



London

**GLA Cost of Living Crisis Prevention Project**  
**Midway Report (July 2022 – February 2023)**

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## Executive Summary

This report provides a mid-way report, including reporting on client data and engagement, and project delivery for the period to end-February 2023. The report covers all activities from the initial launch in July 2022, project mobilisation, and service delivery. It incorporates the agreed reporting framework with GLA, alongside description and analysis of the reach of the project in supporting Londoners through the cost of living crisis.

### **Executive Summary**

- A new and innovative London Cost of Living advice support partnership project developed, mobilised, and supporting thousands of Londoners in need.
- Crisis Prevention Advisers supported 3,044 Londoners, with 11,688 advice issues and 4,496 advice appointments. Specialist Welfare Advisers supported 503 Londoners, with 3,646 advice issues and 1,032 appointments
- The project also supports extensive engagement across London from talks/raising awareness with community/faith groups, presenting at larger voluntary sector Cost of Living sessions, information delivery, and participating in public Cost of Living support events. Delivery partners supported a further 1,650 Londoners through engagement events. In terms of total attendance at engagement events, we helped raise awareness/understanding of the Cost of Living crisis and support available to over 4,000 Londoners attending events.
- 8 Advice First Aid sessions also delivered, with 98 attendees from 32 local community partners and support organisations.
- Through a range of local service delivery models, the Cost of Living project proactively reaches out, engages with and supports individuals, families and local organisations including those who perhaps previously would not readily seek support from an advice charity or another organisation until the point of crisis
- The depth and complexity of support is illustrated by demand for on-going support (monthly appointments) and high advice issues. We are supporting Londoners with more challenging advice issues (when compared for example to local citizens advice generalist (core) support) and project advisers are supporting more Londoners with ongoing appointments and support.
- The project mobilisation period was both longer and more involved than anticipated; this reflected a combination of factors including London Citizens Advice coalition working in a very different way encompassing both grant distribution and service delivery, recruitment challenges and training, and building new working relationships with community partners. The Cost of Living crisis has also impacted significantly, not only for Londoners, but also London Citizens Advice charities and other support organisations we closely work with.
- The range of service delivery models reflects the needs and demands of individual community/faith organisations we're supporting, local communities and London boroughs we work in. Whilst the range and flexibility in service delivery models is a notable strength of and asset to this project, a very small number of delivery partners have experienced challenges beyond the early months which accounts for some regional disparity.

- The London Cost of Living Project Manager regularly meets with delivery partners' operational leads and advisers to share best practice, experiences. and lessons learned, the benefits of the enhanced reporting structure agreed with GLA also extends across London Citizens Advice partnership. The shared reporting framework developed and implemented has already initiated discussions and meetings between delivery partners to share innovations and delivery models.

## Introduction

The London Citizens Advice GLA Cost of Living Project comprises a partnership of 20 London Citizens Advice charities, 16 (full time equivalent) Crisis Prevention Advisers, 5 Specialist Welfare Advisers and an Advice First Aid training lead, supported by the London Cost of Living Project Manager, the London Citizens Advice Development Manager and London Citizens Advice Steering Group. The Steering Group comprises 9 experienced Chief Executives from across the London Citizens Advice network. Together this team has mobilised (including recruitment and developing new working relationships with local community/faith organisations) and to date supported thousands of Londoners impacted by immense cost of living challenges.

The cost of living support London Citizens Advice provides ranges from information, advice assessments, generalist advice, specialist advice, ongoing casework and through Advice First Aid building capacity in local organisations/communities. The support provided depends on the needs and circumstances of each individual. A key objective from the beginning has been to strengthen partnership working and through referral pathways from community groups to reach Londoners in hardship who may not otherwise access support. This includes a tailored training programme for community partners – Advice First Aid (AFA) - in which all delivery partners support in building local community advice understanding and provide a coherent offer of support to community and grassroots organisations so they can help their clients/service users to access that advice and support

London Citizens Advice has also worked closely with the London Legal Support Trust (LLST) to support our respective networks (local Citizens Advice charities and Centres of Excellence) to collaborate at local level for the benefit of Londoners. This strong and developing working relationship is helping to build a more strategic approach to coordination and capacity building across London's advice networks. The relationship with GLA is also based on a strategic partnership, with both partners responding to the challenges of the *Advising Londoners* report,<sup>i</sup> building on learning from the Advice in Community Settings programme, and contributing to the Robust Safety Net mission. External information about the partnership working and project is regularly updated on London Citizens Advice website (<https://londoncitizensadvice.org.uk/>).

