and working with partners to focus on meeting community need for advice and information before problems reach crisis point.
- Maintaining and developing accessible advice and information services for communities via telephone, email, and online enquiry.
- Maximising the income of individuals and families through increased benefit take-up and support with problem debt.
- Maintaining and developing a public website, including video advice resources developed in partnership with students on the Public Legal Education module at the University of Warwick Law School.
- Seeking opportunities to help enhance service offer and demonstrating a good ‘return on investment’ for funders.
- Helping address poverty and inequality by increasing the take-up of benefits and by offering debt advice and casework.
- Recruiting and supporting volunteers to assist with service delivery and aid their own personal and professional development.
- Playing a part in the life of the city through engagement with local initiatives, policy work and campaigns.

Financial review

Trustees set the budget each year and a finance report is submitted to each board meeting. Trustees also receive a quarterly monitoring report. The Xero financial software package has been implemented this year which has given the additional flexibility required, particularly in a hybrid working environment.

The CEO and finance assistant deal with day-to-day financial matters in accordance with well established procedures. A Finance and General Purposes sub-committee, involving the Chair, Treasurer and CEO, meets at least quarterly to review progress against budget and prepare reports to the wider Trustee membership.

Overall income reduced from £498,075 in 2020/21 to £397,124 in 2021/22, a reduction of around 20%. In the prior year access to several one-off and unrestricted grants was provided to support work during the pandemic and this largely explains the overall reduction in income. Coventry City Council continue to be the main funder, but this grant was frozen for the fourth year in succession.

Restricted income fell this year because of multi-year project funding coming to an end. The support of Feeding Britain for a two-year funded project (see below) has been secured and the charity has benefited from shorter term restricted funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Staff costs continue to be the largest area of expenditure, representing around 86% of core costs this year. With inflation on the rise, and with no increase in unrestricted funding, these costs are only likely to rise further. Each of the budget lines for the coming year have been reviewed and identified savings that will have the least impact on service delivery. However, the need to diversify funding streams is recognised by the Board as crucial to safeguard the charity's future and build capacity to meet ever increasing demand.

Reserves policy

The trustees have set a reserves policy that requires reserves to be maintained at a level which ensures that core activity could continue during a period of unforeseen difficulty and that a proportion of reserves be maintained in a readily realisable form. The reserves policy is calculated and reviewed annually by the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee.

The intention of the policy is to cover liabilities including provision for redundancies, premises and other contractual costs, a reasonable level of urgent contingencies and the realistic costs that may be incurred if the charity were to be wound-up.

The trustees assess the required level of reserves on an annual basis, alongside the operating budget. The assessment takes account of the income and expenditure risk within the budget and the need to keep sufficient bank balances to be able to manage the day-to-day fluctuations of receipts and payments. Any significant changes in activities or financial obligations that could affect the level of reserves is closely monitored.

Based on risk analysis, unrestricted reserves equivalent to at least three months operating costs were agreed to be necessary (representing approximately £96,000 for the 2022/23 financial year ahead). The level of unrestricted reserves at the end of 2021/22 (£127,634) represents around four months operating costs.

The trustees took a deliberate decision to invest reserves in core service delivery during recent years in recognition of the increasing need within local communities. When project funding has ended, we have endeavoured to maintain delivery and to refocus resources as necessary. After undertaking a budget review, the board have again set a deficit budget for the coming year. This will allow beneficiary need to be met while pursuing opportunities for additional resource.

Investment Policy and Performance

CIAS continues to bank with Unity Trust, an independent bank committed to supporting socially minded organisations across the UK. Investments are held with Cambridge and Counties Bank and Redwood Bank. Investments are held in the form of notice accounts so that funds can be accessed within a maximum of 120 days.

Finding a reasonable return on investment is still a major problem for the charity sector. Investments are regularly reviewed but, due to continuing low levels of interest rates, income from these investments is limited.

Acknowledgements

The Board would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who have supported our work in the past year, specifically:

- Coventry City Council – for their continued support of the core advice service
- The 29th May Charitable Trust – who have awarded a grant in each of the last three financial years to help cover the costs of AdvicePro software.
- The National Lottery Community Fund – who awarded a grant towards the IT and training needs of volunteers.
- Coventry General Charity and Coventry Church (Municipal) Charities for their one-off grants to help with running costs.
- Orbit – who have supported work with their tenants across the city.
- The Henry Smith Charity – for their support of the volunteering programme over the past three years.
- Feeding Britain – who are supporting work to embed advice services within Social Supermarkets and community Grub Hubs in the city.
- Individual donors – A small number of people who regularly donate in support of work or who make one-off donations. We are extremely grateful to every one of you.

Review of the Year

Information, advice and support

As lockdown restrictions continued into 2021, staff continued to largely work from home. As restrictions relaxed, a hybrid working policy was introduced, allowing flexibility of work location when in-person services were not being delivered. When restrictions fully relaxed, staff were encouraged to attend the office more regularly to help build team moral and restore a more interpersonal working relationship.

The remote service delivery methods introduced during lockdown (i.e. telephone and digital advice) continued to be popular with many beneficiaries. Positive feedback was received on easier access compared to waiting in a queue at a physical venue. However, for many beneficiaries it was recognised that these remote advice methods were not the best for them, and so activities were focused on reintroducing face to face services in partnership with community organisations so that that the form of advice for the people who need it most could be prioritised. This hybrid approach proved successful and won plaudits from beneficiaries and from community partners.

CIAS achievements are fully detailed in a separate impact report for 2021/22 that will be made available on the website and provided to supporters and funders. In summary, achievements for the financial year include:

- Opening 1762 new files for 1517 individuals and families. Closing 1642 files, as work was concluded, over the same period.
- The two main enquiry areas continue to be welfare benefits and welfare rights (76% of new files opened) and debt/money guidance issues (14%).
- The two main benefit enquiry areas were Personal Independence Payment (30%) and Universal Credit (18%). Many benefit enquiries covered multiple issues.
- Nearly 16% of all debt enquiries were due to overpayments of social security benefits and a further 14% were due to rent and council tax arrears.
- Clients reported over £550,000 of debt in total.
- We helped individuals and families to realise reported financial gains of over £2.4 million which we estimate is worth at least £5 million to the local economy as this money circulates rather than being taken out of the city.
- 42% of clients who supplied information identified as being from a minority ethnic community.
- 59% of clients were women.
- 37% of clients told us they had a long-term illness and/or disability.
- The website was viewed over 13,500 times in the past financial year.
- Over 11,000 items of work were completed for clients including interviews, research, correspondence, phone calls and other actions.

