



12th April 2021

Housing association tenants supported by Citizens Advice across Oxfordshire through successful partnerships

Citizens Advice across Oxfordshire has a number of partnerships with housing associations and social landlords that manage property within the county. Housing associations provide affordable homes for rent and shared ownership. Citizens Advice provide money advice services to their customers.

The charity's services help hundreds of tenants every year with money advice and support. Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire, Cottsway and GreenSquare housing associations have developed highly successful partnerships over many years. Citizens Advice South and Vale have successful partnerships with SOHA and Sovereign. Citizens Advice North Oxfordshire partner with Sanctuary Housing and Green Square to help their tenants.

"I'd be on the streets if not for Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire"

John was a HGV driver. Due to a stroke, he became disabled, lost his job and could not pay his bills. *"I needed help. I was getting behind on everything. I had no money and so many bills and rent to pay. I am dyslexic so have problems understanding forms and letters. I struggle to write. I have no one around here to help me. Citizens Advice has helped by filling in forms, reading letters and moving things along. My Universal Credit Crisis loan helped a little. My appeal has failed twice so I had to go to court which made me nervous.*

In March 2020, having attended a court appeal, John was awarded backdated Universal Credit and Personal Independent Payment. He also became eligible to apply for a Blue Badge.

The charity's advice and support, often to people with underlying conditions, ranges from budgeting advice, prioritising debts, and ensuring people are on the right benefits to working with the housing associations to prevent possession proceedings. 68% of the people using our advice services have a long-term health condition or a disability. Changes in people's circumstances, relationship issues or loss of employment can all contribute to the need for support.

People's top three benefits issues were Personal Independent Payment, housing support and council tax support. The top three debt issues were rent arrears, council tax arrears and fuel debts.

Emma Stone, Head of Neighbourhoods for GreenSquare Accord said:

"We value our partnership working with the Citizens Advice, it gives our customers access to the help and advice they need and resolve the financial problems they face. Being able to refer customers straight to our dedicated advisor cuts down the waiting time for GreenSquare tenants and we know they will get the best advice possible."

Sean Kyte, Cottsway's Financial Inclusion Manager, said:

"I am really pleased with our partnership with Citizens' Advice West Oxfordshire. I have seen first-hand how together we have helped Cottsway customers in financial hardship overcome difficulties. While we're always here to help, this service gives all of our customers the additional option to speak to someone independently and in confidence, which is a great asset."

Teresa Archer, Chief Officer from Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire said:

"We are concerned about the drop in demand for advice since lockdown. We know the issues are still out there and some of the Government financial support may be masking a longer term issue of debt. We are worried that some people who have been isolating are finding it harder to get in touch to discuss their issues. The first step is the hardest. We can provide a real holistic approach and signpost people towards the help they need. Our dedicated advisers can help people check what benefits they're entitled to, support people in negotiating with creditors, and ensure they're getting all the help and support that is on offer.

We know people are going to need our help as we begin on the road to recovery, and we urge anyone that needs some support to get in touch as soon as possible."

To find your local Citizens Advice for advice, visit www.caox.org.uk.

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](#).