



PRESS RELEASE

15th December 2021

Citizens Advice partner with the Trussell Trust Food banks to help more people through these difficult times

As many households face difficult times across Oxfordshire, Citizens Advice is seeing a huge demand for advice and charitable support. Food bank use has increased sharply too.

To help people using Trussell Trust foodbanks with timely expert advice, two new full time virtual Citizens Advice caseworkers are to be employed across the county.

The predicted rise in energy costs, and withdrawal of the £20 uplift of Universal Credit are making life harder. Currently there are over 11,600 people claiming unemployment in Oxfordshire - double the number two years ago. Oxfordshire is also the most expensive county to live in, outside London.

Due to Citizens Advice amplified demand, waiting times to see a debt adviser can be up to four weeks and the local charity is only able to answer approximately two thirds of its calls. This means it can be a struggle for people to access their services in a timely way and may lead to increased hardship. Food bank use is expected to rise over the coming months too.

Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire, Citizens Advice North Oxfordshire and Citizens Advice Oxfordshire South and Vale are working in partnership with the four Trussell Trust food banks in Oxfordshire to provide timely, accessible independent advice to those using food banks. These Food Banks are in Witney, Abingdon, Banbury and Bicester. The lead partners are Witney and West Oxfordshire Food Bank and Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire.

Teresa Archer, Chief Officer Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire said;

"This new partnership with the Trussell Trust is an exciting opportunity for us to provide a dedicated resource to Trussell Trust food bank users. It will enable us to have a single dedicated phone number and email address to receive referrals from the Trussell Trust Food banks five days per week. Our caseworkers will provide comprehensive advice and support to anyone using the food banks, which will include debt and money, housing and employment advice.

Mick Morris, Chair Witney Food Bank said:

“We are delighted to have this opportunity to develop a new service with Citizens Advice across Oxfordshire. We want to ensure that those using our food banks for essential support can also access quality independent advice. The new service will ensure that users have the income they should, have support with managing debts and in budgeting for such challenging times.”

Citizens Advice in Oxfordshire is the only advice agency to offer independent, holistic advice to anyone in need, but our resources are limited and demands have risen due to the pandemic. Our data suggests this trend is set to continue. Our charity deals with all aspects of benefits, debt, housing and employment advice as well as providing comprehensive casework to support those that need it. Many of the cases we handle are complex, with multiple interrelated issues to resolve. Family breakdown, domestic abuse, bereavement and employment changes can all lead to periods of hardship.”

For more information about our range of services, and for contact details for Citizens Advice across Oxfordshire go to www.caox.org.uk

Ends

For more information regarding this press release, please contact judy.anders@citizensadvicewestoxon.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](#).