Calculation of financial gains for clients (£2.4 million as stated above) is a significant indicator of the value for money we offer for funders, as well as the obvious benefit to individuals and families in the city. Increased income and reduced indebtedness can be life-changing, having a positive impact on health and wellbeing as well as providing increased financial security.

The Board recognises that the figure quoted for financial gains is likely to be significantly less than the actual amount realised as it is based on reported one-off gains plus a projection of entitlement over a 52-week period. Many clients are in receipt of benefits for much longer periods than this and, additionally, some clients do not report the outcome of our work with them. Social return on investment is considerably higher as there are wider impacts on the economy and non-financial outcomes to consider.

The team of advisers have noted a steady increase in complex and multiple advice needs along with a significant increase for practical support. Many clients have additional needs because of mental health problems, for example, or because English isn’t their first language or perhaps because they are digitally excluded. Cuts in support services in recent years have led to increased demands on services such as CIAS and, while we have endeavoured to meet some of these challenges with the support of our volunteers, problems with capacity continue.

Work funded by Orbit, originally focused on the Tanyard Farm area of Coventry but later expanded to encompass all Orbit tenants in the city, continued until October 2021. Although very successful, we were unable to secure continuation funding for the work beyond that point. A good relationship is maintained with Orbit and it is hoped both organisations can work together again in future. Many clients are tenants of registered social landlords (RSLs) in the city, and we are happy to explore opportunities to work closely with other providers too.

Late in the financial year a two-year programme was launched, supported by Feeding Britain, which seeks to embed advice services within three of the Social Supermarkets and community Grubs Hubs in the city. Although it is early days, initial results are positive. By working closely with the volunteers at each location we can build trust and engage with service users at an early stage, thereby helping to prevent future problems. The Board look forward to reporting more on this work next year.

For such a small staff team, supported by a handful of dedicated volunteers, the Board is proud of the charity's achievements for individuals and families in Coventry, many of whom are faced with the real challenge of heating or eating daily. The profile of CIAS in the city has risen enormously during the years of the pandemic and is very much embedded in the life of the city and initiatives to tackle poverty and exclusion.

The Board would like to thank all of staff for their hard work and commitment, particularly in the face of the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Equality and Diversity

In response to the Racial Diversity in the Charity Sector report, CIAS trustees answered the call from ACEVO to sign up to eight principles to address the diversity deficit in the charity sector (https://www.acevo.org.uk/eight-principles-to-address-the-diversity-deficit-in-charity-leadership/). A working group, including trustees, staff and volunteers, met to give feedback and ideas on how the charity could improve its focus on diversity and inclusion. This resulted in an action plan focusing on reviewing and improving CIAS working practices.

Volunteer programme

The direct funding for a volunteer programme, with thanks to The Henry Smith Charity, ended in December 2021. Due to some efficiencies and judicious use of reserves this programme was maintained to the end of the financial year. This enabled CIAS to continue to offer opportunities for volunteers to help with tasks such as completing benefit claim forms for clients, assisting with preparing financial statements as part of the debt advice process, offering administrative support, and working on social media.

To date, we have been unable to secure continuation funding, but the Board has recognised the value of volunteering to our charity as part of its new three-year strategy. Additional resource is being sought, that will help ensure that volunteering opportunities are part of our core service offer in the future.

The Board would like to thank all our existing and previous volunteers for their dedication and commitment to our charity. We recognise that you give your time for free, and your support is invaluable.

The Future

COVID-19

Although COVID has not gone away, in common with much of wider society CIAS has moved out of restrictions and advisers are able to offer a mix of face to face and remote services in line with the Board approved strategy. The period has been unprecedented, and we were fortunate to attract funding that enabled us to navigate the past two years. Unfortunately, as we move into the 2022/23 financial year, much of this funding has disappeared and many Trusts and Foundations are reviewing their own future strategies.

A lot was learned from the pandemic. Long-considered ideas for increasing the use of technology were implemented and the continued opportunities for hybrid working has had a largely positive impact on our staff. This learning will be carried forward into whatever future transpires!

Future Initiatives

The Board continues to focus on the longer-term development of the charity. Entering the second year of a three-year strategy, areas of progress and work to come are detailed below.

The key priorities are:

- **To refresh the commitment to delivering face to face (F2F) advice in the community**. We have developed several new face-to-face advice services at Family Hubs, Social Supermarkets/Grub Hubs and Community Centres. The core advice offer is integrated with city-wide work around early help and place-based working. This activity is supported by our telephone Adviceline and online enquiry system which enables people to be helped using the most appropriate channel for them and for resources to be focussed most effectively.
- **To identify and secure funding to continue development of the volunteer programme**. As indicated earlier in this report, the volunteer programme continues at a reduced scale. Focus is on securing additional funding to expand the programme so that the increasing need for support within local communities can be met. Additional training to volunteers, including the opportunity to achieve recognised NVQ qualifications is planned.
- **Ensure that CIAS is ready for Advice Quality Standard (AQS) re-evaluation in January 2022 and can achieve the recognised standard**. Following an independent assessment, CIAS was awarded the AQS for a further two years in recognition of the high standards of service and quality of advice on welfare benefits and debt.