The project is complex, not only with multiple delivery partners but also the range of delivery models reflecting local expertise, local knowledge and local residents/organisations needs and demands resulting from the cost of living crisis. As agreed with GLA, an enhanced reporting framework was developed and implemented in March (applied retrospectively and ongoing) to provide:

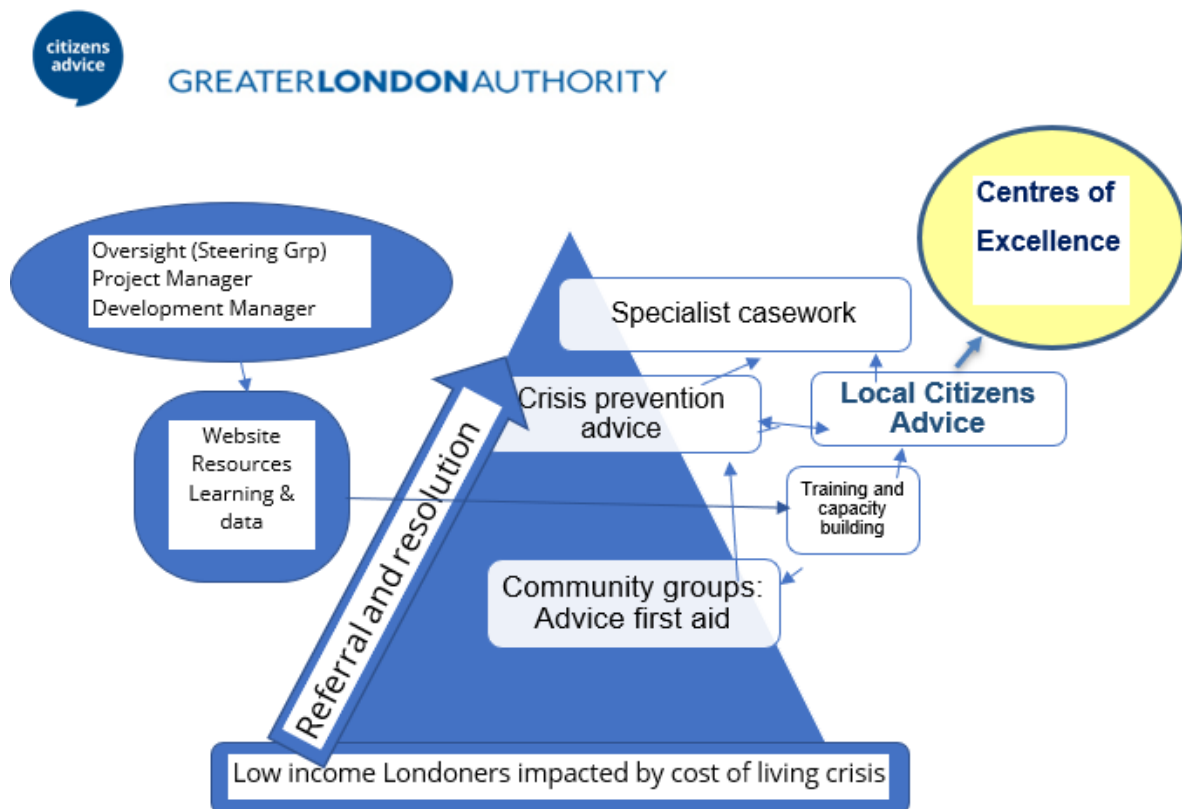
1. Consistent data – both to GLA and from across London Citizens Advice GLA partnership
2. Consistent and relevant reporting to GLA
3. Greater understanding of delivery models across the project and the range of support Londoners are receiving
4. Better understanding to how Cost of Living challenges impact data
5. Better understanding to regional differences across London

### The Core model

The project was set up to deploy new crisis prevention adviser roles (16 FTE) in the London Citizens Advice network to work closely with community, faith groups, their service users and members, and local residents to proactively support individuals and families affected by cost of living crisis. The support encompasses engagement and outreach in community venues and/or citizens advice offices providing in person information, advice assessments, generalist advice and support, identifying needs and referring to a specialist advice response where needed.

