

REPORT TO: Health & Wellbeing Board

DATE:

REPORTING OFFICER: Hitesh N Patel (Citizens Advice Halton)

PORTFOLIO: Health & Wellbeing

SUBJECT: The impact of advice services on tackling poverty and the wider determinants of health.

WARD(S) Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an overview of the volume and nature of enquiries local people are raising with Citizens Advice Halton, what trends are emerging and what challenges this may pose for the wider health & wellbeing system may need to prepare for.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be received and the Board determines a way forward.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In 2024-25 Citizens Advice Halton helped 7,695 people (of whom 65% classed themselves as being wither disabled or having a long-term health condition.

- 18% requested help to access charitable support (e.g. food/fuel vouchers, grants for household goods),
- 20% requested debt advice,
- 30% requested welfare benefits advice.

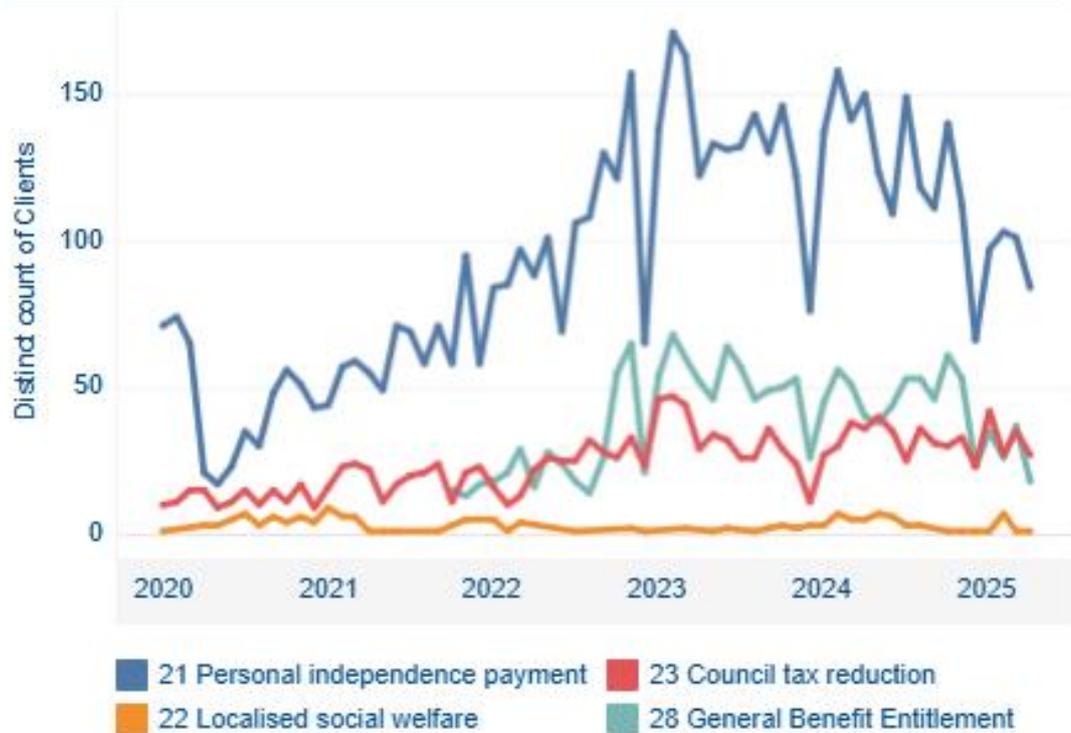
As a result of Citizens Advice's intervention £7.9million of debt was written off and £6.2million of additional income was gained.

3.2 Citizens Advice Halton will present data showing how the nature and number of enquiries they deal with has changed over the years and what this might mean for local services and policy development.

3.3 For example, there has been significant increase in demand for support to apply for Personal Independence Payments. This benefit is subject to overhaul by the Government and this will have significant societal implications for our population (e.g. carers would no longer be able to claim Carer's Allowance) and operational implications for local services (e.g. with less disposable income to

maintain independent living, disabled people may instead ask the Council to provide additional support)

Benefits & Selected Tax Credits



4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None identified

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None identified

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 The work of advice agencies like Citizens Advice Halton contributes to:

- Priority 1 of Halton BC's Corporate Plan i.e. Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence, and
- Priority 4 i.e. Tackling Inequality, Helping Those Who Are Most In Need.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Based on HM Treasury methodology it is estimated that Citizens Advice saved the NHS and local authority £987,474 last year.

- £97,278 in reduced demand for GP appointments
- £367,720 in reduced demand for Mental Health services
- £90,523 in reduced demand for other parts of the NHS system
- £436,953 in preventing homelessness

If the gap between supply and demand for social welfare information, advice and support grows, and mitigation is not put in place then it is conceivable that more financial pressure will be placed on the local public sector.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The advice sector is relied upon predominantly by people with a protected characteristic (e.g. disability, gender, sexuality, race, pregnancy/maternity).

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None Identified

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

'None under the meaning of the Act.'