Further objectives over the medium to longer term were also identified:

- **Undertaking a feasibility study into options for delivery of debt advice going forward**. Working closely with advice partners and the city council, among others, to flag the importance of accredited debt advice in the city. As the cost-of-living crisis deepens, the need for this advice becomes ever more important and opportunities to develop capacity are being investigated. Work on this front will continue through 2022/23.
- **To identify and implement actions to improve diversity and inclusion within the charity.** Trustees undertook a piece of work during the year to identify actions based on the ACEVO diversity and inclusion principles. (‘Eight principles to address the diversity deficit in charity leadership’ at https://www.acevo.org.uk/eight-principles-to-address-the-diversity-deficit-in-charity-leadership/.) Progress against these actions is kept under review by the Board.
- **Improving focus on wellbeing.** We signed up for the West Midlands Combined Authority ‘Thrive at Work’ programme (V https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/thrive/thrive-at-work/about-the-programme/) and achieved the Foundation Level this year in recognition of this commitment. We are now working towards achieving the Bronze Level award in 2022/23. Additionally, an Employee Assistance Programme was introduced, through Health Assured (https://www.healthassured.org), that offers 24/7 support to all staff, volunteers and their families and is completely free to use.

- **Redevelop and relaunch the Advice Services Coventry public website**. No progress has been made to date.
- **Review staff roles, resources and core advice offer** – to ensure that demand can continue to be met in the most effective ways possible. An internal service review commenced in March 2022 and will be covered in next year's annual report.
- **Review fundraising strategy** - ensuring shared clarity of purpose throughout the charity with a focus on seeking opportunities to 'do more of what we do best' and taking services to new people and communities. To help progress this ambition Mogan and Mogan have been engaged, a well-respected and successful Coventry based fundraising consultancy, to help develop the funding strategy further during 2022/23.
- **To consider and develop a succession strategy** - a national shortage of experienced advisers raises the question of how best to 'bring people through' as roles emerge. Focus is required on succession at all levels of the charity to help safeguard against future gaps in service. It is intended to engage with local, regional, and national bodies to consider opportunities for developing paid internships and training roles, as well as looking at the charity's organisational structure and how routes to progression might be created.

The trustees report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

John Lowe

John Lowe (Sep 9, 2022 09:28 GMT+1)

John Lowe
Chair of Trustees
Dated: 5 September 2022

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of Coventry Independent Advice Service Limited (the charity) for the year ended 31 March 2022.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 (the 2006 Act).

Having satisfied myself that the financial statements of the charity are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). In carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of Association of Accounting Technicians, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or

2 the financial statements do not accord with those records; or

3 the financial statements do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or

4 the financial statements have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

James Rose

James Rose (Sep 12, 2022 08:07 GMT+1)

James Rose FMAAT

14 Queens Road
Eagle House
Coventry
CV1 3EG

Dated: 6 September 2022

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total 2022 £	Unrestricted funds 2021 £	Restricted funds 2021 £	Total 2021 £
Income from:							
Donations, legacies and grants	**3**	330,892	48,960	379,852	381,193	104,271	485,464
Other trading activities	**4**	16,197	-	16,197	11,277	-	11,277
Investments	**5**	1,080	-	1,080	1,334	-	1,334
Total income		348,169	48,960	397,129	393,804	104,271	498,075
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	**6**	2,561	-	2,561	-	-	-
Charitable activities							
Advice Service	**7**	376,873	74,726	451,599	368,594	80,868	449,462
Total charitable expenditure		376,873	74,726	451,599	368,594	80,868	449,462
Total expenditure		379,434	74,726	454,160	368,594	80,868	449,462
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers		(31,265)	(25,766)	(57,031)	25,210	23,403	48,613
Gross transfers between funds		569	(569)	-	2,545	(2,545)	-
Net (expenditure)/income for the year/ Net movement in funds		(30,696)	(26,335)	(57,031)	27,755	20,858	48,613
Fund balances at 1 April 2021		158,330	35,621	193,951	130,575	14,763	145,338
Fund balances at 31 March 2022		127,634	9,286	136,920	158,330	35,621	193,951

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities also complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 2006.

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MARCH 2022

	Notes	2022 £	2022 £	2021 £	2021 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**12**		4,644		3,497
Current assets					
Debtors	**13**	-		6,806	
Cash at bank and in hand		147,283		202,951	
		147,283		209,757	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**14**	(15,007)		(19,303)	
Net current assets			132,276		190,454
Total assets less current liabilities			136,920		193,951
Income funds					
Restricted funds	**16**		9,286		35,621
Unrestricted funds			127,634		158,330
			136,920		193,951

The company is entitled to the exemption from the audit requirement contained in section 477 of the Companies Act 2006, for the year ended 31 March 2022.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of financial statements.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 5 September 2022

John Lowe

John Lowe (Sep 9, 2022 09:28 GMT+1)

John Lowe
Trustee

Company registration number 02761115

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Coventry Independent Advice Service Limited is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is Oakwood House, Cheylesmore, Coventry, West Midlands, CV1 2HL, United Kingdom.

The charity is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England and Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees are liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charity in the event of liquidation.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the charity's [governing document], the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 “The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland” (“FRS 102”) and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019). The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The charity has taken advantage of the provisions in the SORP for charities not to prepare a Statement of Cash Flows.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, [modified to include the revaluation of freehold properties and to include investment properties and certain financial instruments at fair value]. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the charity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known, and receipt is expected. If the amount is not known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

1.5 Expenditure

All expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to that expenditure, it is probable settlement is required and the amount can be measured reliably. All costs are allocated to the applicable expenditure heading that aggregate similar costs to that category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of resources, with central staff costs allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use. Other support costs are allocated based on the spread of staff costs.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Office equipment	straighline method over three years

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.7 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the charity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.8 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the charity's balance sheet when the charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors and bank loans are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Debt instruments are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the charity's contractual obligations expire or are discharged or cancelled.

1.10 Taxation

The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

1.11 Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

1.12 Retirement benefits

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

1.13 Governance costs

These include the costs attributable to the charity's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees' meetings and reimbursed expenses.