This capacity is supplemented by the five specialist advisors to take referrals from delivery partners for cases that involve resolving more complex/specialist legal problems. Local Citizens Advice also act as ‘community anchors,’ and some funding is used to develop new partnerships with local grassroots/community organisations and deliver ‘Advice First Aid’ training to community staff/volunteers to upskill them in identifying advice needs and making onward referrals.

Figure 1: Core partnership model



This core model works through 20 LCA delivery partners. A full list of project delivery partners is included in Appendix 1. GLA funding supports the appointment, training and supervision of 16 generalist frontline (Crisis Prevention) advisors employed by LCA delivery partners to provide cost of living crisis support in London boroughs affected by high deprivation/poverty. To enable the project to have Pan-London reach, LCA delivery partners hosting crisis prevention adviser roles have been encouraged to “partner” with neighbouring borough LCAs to extend their reach. Given geographical and limitations alongside local need there is flexibility in how the partnering arrangements work to benefit Londoners.

Examples include:-

- Outreach advice appointment sessions by Citizens Advice Merton and Lambeth (CAML) at Mushkil Aasaan - a local care and support charity in Tooting, Wandsworth, one day per week
- Citizens Advice Harrow deliver monthly outreach sessions at Citizens Advice Hillingdon

The crisis prevention advisers are supported by a team of specialist welfare advisers, based in LCAs with experience of case work; they are available for phone and email consultation with advice workers, to review cases and take referrals. The specialist advisers were allocated to subregional delivery areas following an expression of interest process to support the LCAs/crisis advisers within their 'hub' as well as taking internal referrals from the LCAs in which they are hosted. Figure 2 demonstrates how and where the capacity has been distributed.

**Figure 2: Distribution of capacity across London Citizens Advice**



The third element is wider community engagement – this is locally driven, best described as a “bottom-up” model, as we know from extensive community engagement experience across the LCA network that there is no standard template. London LCAs take part in, or are co-producers or initiators of, a wide range of community events (both in person and remote) from borough level Cost of Living roadshows, pop-up advice initiatives, to working with local VCS bodies, local advice fora, community networks, ward Councillors, residents and grass-roots organisations. Community and faith groups across London are extremely diverse, and some are hyper-local. To support the network in building capacity with community partners, and also integral to the delivery of the project, Citizens Advice Wandsworth (CAW) lead on the programme of Advice First Aid training drawing on CAW’s expertise in this area (see pages 21-25).

### *Governance and spending allocation*

The London Citizens Advice coalition comes under the governance of Citizens Advice London Steering Group (SG) which has delegated responsibility from London Citizens Advice Chief Executives for developing London partnership work, supported by the London Development Manager who is based at RCJ Advice. RCJ Advice formally 'hosts' the project as the accountable legal entity. The SG developed and completed an "expression of interest" application process with London Citizens Advice charities (LCAs) to allocate adviser/staff capacity across LCAs. This process prioritised LCAs supporting more deprived communities. LCA delivery partners have sub-agreements with RCJ. RCJ's Finance Manager manages all financial aspects of the project.

The financial allocations to delivery partners reflect what is set out as budget heads in the agreement, and paid in instalments subject to satisfactory completion of financial monitoring returns. In summary terms of how the expenditure is allocated against the agreed model:-

- Funding for adviser capacity of £890,000 to be paid by RCJ in restricted allocations to delivery partner LCAs for adviser staffing and support costs. Adviser staffing costs are based on a full cost recovery model (inclusive of on-costs) of £40k per FTE crisis prevention adviser and £50k per FTE specialist caseworker allocation.
- Funding to support Advice First Aid delivery, including a FTE training lead role (£50k full cost recovery) of £99,000
- Remaining funding of £211,000 allocated to central support including for project management, finance support, resources, translation (including individual languageline accounts for delivery partners), website, communications and events, research and evaluation.

### **Project Mobilisation**

The project formally launched on July 9<sup>th</sup> 2022 at an event with the Mayor of London at Citizens Advice East End (CAEE). This was fitting as CAEE covers three of the top four most deprived boroughs in London, as well as some of the most diverse boroughs – namely Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham. Community partners and LSST Centres of Excellence in East London also joined the event. The event received positive media attention and helped establish a number of project working relationships. The Mayor also met a number of CAEE service users, and heard first-hand about the cost of living challenges they were facing and the services provided by local Citizens Advice and partner organisations.



