



7th April 2021

Benefits in Place – a new pilot making our advice more accessible to those in need

We are excited to announce the launch of our new Benefits in Place pilot. Funded by Oxfordshire County Council Public Health, we are transforming the previous Benefits in Practice service to make it more accessible to those in need.

For many years Citizens Advice across Oxfordshire has delivered advice surgeries through a limited number of GP practices in Cherwell, West Oxfordshire & Oxford City. Public Health want to ensure that the service can be accessed by a wider range of people across the county by creating access points in partnership with other local agencies and organisations where people already go. This will reduce foot traffic to GP surgeries and make the service more targeted to people in need. The pandemic has created the perfect opportunity for us to remodel the existing service and create a virtual county team, building on our experience of delivering advice throughout the year.

A new, digital referral system has been created which will allow health professionals and other providers from any Oxfordshire location to refer clients quickly and easily. People can also self-refer. Our volunteers will complete an initial assessment and people who are eligible for and need casework support will be given appointments with BiP caseworkers. Those not needing, or not eligible for BiP casework, will be supported by our generalist advice services across the county, as well as other sources of support - such as energy advice, support grants, Adviceline, Consumer Service etc. Anyone presenting with issues that need urgent attention will be immediately referred to their local Citizens Advice service as emergencies and receive prompt attention.

This new pilot service will improve access to advice for people who are referred through primary care and other community services such as food banks. The "**Benefits in Place**" **digital front door** will ensure that our advice services are joined up, effective and efficient. This is vital in these unprecedented times as client numbers and issues rise due to the impact of the pandemic.

Health Professionals, foodbanks, pharmacies, social prescribers and other place based organisations can refer clients using the referral form www.caoxrefer.org.uk/benefits-in-place or people can self-refer themselves by calling 0300 3035340.

We give people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are, and whatever their problem.

- The four Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire, Oxford, North Oxfordshire and South Northamptonshire and South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse all exist to provide free, confidential, independent advice in Oxfordshire and they are all members of Citizens Advice, the national charity
- For Citizens Advice general local free telephone advice, visit www.caox.org.co.uk.
- Citizens Advice Freephone Adviceline 0800 144 8848 and Textphone: 0800 144 8884
- Citizens Advice in Oxfordshire are supported by more than 670 trained volunteers and 52 paid staff working across 14 advice centres. In the last year, we helped 27,000 people across Oxfordshire with 78,000 issues.
- Citizens Advice is made up of the national charity Citizens Advice; the network of independent local Citizens Advice charities across England and Wales; the Citizens Advice consumer service; and the Witness Service.
- Citizens Advice helped 2.7 million people face to face, over the phone, by email and web chat in 19-20. We had 3.5 million visits to our national website. For full service statistics see Citizens Advice monthly publication [Advice Trends](#).