1.14 Government Grants

Government grants are recognised based on the accrual model and are measured at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are classified as relating either to revenue or to assets. Grants relating to revenue are recognised in income over the period in which the related costs are recognised. Grants relating to assets are recognised over the expected useful life of the asset. Where part of a grant relating to an asset is deferred, it is recognised as deferred income.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

3 Donations, legacies and grants

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2022	**2022**	**2022**	2021	2021	2021
	£	**£**	**£**	£	£	£
Donations and gifts	1,205	-	1,205	2,037	-	2,037
Grants received	329,687	48,960	378,647	379,156	104,271	483,427
	330,892	48,960	379,852	381,193	104,271	485,464
Grants receivable for core activities						
Coventry City Council	322,287	-	322,287	322,287	-	322,287
The Henry Smith Grant	-	21,500	21,500	-	41,500	41,500
Orbit Grant	-	8,285	8,285	-	33,391	33,391
29th May 1961 Charity	5,000	-	5,000	5,000	-	5,000
Heart of England Grants	-	-	-	10,000	10,000	20,000
National Lottery Community Grant	-	9,800	9,800	-	4,380	4,380
Coventry Buidling Society & Heart of England Grant	-	-	-	-	10,000	10,000
Doing Things Differently	-	-	-	-	5,000	5,000
Feeding Britain	-	9,375	9,375	-	-	-
Government Grants and other gramts	2,400	-	2,400	41,869	-	41,869
	329,687	48,960	378,647	379,156	104,271	483,427

4 Other trading activities

	Unrestricted funds	Unrestricted funds
	2022	2021
	£	£
Full recovery cost	16,197	11,275
Other income	-	2
Other trading activities	16,197	11,277

5 Investments

	Unrestricted funds	Unrestricted funds
	2022	2021
	£	£
Interest receivable	1,080	1,334

6 Raising funds

	Unrestricted funds	Total
	2022	2021
	£	£
Fundraising and publicity		
Fundraising agents	2,561	-
	2,561	-

7 Charitable activities

	Advice Service 2022 £	Advice Service 2021 £
Staff costs	374,420	373,541
Depreciation and impairment	2,101	1,016
Recruitment	705	600
Training and conferences	3,994	3,199
Rent, service charge and storage fees	14,782	23,524
Repairs and maintenance	20	133
Telephone	5,716	5,639
Printing, postage and stationery	4,414	4,296
Sundry expenses	18,021	15,043
Legal and professional fees	9,095	7,795
Volunteer expenses	2,061	335
Insurance, subscriptions and licences	5,638	2,007
Equipment	-	2,663
Computer software and maintenance costs	10,482	9,521
	451,449	449,312
Share of governance costs (see note 8)	150	150
	451,599	449,462
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	376,873	368,594
Restricted funds	74,726	80,868
	451,599	449,462

8 Support costs

	Support costs £	Governance costs £	2022 £	Support costs £	Governance costs £	2021 £
Independent examiners fee	-	150	150	-	150	150
	-	150	150	-	150	150
Analysed between Charitable activities	-	150	150	-	150	150

9 Trustees

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the charity during the year.

10 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2022 Number	2021 Number
Charitable activities	11	10
Administration	2	3
Total	13	13

Employment costs	2022 £	2021 £
Wages and salaries	339,010	332,642
Social security costs	17,248	23,702
Other pension costs	18,162	17,197
	374,420	373,541

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000 during the year.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £56,733 (2021 - £56,168).

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000.

11 Taxation

The charity is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

12 Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment
	£
Cost	
At 1 April 2021	13,818
Additions	6,165
Disposals	(6,366)
At 31 March 2022	13,617
Depreciation and impairment	
At 1 April 2021	10,321
Depreciation charged in the year	5,018
Eliminated in respect of disposals	(6,366)
At 31 March 2022	8,973
Carrying amount	
At 31 March 2022	4,644
At 31 March 2021	3,497

13 Debtors

	2022	2021
Amounts falling due within one year:	£	£
Prepayments and accrued income	-	6,806

14 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2022	2021
	£	£
Other taxation and social security	7,240	5,621
Trade creditors	2,673	7,635
Accruals and deferred income	5,094	6,047
	15,007	19,303

15 Retirement benefit schemes

Defined contribution schemes

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the charity in an independently administered fund.

The charge to profit or loss in respect of defined contribution schemes was £18,162 (2021 - £17,197).

16 Restricted funds

The income funds of the charity include restricted funds comprising the following unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust for specific purposes:

		Movement in funds				Movement in funds			
	Balance at 1 April 2020	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2021	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 31 March 2022
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
The Henry Smith Charity Grant	4,861	41,500	(37,563)	-	8,798	21,500	(30,298)	-	-
Orbit Grant	4,107	33,391	(28,082)	-	9,416	8,285	(18,618)	917	-
Tampon Tax Community Fund	5,795	-	(5,795)	-	-	-	-	-	-
TNL Community Fund	-	4,380	(1,223)	-	3,157	-	(2,402)	(755)	-
Heart of England Winter Well Being Grant	-	10,000	(2,000)	-	8,000	-	(7,269)	(731)	-
Heart of England and Coventry Building Society Grant	-	10,000	(3,750)	-	6,250	-	(6,250)	-	-
Heart of England Doing Things Differently Grant	-	5,000	(2,455)	(2,545)	-	-	-	-	-
Feeding Britain	-	-	-	-	-	9,375	(9,375)	-	-
TNL Community Fund 2	-	-	-	-	-	9,800	(514)	-	9,286
	14,763	104,271	(80,868)	(2,545)	35,621	48,960	(74,726)	(569)	9,286

The Henry Smith Charity Grant - volunteer development project.

Orbit Grant - funds a project to encourage benefit take-up on the Tanyard Farm estate in Coventry.

Tampon Tax Community Fund - specific project to projects that improve the lives of disadvantaged women and girls.

TNL Community Funds - fund a new telephony system and related costs.

Heart of England Winter Wellbeing Fund - support work with food networks and emerging Social Supermarkets.

Heart of England & Coventry Building Society Grant - support our debt advice work.

Heart of England Doing Things Differently Grant - support our debt advice work.

17 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2021 - none).