The initial weeks of the project focused on finalising agreed allocations and preparing sub-agreements for LCA delivery partners, ongoing consultation across the network enabled London Citizens Advice to finesse the model and build in co-production with delivery partners. During the mobilisation period, an operations group developed project documents and tools including guidance, templates, and setting up operational support essential for LCAs to commence delivery. During this period delivery partners identified local boroughs' needs, voluntary sector support provision and commence engagement re potential partnership/collaborative working arrangements. It was important that the project provide flexibility which enabled LCAs to adapt the model to their way of working, community partners, local outreach arrangements and networks whilst ensuring a full range of cost of living support was available to Londoners, from information to advice and casework. The

project guidance therefore specified CPAs should offer benefit checks and debt assessments.

### *Recruitment challenges*

Recruitment was completed by LCAs who successfully applied for roles. Whilst the majority of LCAs were able to appoint Crisis Prevention Advisers and Specialist Caseworkers, some, similar to many in the charity sector, experienced recruitment difficulties. Posts were advertised from mid-July onwards. Several LCAs found they were unable to recruit externally (some completed two recruitment rounds) so appointed internally through redeployment of staff, and in some instances trainee advisers were promoted to CPA roles. Recruitment, inductions and training new staff (including notice periods and annual leave commitments) or moving and training advisers from other projects in a planned way resulted in unavoidable delays in all advisers joining the project. Nevertheless over the first few months, all delivery partners recruited either Crisis Prevention Advisers, Specialist Caseworkers or both. RCJ Advice recruited a Project Manager over the summer with SG members as part of the interview panel. Project Manager joined in mid-September. Recruitment challenges/delays inevitably had an impact to anticipated project mobilisation, for example:-

- CA Barnet were unable to recruit a Specialist Caseworker during two initial recruitment rounds but were successful on the third attempt, with their Specialist commencing in November.
- CA Brent and CA Barking & Dagenham CA conducted internal restructuring in order to fulfil staffing requirements for the project, starting project delivery later than planned.

### *Project Induction and early months*

Five project induction meetings were scheduled for advisers and operational leads in September and October. The induction meetings included detailed project overview – aims, targets, AFA - and opportunity for Q&As. Q&As raised in induction meetings were also shared with all advisers/operational leads. Reporting guidelines were developed and shared with delivery LCAs, detailing the project reporting requirements and expectations and a project funder code was set up in Casebook. All delivery partners were provided with a project Language Line account.

During the first delivery quarter, sub-regional area delivery meetings led by Specialist Caseworker and LCA were also held to start building project relationships between LCAs in their delivery hubs.

In addition to regular meetings, the Project Manager commenced a schedule of visits with LCAs to build project working relationships, fully understand the development and implementation of local service delivery, monitor project delivery and discuss any queries or issues arising. CA Westminster, CA Redbridge, CA Hounslow, CA Merton and Lambeth and CA East End were all visited by the Project Manager in the October to December period. Regular project meetings with delivery partners' operational leads and advisers discussed all aspects of project operations including sharing best practice, experiences, and lessons learned. The London Development Manager also updated the Steering Group as to mobilisation challenges and other developments with the project at each SG meeting.

## Monitoring data – outputs and outcomes

Following discussions with GLA in March 2023, London Citizens Advice implemented a new enhanced reporting framework to record and report the extensive range of advice and support being delivered. Whilst previous reporting to GLA used Casebook (Casebook is the Citizens Advice national client management system which records client advice across the network), London Citizens Advice new reporting system for GLA provides information on the following for regional Crisis Prevention Advisers and Specialist Welfare advisers:

- clients supported (advice assessments, advice appointments and casework);
- number of appointments;
- number of advice issues
- engagement (raising awareness and information support only) including cost of living Events and community group talks/presentations - both numbers of Londoners directly supported and total attendance numbers.

The framework operates through a new shared project spreadsheet developed for all delivery partners to input and update. The responsibility to update data rests with the CEO/Project Lead from each delivery partner. Where there are queries to, say, emerging trends or inconsistencies, the London Citizens Advice Project Manager discusses and clarifies with the LCA Project Lead before monitoring reports are submitted to GLA.

