

A light blue line art illustration of four people (two men and two women) is positioned in the center of the page. They are standing and appear to be engaged in a group discussion or meeting. The background behind them is a light blue wavy shape.

**Putting people first
since 1972**

Annual Report
2023-24



Chairperson's Report



As Chair of Community Advice Causeway, I am pleased to report another year of quality service provision across our localities, delivered in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders.

We remain indebted to our commissioners, both at Departmental and local Government levels, for their ongoing financial support and for the agreed contract to deliver a local advice service for the next three years.

How quickly circumstances can change from year to year but in-year we were so pleased to welcome the reestablishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly and a devolved government.

As I reflect on social policy, clearly there remained many significant challenges, resulting in continuing community pressures across our service area.

Cost of living pressures included rising expenditure on family food baskets, increasing home/community heating costs and rents, pushing some working families into poverty for the very first time. Housing stock often failed to meet local requirements and Health Service pressures continued with long waiting lists for both medical investigations and surgery. Families continued to seek assistance to navigate the complex benefit systems and on getting advice on managing debt. Also new refugee families sought assistance with integration into new culture and in seeking out the local services required for living in new country. These are but a few of the many issues that faced the team.

I can report, however, that the team have remained constant and available to support and assist throughout what was a turbulent year. I must congratulate them on their tenacity and ability to adapt and modernise service provision to ensure they meet demand.

Our Organisational values remain unchanged as we continue to ensure provision of a service that is free, confidential, independent, impartial and accessible to all who wish to access it.

While I am sure it sometimes feels like working in the eye of a storm, I remain indebted to both the Manager, Samantha Boswell, and the operational team for their commitment and continued hard work throughout 2023/2024. I must also pay tribute to the Trustee Board for their continued support in assisting me, as Chair, with oversight of the service.

I commend the Annual General Report to you which clearly evidences effective, efficient quality service provision throughout 2023-2024.

Margaret Gordon



Our Aims

To provide the help that people need for the problems they face through the provision of free, independent, impartial, accessible and local advice services.

To ensure no individual should suffer through:

- Lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities
- Inability to effectively express their needs
- Lack of knowledge of the help that is available to them

Our Values

Community Advice Causeway:

- Opposes discrimination
- Is committed to a tolerant, just and pluralist society
- Encourages participation from all sections of our community, at every level of our organisation



Chief Officer's Report



Community Advice Causeway made an impressive impact on our community in 2023-24 and, as Chief Officer, I am incredibly proud of our achievements. I see first-hand the positive and often long-term benefits of the service that we provide.

In a year which saw increasing focus on living costs and the shortage of affordable housing, we generated £7.3 million for clients through holistic advice, helping people to meet their basic needs and improve their wellbeing. We attended an unprecedented number of awareness raising sessions and information events and continued to strengthen local support through our work with Causeway Coast and Glens Anti-Poverty Steering Group.

Our highly skilled operational team ably manages changing demand, through continued training and professional development. We are accessible to anyone who needs us, always abreast of the changing policies and issues which impact our clients. We use language resources, interpreting services and new technology to provide advice to a growing number of clients who are seeking international protection in our locality, or who are part of our migrant population.

I would like to highlight the Advice 4 Health Project which is a much-valued longstanding service within our Organisation. Taking referrals from an ever-increasing number of Health and Social Care Professionals and Community partners across Northern Trust areas of Mid Ulster and Causeway Coast and Glens, Advice 4 Health is tailored to the needs of clients who are facing additional health challenges. This high-profile project greatly enhances our overall service by delivering additional advocacy, advice sessions, home visits, and representation to those who need it most, removing barriers which often prevent these individuals from accessing the help that they need.

We know the value of our strong partnerships and we are grateful for the support of all organisations and individuals in our network. Particularly our funders, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Department for Communities and Public Health Agency.

Finally, a personal message of thanks from me to the people who give so much of themselves; who stretch limited resources to offer solutions, dignity and safety to every client; who have such resilience and energy - the remarkable Community Advice Causeway team.

Samantha Boswell

Our Vision

We are here when you need us

- Our service is accessible
- Advice is available through different channels, and you can choose what works for you
- You will speak to someone who is qualified to help you
- We have advisers who speak Polish, Irish and Romanian
- You won't have to repeat yourself

You get the level of support that you need

- If you are at increased risk of disadvantage, we go the extra mile to ensure that you get the correct level of support
- Your needs are central to our service
- We use every resource available to us

We help you to find a way forward

- We use our expertise and resources to help you to explore every option, whatever your situation
- We signpost you to our partners, when appropriate
- We exercise influence on laws, policies and local services to reflect your needs