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE

England & Wales - Charity number 1015216

Accounts

Charity Registration No. 1015216

Company Registration No. 02761115 (England and Wales)

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Chairperson	John Lowe
Trustees	John Lowe Cllr Joseph Clifford Cllr Rachel Lancaster Isabelle Osbourne Michael Fell Reverend Simon Betteridge Mark Monaghan
Secretary	Alan Markey
Charity number	1015216
Company number	02761115
Principal address	Oakwood House Cheylesmore Coventry West Midlands United Kingdom CV1 2HL
Registered office	Oakwood House Cheylesmore Coventry West Midlands United Kingdom CV1 2HL
Independent examiner	McGlone Wardzynski Limited Eagle House 14 Queens Road Coventry West Midlands United Kingdom CV1 3EG

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Bankers

Unity Trust
Nine Brindley Place
4 Oozells Square
Birmingham
B1 2HB

Redwood Bank
The Nexus Building
Broadway
Letchworth Garden City
SC6 3TA

Cambridge and Counties Bank
Charnwood Court
5B New Walk
Leicester
LE1 6TE

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

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COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

TRUSTEES REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purpose of the Companies Act 2016, present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's (governing document), the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)".

Structure, Governance and Management

Coventry Independent Advice Service (CIAS) is a charitable company. The Memorandum of Association establishes the objects and powers of the charitable company which is governed by the Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up, members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Recruitment and appointment of directors

The trustees are appointed by ordinary resolution of the Charity or by the existing directors. Only members of the Charity can be appointed as directors. Under the requirements of the Articles of Association one third of the directors are required to retire by rotation after which they must be re-elected at the next Annual General Meeting.

During the past year the trustees have been meeting every 1-2 months to review performance and budgets as well as overseeing the strategy of CIAS. The trustees are responsible for the charity's finances and employment of the staff team. CIAS operates in accordance with its documented policies and procedures which are designed to ensure that these responsibilities are fully met. Day to day management of activities is delegated to the Director of Service who reports to the trustee board.

Trustee induction and training

The induction process for any newly appointed trustee comprises of an initial meeting with the Director of Service, together with attendance at a meeting of the trustees as an observer. New trustees are given access to previous board papers, recent accounts and annual reports, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Charity Commission Guidance (CC3).

Risk Management

CIAS has a strategic plan, combined with a financial risk management plan to assess any strategic, business, or operational risks. CIAS has detailed Health and Safety, Risk Management and Safeguarding policies as well as other policies to ensure that risks are identified and managed. All risk key policies are reviewed at least annually and updated as necessary. Public and professional liability insurance is held at a level recommended by our membership body, AdviceUK, along with appropriate levels of insurance against other identified risks, such as fire and theft.

Information Assurance and Data Protection

CIAS has policies to effectively manage compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which are reviewed and updated regularly. All staff receive GDPR training relevant to their roles, and we make sure that our IT systems are secure and comply with recognised cyber security standards.

We use the secure Office365 cloud-based environment for day-to-day operations and use the online case management system, AdvicePro, to secure all client information and case files. Both services are fully assured and compliant with international data security standards. Our Office365 system was upgraded this year to take advantage of enhanced security and protection options as more people were regularly working from home.

Liabilities

This charity has certain financial liabilities including paying salaries, meeting pension obligations, leasing equipment and premises costs. We also have obligations to meet any agreed service delivery targets.

This Board has adhered to this policy at all times during the period reported. CIAS trustees scrutinise the organisation's finances in detail and financial statements are presented at each meeting so that decisions are based on a full understanding of our reserves position and the impact that future income and expenditure has on our overall financial position

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the trustees should follow best practice and:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and;
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity and enable them to ascertain the financial position of the charity, and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees are responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Public Benefit Statement

In setting our objectives and planning our activities the trustees have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 by giving due consideration to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance. In particular, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

Our charitable objectives are to promote any charitable purpose for the public benefit of communities in Coventry and the surrounding areas, predominantly by providing information, advice, public education and other support to relieve poverty and hardship, reduce inequality and improve quality of life. Our business planning, development and operational activity are carried out with these core objectives at heart and with the aim of focusing our work on the most disadvantaged and financially excluded sections of our society.

Objectives and Activities

Main activities

We help individuals to identify and claim benefits, to challenge benefit decisions, to advise on strategies for dealing with problem debt, to negotiate with creditors and to provide information and support on a range of other social welfare issues. The service is free and confidential.

Our service model is focused on reaching people where they live, in their own neighbourhoods, and in areas of greatest need. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, our service was delivered from community outreach venues across the city via a mix of 'drop-in' sessions and pre-booked appointments. Since the pandemic, we have been delivering our service remotely, by telephone and digitally. Over the year we have undertaken a range of activities to help meet our charitable objectives, including:

- Maintaining and developing accessible advice and information services for communities via telephone, email and other digital means
- Maximising the income of individuals and families through increased benefit take-up and support with problem debt;
- Maintaining and developing a public website;
- Seeking funding opportunities to help enhance our service offer and demonstrating a good 'return on investment' for our funders;
- Helping address poverty and inequality by increasing the take-up of benefits and by offering debt advice and casework;
- Recruiting and supporting volunteers to assist with service delivery and aid their own personal and professional development; and
- Playing a part in the life of the city through engagement with local initiatives, policy work and campaigns.

Financial review

Trustees set the budget each year and normally monitor this quarterly. The Director of Service and finance assistant deal with day-to-day financial matters in accordance with well established procedures. A finance sub-committee meeting, involving the Chair, Treasurer and Director of Service, is held at least quarterly to review progress against budget and prepare reports to the wider Trustee membership.

Investment Policy and Performance

CIAS continues to bank with Unity Trust, an independent bank committed to supporting socially minded organisations across the UK. We hold investments with Cambridge and Counties Bank and Redwood Bank. Investments are held in the form of notice accounts so that funds can be accessed within a maximum of 100 days.

Finding a reasonable return on investment is still a major problem for the charity sector. We continually review our investments but, due to all time low levels of interest rates, our income from these investments is limited.

Reserves policy

The trustees have set a reserves policy that requires reserves to be maintained at a level which ensures that our core activity could continue during a period of unforeseen difficulty and that a proportion of reserves be maintained in a readily realisable form. The reserves policy is calculated and reviewed annually by the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee.

The intention of the policy is to cover liabilities including provision for redundancies, premises and other contractual costs, a reasonable level of urgent contingencies and the realistic costs that may be incurred if the charity were to be wound-up.