### **Crisis Prevention Advisers**

The data reports clients supported (1st appointment), total number of appointments and number of advice issues for each of the five regional delivery areas to end-February 2023. As highlighted above owing to a combination of factors the project mobilisation period was longer than anticipated. December was also impacted by closure over the festive period.

**Figure 3: Crisis Prevention advisers – appointments and issues**

<b>Advice &amp; Casework, Appointments, Issues – Crisis Prevention Advisers</b>									
	<b>Mobilisation Aug 22 - Oct 22</b>			<b>Nov-22</b>			<b>Dec 22</b>		
	Clients	Appointments	Issues	Clients	Appts	Issues	Clients	Appts	Issues
<b>East</b>	61	111	110	47	52	66	57	70	85
<b>North</b>	0	0	0	63	113	201	164	232	536
<b>Central</b>	116	136	391	123	162	544	111	177	754
<b>South East</b>	8	9	10	88	67	272	55	59	100
<b>South West</b>	162	347	1264	164	281	740	103	203	626
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>1775</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>1823</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>2101</b>

<b>Advice &amp; Casework, Appointments, Issues – Crisis Prevention Advisers</b>						
	<b>Jan - 23</b>			<b>Feb – 2023</b>		
	Clients	Appointments	Issues	Clients	Appts	Issues
<b>East</b>	94	186	192	82	146	142
<b>North</b>	327	394	931	309	425	766
<b>Central</b>	157	223	714	139	206	519
<b>South East</b>	83	66	196	98	85	268
<b>South West</b>	206	356	1059	227	390	1202
<b>Total</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>1225</b>	<b>3092</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>1252</b>	<b>2897</b>



## Specialist Caseworkers

The data reporting for specialists caseworkers follows the same structure and trajectory. Owing to recruitment challenges, the Caseworker for North London did not commence working with the project until December.

**Figure 4: Specialist Caseworker – appointments and issues**

Advice and Casework – Specialist Caseworkers									
	Mobilisation Aug 22 - Oct 22			Nov-22			Dec 22		
	Clients	Appointments	Issues	Clients	Appts	Issues	Clients	Appts	Issues
<b>East</b>	32	50	48	38	54	62	39	111	68
<b>North</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	12	109
<b>Central</b>	41	61	211	27	63	702	15	28	519
<b>South East</b>	0	0	0	7	11	65	9	23	72
<b>South West</b>	7	7	45	12	18	55	6	7	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>811</b>

Advice and Casework – Specialist Caseworkers						
	Jan			Feb		
	Clients	Appointments	Issues	Clients	Appts	Issues
<b>East</b>	57	175	114	55	153	110
<b>North</b>	19	32	239	16	32	347
<b>Central</b>	23	37	161	17	23	142
<b>South East</b>	17	37	127	15	44	144
<b>South West</b>	12	24	121	28	30	142
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>885</b>

## Engagement

In addition to advice and casework, the project supports Londoners in their communities through a wide range of engagement such as pop-up stands, public information events, cost of living roadshows, and opportunities for one-off inquiries.

**Figure 5: Engagement and events**

Engagement – information, one off inquiries/light-touch support, and events						
	Mobilisation Aug 22 - Oct 22		Nov-22		Dec 22	
	No of people receiving information/support	Total no attending events	No of people receiving information/support	Total no attending	No of people receiving information/support	Total no attending events
<b>East</b>	73	75	67	60	27	73
<b>North</b>	70	115	68	102	30	66

<b>Central</b>	68	118	140	195	20	200
<b>South East</b>	0	0	29	103	71	136
<b>South West</b>	147	545	149	374	6	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>485</b>

<b>Engagement – information, one off inquiries/light-touch support, and events</b>				
	Jan		Feb	
	No of people receiving information/s support	Total no attending events	No of people receiving information /support	Total no attending events
<b>East</b>	62	125	49	57
<b>North</b>	23	12	34	36
<b>Central</b>	118	402	70	455
<b>South East</b>	71	106	53	313
<b>South West</b>	135	162	46	174
<b>Total</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>1035</b>

## Summary

	<b>To end-Feb 2023</b>
Number of Londoners supported by CPA	3044
CPA total Number of Advice Appointments	4496
CPA total number of advice issues	11688
No of Londoners supported by specialist welfare	503
SA appointments	1032
SA advice issues	3646
Engagement Londoners supported	1626
Engagement total attendance	4014
Total activity by region	
<b>East</b>	840
<b>North</b>	1134
<b>Central</b>	1185
<b>South East</b>	604
<b>South West</b>	1410

## Advice Issues

Looking at the breakdown of issues that clients sought advice support for, 47% relate to benefits, 16% housing, and 14% debt. These top three advice issues are similar percentages we experience for core generalist Citizens Advice support in London boroughs with high deprivation/poverty.