2023-24 year in review



£7.3 million

Income generated for clients



44.7k
Enquiries



29.7k
Welfare Benefits
Enquiries



150
Immigration
Cases Managed



393
Clients
represented at
Benefit Tribunal



239
New Debt Cases
Opened



503
Clients referred
for emergency
support

100%

of clients said
they would
use our service
again



100%

of clients said
they would
recommend us

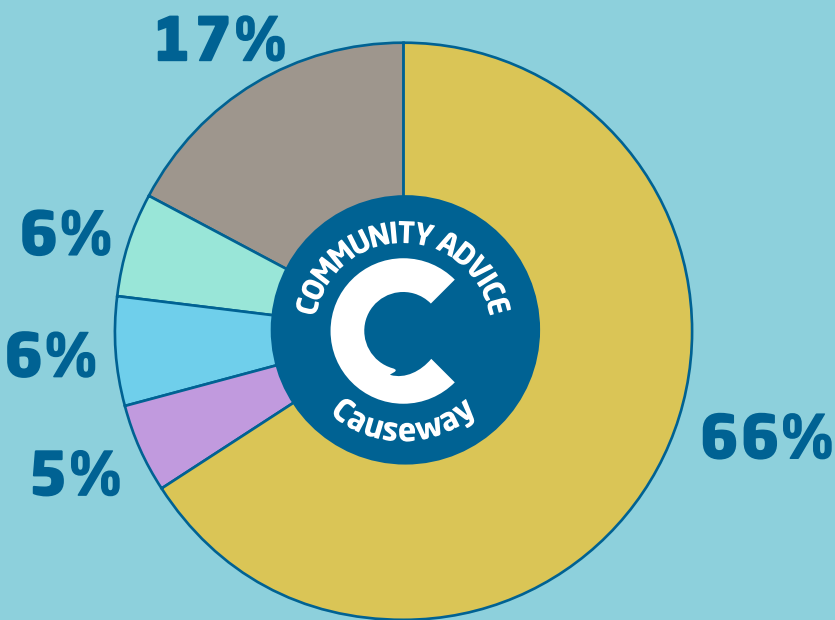


96%

of clients said
that our service
improved their
circumstances



Enquiries



- Benefits
- Employment
- Housing
- Debt
- Other

Finance 2023-24

The 2023-24 financial audit for Community Advice Causeway was carried out by IDS Chartered Accountants LLP. Their Annual Report and Financial Statements are published and available to view on the website of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

<https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/>

Charity Search: Community Advice Causeway



One Client's Journey

Rose was referred to our Advice 4 Health team for help with unsecured debts. Rose had long-term depression and anxiety, and she had been unable to keep up with payments. At the point of referral, Rose was about to run out of electricity and food and had not had oil for heating for some weeks.

Our advisor immediately organised emergency support for electricity and heating oil and referred Rose to the local food bank and social supermarket. A benefit check revealed that she was in receipt of income-based ESA but had been refused PIP over a year earlier. She was reluctant to make another claim as the process had negatively impacted her in the past, but we reassured her that we would be there to support her. The claim was disallowed. With Rose's permission we gathered supporting evidence from her medical professionals and used this to request a Mandatory Consideration. This resulted in an award of enhanced daily living PIP at £101.75 per week. When the award notice was received, we carried out a further benefit check and identified a resulting entitlement to a Severe Disability Premium on ESA of £76.40 per week. She also received an increase in help with housing costs. This additional income made a huge difference to Rose's day-to-day life, putting food on the table and allowing her to heat her home and feel independent.

Meantime, our debt team identified that Rose was eligible for a Debt Relief Order, to write off the unsecured debts which were causing so much distress. Once her benefit income was sorted out, Rose was able to afford the £90 fee and her Debt Relief Order was completed. This fee has since been removed and it is now free to apply for a Debt relief Order.

"I had to let you know how much you did for me. You all gave me the confidence to apply for PIP again and you were so kind and patient through the whole process. I couldn't believe how much more I was entitled to and it has made such a difference. I can pay my bills now and I'm not worried about debt letters coming now that the debts are cleared. All the people who I saw were kind and professional. I have hope again. I can't thank you enough."

What we cover:

- Benefits and Appeals
- Money and Debt
- Employment
- Housing
- Consumer Issues
- Education
- Family issues



How to contact us:

Self Referral

Send your contact details any time to

advice@advicecauseway.com

and we will call you back or advise via email.

Or, call our

Telephone Helpline to get advice
or arrange an appointment -

(028) 7034 4817

Monday	9.30am to 1pm	2pm to 4pm
Tuesday	9.30am to 1pm	2pm to 4pm
Wednesday	9.30am to 1pm	2pm to 4pm
Thursday	9.30am to 1pm	2pm to 7pm
Friday	9.30am to 1pm	2pm to 4pm

Pre-arranged face-to-face appointments are available in
Ballycastle, Ballymoney, Coleraine and Limavady

NI Charity Number: NIC 103018

Community Advice Causeway is authorised and regulated by the Financial
Conduct Authority: FRN 616964

Correspondence address 2nd Floor 1-5 Brook Street, Coleraine, BT52 1QT