The trustees assess the required level of reserves on an annual basis, alongside the operating budget. The assessment takes account of the income and expenditure risk within the budget and the need to keep sufficient bank balances to be able to manage the day-to-day fluctuations of receipts and payments. Any significant changes in activities or financial obligations that could affect the level of reserves is closely monitored.

Based on risk analysis, unrestricted reserves equivalent to at least three months operating costs were agreed to be necessary (representing approximately £100,000 for the 2021/22 financial year ahead). The current level of unrestricted reserves (£158,330) represents around five months operating costs. This is mainly due to underspend on several budget lines due to the impact of Covid-19 and increased level of income from fundraising activity during the pandemic to assist with delivery of our charitable objectives. The board have set a budget for 2021/22 with the intention of reinvesting some of these reserves within the core service. There are no ongoing commitments that extend beyond this period and most operating costs could be reduced significantly and at short notice if required.

Review of the Year

Financial review

Our overall income increased from £394,226 in 2019/20 to £498,075 in 2020/21, an increase of around 26%. Our unrestricted income increased by around 14% thanks largely to one-off grants to support our work during the pandemic. Coventry City Council remain our core funder and we thank them for their continued support.

Restricted income more than doubled in the year and accounted for over 20% of our total income, compared to just 12.5% last year. This represents our success in attracting additional project-based funding for activities to support our core objectives. We would like to thank all of the organisations and individuals who supported our work in the past year and going forward, particularly Heart of England Community Foundation who awarded us grants under several of their programmes that have helped us to reach some of the most vulnerable clients during the pandemic. We also received invaluable support from HMRC, National Lottery, 29th May 1961 Charity and a range of smaller donors during the year who the Trustees would like to gratefully acknowledge and thank.

Staff costs continue to increase and now represent around 84% of our total expenditure (81% in 2019/20). This increase largely reflects additional cost of living awards to staff and increased workplace pension costs, as well as reflecting on the reduced overhead costs incurred due to travel restrictions and more work taking place electronically.

Information, advice and support

Due to lockdown restrictions imposed in March 2020, all CIAS staff worked from home during the year. This has meant that we have had to adapt our working practices to deliver the high-quality advice we are renowned for over the telephone or through digital channels. Staff have adapted extremely well, and the success of these practices has helped to inform our future delivery models. Whilst we fully intend to recommence face to face work when safe to do so, this is currently reserved for the most vulnerable clients for whom remote advice is not appropriate or feasible.

Our achievements are fully detailed in a separate impact report for 2020/21 that we make available on our website and provide to supporters and funders. In summary, our achievements for the financial year include:

- We opened 1,811 new files for 1,686 individuals and families.
- The two main enquiry areas were welfare benefits (69% of new files opened) and debt/money guidance (12%). Problems relating to Universal Credit made up around one-fifth of all benefit enquiries.
- Total reported financial gains for clients were £2.76 million.
- 54% of clients, who supplied information about their ethnicity, identified as being from a minority ethnic community.
- 59% of our clients were women.
- Our website was viewed over 11,000 times.
- Over 13,000 items of work were completed including interviews, correspondence, and other actions on behalf of clients.

The return on investment for funders was in the ratio of £8 returned in additional income for residents for every £1 of funding received which is significant value for money. Social return on investment is considerably higher as there are wider impacts on the economy and non-financial outcomes to consider. Calculation of financial gains is also likely to be significantly underestimated as it is based on one-off gains plus a projection of entitlement over a 52-week period. Many clients are in receipt of benefits for much longer periods than this and, additionally, some clients do not report the outcome of our work with them.

Our team reports that he clients we advised during the past year came with more complex and multifaceted problems and a significant proportion had never approached an advice service before. This meant that our staff spent longer dealing with enquiries and undertook more items of work, even though the number of clients helped was less than the previous year. These outcomes also include some cases which were opened in the previous year and completed in this financial year.

Our work in the Tanyard Farm area of Coventry, funded by Orbit, continued throughout the pandemic although delivery plans were adapted so that the service could be offered remotely. This had an impact on numbers of people accessing the service as we were unable to deliver face-to-face on the estate as planned. However, we still realised significant financial gains for individuals and families on the estate and were able to expand the service to include other Orbit tenants across the city. We estimate that Orbit tenants gained nearly £375,000 thanks to our advice and interventions.

The project employs a dedicated adviser and, due to costs savings, has been extended to October 2021. We hope that we can maintain a continuing relationship with Orbit and would like to thank them for their support.

We are incredibly proud of our achievements during the year, particularly considering the need for staff to quickly adjust to working from home during an unprecedented global crisis.

Volunteer programme

We continued to develop opportunities for volunteers thanks to funding from The Henry Smith Charity. This funding is due to end in December 2021 and we are currently working on succession planning so that offering volunteer opportunities, and supporting those volunteers to develop personally and professionally, becomes part of our core service.

During the reporting year we recruited several new volunteers who have been invaluable in assisting with benefit form completion, providing administrative support and social media work. We would like to thank all our volunteers for their dedication and commitment to our charity.

The Future

COVID-19

This has been unprecedented year in terms of challenges on many fronts. Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, as with many other organisations, we continued to provide our services remotely and adapted to using technology as a key part of service delivery.

We managed to successfully apply for emergency funding to address the advice issues that residents were experiencing due to COVID-19. We received funding from the National Lottery to provide advice to people affected by the coronavirus and HMRC also agreed that we could adapt a planned project to support the wider community. We also received a COVID Business Support Grant from Coventry City Council which also helped with service adaptation.

We have invested in a new telephony system, backed by Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Teams, which gives greater flexibility, is better suited to our future needs and offers enhanced data security. Trustees have continued to exercise a diligent and close financial overview by monitoring budgets and expenditure and supporting the Director of Service and staff to continue effective operations.

Future Initiatives

CIAS trustees continue to focus on the longer-term development of the charity. Several events have been held during the year where business planning and strategic objectives were discussed for incorporation into a new three-year strategy (2021-2024). The key priorities for the next six months are:

- To refresh our commitment to delivering face to face (F2F) advice in the community – this will include developing our core advice offer to include new F2F advice services integrated with community initiatives, priority groups, priority neighbourhoods and early intervention approaches. F2F advice will be supported by telephone/digital advice so that people can be helped using the most appropriate channel and to use resources most effectively.
- To identify and secure funding to continue development of our volunteer programme
- Ensure that our service is ready for AQS re-evaluation in January 2022 and can achieve the recognised standard.

We also identified further objectives over the medium to longer term:

- Undertaking a feasibility study into options for delivery of debt advice going forward.
- To identify and implement actions to improve diversity and inclusion within our charity
- Improving our focus on wellbeing throughout our charity
- Redevelop and relaunch the Advice Services Coventry public website
- Review our staff roles, resources and core advice offer – to ensure that we can continue to meet demand in the most effective ways possible.
- Review our fundraising strategy - ensuring shared clarity of purpose throughout our charity with a focus on seeking opportunities to 'do more of what we do best' and taking our work to new people and communities.
- To consider and develop a succession strategy - a national shortage of experienced advisers raises the question of how best to 'bring people through' as roles emerge. We should focus on succession at all levels of our charity to help safeguard against future gaps in service.

Thank you

We would like to thank all our funders, supporters, and partners for their ongoing support during this difficult period which has enabled us to continue to provide our essential advice services. We also want to thank all our staff, volunteers and trustees for their professionalism and dedication to the charity in challenging times. Their commitment and effort enable us to continuing securing positive outcomes for thousands of people in our communities.

The trustees report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

john lowe
john lowe (Oct 28, 2021 08:53 GMT+1)

John Lowe - Trustee
Dated: 22nd October 2021

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of Coventry Independent Advice Service Limited (the charity) for the year ended 31 March 2021.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 (the 2006 Act).

Having satisfied myself that the financial statements of the charity are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). In carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of Association of Accounting Technicians, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or

2 the financial statements do not accord with those records; or

3 the financial statements do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or

4 the financial statements have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

James Rose

James Rose (Oct 28, 2021 15:02 GMT+1)

James Rose FMAAT

Eagle House
14 Queens Road
Coventry
West Midlands
CV1 3EG
United Kingdom

Dated: 26th October 2021

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2021 £	Restricted funds 2021 £	Total 2021 £	Unrestricted funds 2020 £	Restricted funds 2020 £	Total 2020 £
Income from:							
Donations, legacies and grants	3	381,193	104,271	485,464	333,413	50,651	384,064
Other trading activities	4	11,277	-	11,277	8,122	-	8,122
Investments	5	1,334	-	1,334	2,040	-	2,040
Total income		393,804	104,271	498,075	343,575	50,651	394,226
Expenditure on:							
Charitable activities							
Advice Service	6	368,594	80,868	449,462	378,229	58,328	436,557
Total charitable expenditure		368,594	80,868	449,462	378,229	58,328	436,557
Net incoming/ (outgoing) resources before transfers		25,210	23,403	48,613	(34,654)	(7,677)	(42,331)
Gross transfers between funds		2,545	(2,545)	-	7,371	(7,371)	-
Net income/(expenditure) for the year/ Net movement in funds		27,755	20,858	48,613	(27,283)	(15,048)	(42,331)
Fund balances at 1 April 2020		130,575	14,763	145,338	157,858	29,810	187,668
Fund balances at 31 March 2021		158,330	35,621	193,951	130,575	14,762	145,337

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities also complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 2006.

COVENTRY INDEPENDENT ADVICE SERVICE LIMITED

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MARCH 2021

	Notes	2021 £	2021 £	2020 £	2020 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**11**		3,497		1,850
Current assets					
Debtors	**12**	6,806		4,357	
Cash at bank and in hand		202,951		155,284	
		209,757		159,641	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**13**	(19,303)		(16,154)	
Net current assets			190,454		143,487
Total assets less current liabilities			193,951		145,337
Income funds					
Restricted funds	**14**		35,621		14,762
Unrestricted funds			158,330		130,575
			193,951		145,337

The company is entitled to the exemption from the audit requirement contained in section 477 of the Companies Act 2006, for the year ended 31 March 2021.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for ensuring that the charity keeps accounting records which comply with section 386 of the Act and for preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of the financial year and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the financial year in accordance with the requirements of sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 22nd October 2021

john lowe

john lowe (Oct 28, 2021 08:53 GMT+1)

John Lowe

Trustee

Company Registration No. 02761115

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Coventry Independent Advice Service Limited is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is Oakwood House, Cheylesmore, Coventry, West Midlands, CV1 2HL, United Kingdom.

The charity is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England and Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees are liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charity in the event of liquidation.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the charity's [governing document], the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)". The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The charity has taken advantage of the provisions in the SORP for charities applying FRS 102 Update Bulletin 1 not to prepare a Statement of Cash Flows.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to include the revaluation of freehold properties and to include investment properties and certain financial instruments at fair value. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the charity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known, and receipt is expected. If the amount is not known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

1.5 Expenditure

All expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to that expenditure, it is probable settlement is required and the amount can be measured reliably. All costs are allocated to the applicable expenditure heading that aggregate similar costs to that category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of resources, with central staff costs allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use. Other support costs are allocated based on the spread of staff costs.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Office equipment	straighline method over three years

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is recognised in net income/(expenditure) for the year.

1.7 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the charity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.8 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the charity's balance sheet when the charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors and bank loans are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Debt instruments are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the charity's contractual obligations expire or are discharged or cancelled.

1.10 Taxation

The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

1.11 Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

1.12 Retirement benefits

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

1.13 Governance costs

These include the costs attributable to the charity's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees' meetings and reimbursed expenses.

1.14 Government Grants

Government grants are recognised based on the accrual model and are measured at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are classified as relating either to revenue or to assets. Grants relating to revenue are recognised in income over the period in which the related costs are recognised. Grants relating to assets are recognised over the expected useful life of the asset. Where part of a grant relating to an asset is deferred, it is recognised as deferred income.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

3 Donations, legacies and grants

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2021	**2021**	**2021**	2020	2020	2020
	£	**£**	**£**	£	£	£
Donations and gifts	2,037	-	2,037	7,620	-	7,620
Grants received	379,156	104,271	483,427	325,793	50,651	376,444
	381,193	104,271	485,464	333,413	50,651	384,064
Grants receivable for core activities						
Coventry City Council	322,287	-	322,287	322,287	-	322,287
The Henry Smith Grant	-	41,500	41,500	-	20,000	20,000
Orbit Grant	-	33,391	33,391	-	24,856	24,856
29th May 1961 Charity	5,000	-	5,000	-	5,795	5,795
Heart of England Grants	10,000	10,000	20,000	3,506	-	3,506
National Lottery Community Grant	-	4,380	4,380	-	-	-
Coventry Buidling Society & Heart of England Grant	-	10,000	10,000	-	-	-
Doing Things Differently	-	5,000	5,000	-	-	-
Government Grants	33,969	-	33,969	-	-	-
Other Grant Income	7,900	-	7,900	-	-	-
	379,156	104,271	483,427	325,793	50,651	376,444

4 Other trading activities

	Unrestricted funds	Unrestricted funds
	2021	2020
	£	£
Full recovery cost	11,275	6,582
Other income	2	1,540
Other trading activities	11,277	8,122

5 Investments

	Unrestricted funds 2021 £	Unrestricted funds 2020 £
Interest receivable	1,334	2,040

6 Charitable activities

	Advice Service 2021 £	Advice Service 2020 £
Staff costs	373,541	354,080
Depreciation and impairment	1,016	564
Recruitment	600	1,500
Training and conferences	3,199	4,873
Rent, service charge and storage fees	23,524	19,022
Repairs and maintenance	133	456
Telephone	5,639	4,116
Printing, postage and stationery	4,296	7,523
Sundry expenses	15,043	10,073
Travel & subsistence	-	3,878
Catering and consumables	-	39
Legal and professional fees	7,795	13,369
Volunteer expenses	335	1,285
Insurance, subscriptions and licences	2,007	3,335
Equipment	2,663	1,100
Computer software and maintenance costs	9,521	11,194
	449,312	436,407
Share of governance costs (see note 7)	150	150
	449,462	436,557
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	368,594	378,229
Restricted funds	80,868	58,328
	449,462	436,557

7 Support costs

	Support costs	Governance costs	2021	Support costs	Governance costs	2020
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Independent examiners fee	-	150	150	-	150	150
	-	150	150	-	150	150
Analysed between						
Charitable activities	-	150	150	-	150	150

8 Trustees

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the charity during the year.

9 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2021 Number	2020 Number
Charitable activities	10	10
Administration	3	2
Total	13	12

Employment costs	2021 £	2020 £
Wages and salaries	332,642	314,893
Social security costs	23,702	22,191
Other pension costs	17,197	16,996
	373,541	354,080

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000 during the year.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £56,168 (2020 - £53,169).

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was £60,000 or more.

10 Taxation

The charity is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

11 Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment
	£
Cost	
At 1 April 2020	11,155
Additions	2,663
At 31 March 2021	13,818
Depreciation and impairment	
At 1 April 2020	9,305
Depreciation charged in the year	1,016
At 31 March 2021	10,321
Carrying amount	
At 31 March 2021	3,497
At 31 March 2020	1,850

12 Debtors

	2021	2020
Amounts falling due within one year:	£	£
Trade debtors	-	1,812
Prepayments and accrued income	6,806	2,545
	6,806	4,357

13 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2021	2020
	£	£
Other taxation and social security	5,621	6,754
Trade creditors	7,635	5,511
Accruals and deferred income	6,047	3,889
	19,303	16,154

14 Unrestricted and restricted funds

Unrestricted funds

					Movement in funds				
	Balance at 1 April 2019	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2020	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 31 March 2021
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
General funds	157,858	343,575	(378,229)	7,371	130,575	393,804	(368,594)	2,545	158,330
	157,858	343,575	(378,229)	7,371	130,575	393,804	(368,594)	2,545	158,330

14 Unrestricted and restricted funds (Continued)

Restricted funds

The income funds of the charity include restricted funds comprising the following unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust for specific purposes:

		Movement in funds						
	Balance at 1 April 2019	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2020	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 31 March 2021
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Big Lottery Awards Grant	3,635	-	(3,012)	(623)	-	-	-	-	-
The Henry Smith Charity Grant	26,175	20,000	(34,566)	(6,748)	4,861	41,500	(37,563)	-	8,798
Orbit Grant	-	24,856	(20,750)	-	4,107	33,391	(28,082)	-	9,416
Tampon Tax Community Fund	-	5,795	-	-	5,795	-	(5,795)	-	-
TNL Community Fund	-	-	-	-	-	4,380	(1,223)	-	3,157
Heart of England Winter Well Being Grant	-	-	-	-	-	10,000	(2,000)	-	8,000
Heart of England and Coventry Building Society Grant	-	-	-	-	-	10,000	(3,750)	-	6,250
Heart of England Doing Things Differently Grant	-	-	-	-	-	5,000	(2,455)	(2,545)	-
	29,810	50,651	(58,328)	(7,371)	14,763	104,271	(80,868)	(2,545)	35,621

14 Unrestricted and restricted funds **(Continued)**

The Henry Smith Charity Grant - volunteer development project.

Orbit Grant - funds a project to encourage benefit take-up on the Tanyard Farm estate in Coventry.

Tampon Tax Community Fund - specific project to projects that improve the lives of disadvantaged women and girls.

TNL Community Fund - fund a new telephony system and related costs.

Heart of England Winter Wellbeing Fund - support work with food networks and emerging Social Supermarkets.

Heart of England & Coventry Building Society Grant - support our debt advice work.

Heart of England Doing Things Differently Grant - support our debt advice work.

15 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2021	Restricted funds 2021	Total 2021	Unrestricted funds 2020	Restricted funds 2020	Total 2020
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fund balances at 31 March 2021 are represented by:						
Tangible assets	3,497	-	3,497	1,850	-	1,850
Current assets/ (liabilities)	154,833	35,621	190,454	128,725	14,762	143,487
	158,330	35,621	193,951	130,575	14,762	145,337

16 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2020 - none).