**Figure 6: Advice issues**

<b>Advice Issues</b>	<b>% of clients</b>
Benefits & tax credits	33%
Benefits Universal Credit	14%
Charitable Support & Food Banks	5%
Consumer goods & services	1%
Debt	14%
Employment	2%
Financial services & capability	2%
Health & community care	1%
Housing	16%
Immigration & asylum	3%
Legal	1%
Relationships & family	2%
Tax	1%
Travel & transport	1%
Utilities & communications	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Within this, with the Cost of Living crisis, demand for housing support includes high demand to support clients facing significant rises in rent and/or service costs (and therefore debt support) and also a rise in tenants facing potential or actual eviction.

The range of advice issues supported alongside total advice issues in tables above, also illustrate the complexity of challenges Londoners are facing and the comprehensive advice support provided. Where specialist services/support such as Immigration is available (either within London Citizens Advice network or other organisations), advisers will refer clients for specialist support not within the GLA project.

Looking at the advice appointments and issues, the project is supporting Londoners with more challenging advice issues (when compared for example to local citizens advice generalist (core) support) and project advisers are supporting more Londoners with ongoing appointments and support. Londoners supported by Crisis Prevention Advisers have an average of nearly 4 advice issues each. This rises to an average of over 7 advice issues per client supported by Specialist Welfare Advisers.

Another data variable highlighting the extensive and complex nature of client work undertaken by advisers is casenotes on Casebook. Over 8,200 casenotes have been entered by advisers in Casebook under the GLA funder code. 53% recorded as detailed or casework.

## Financial outcomes

**Figure 7: Financial outcomes for clients**

Income gain (e.g. new or revised benefit award, charitable payment, unpaid wages)	£1,729,658
Reimbursements, services, loans (e.g. food bank vouchers)	£13,308
Debts written off and repayments scheduled	£1,480
Repayments rescheduled	£180

Financial outcomes reflect monetary impact of advice support provided to date. Debt (write-offs and agreed payment reschedules support) which reflects 14% of all advice issues involves months of client support and liaison with third parties including use of Breathing Space and Debt Relief Orders. The financial outcome figures for this area of specialist support are not available until known.

## Demographic data

The demographic tables below illustrate the reach and engagement of this project. Whilst some categories are not dissimilar to demographic trends for clients supported through LCA core generalist services, there are a number of interesting variances which we explore further below.

### Gender, age and health

Client gender demographics reflect ratios London Citizens Advice charities and other advice organisations support generally speaking. In terms of age, the percentage of Londoners aged 25-34 years is significantly higher for the Cost of Living project. This reflects that the cost of living crisis has no boundaries when it comes to age and the community based proactive focus of this project. The percentages for 35-49 and 50-64 are also higher reflecting again the wide impact of the cost of living crisis.

**Figure 8: Gender and age by percentage**

Gender	Client %
Female	60%
Male	34%
Prefer not to say	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Age	Client %
15-24	3%
25-34	15%
35-49	34%
50-64	32%
65+	14%
Prefer not to say	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

51% of clients disclosed they are disabled or have long-term health conditions. This is significantly higher than core Citizens Advice services across London (average 34%). Many clients, for understandable reasons, although identifying as disabled may choose not to disclose specific health conditions. 55% of those identifying as disabled elected not to disclose specific conditions. Of the 45% disclosed, a higher percentage than average disclosed mental health conditions and multiple impairments.

**Figure 6: Clients and disability**

Disability & Health	Clients
Disabled and or long term health conditions	51%
Not disabled/no health problems, or not recorded/prefer not to say/unknown	49%

Breakdown of disability/health issues (COLC clients)	Client %
Cognitive Impairment	1%
Mental Health	9%
Multiple Impairments	17%
Not Disclosed	55%
Other Disability or Type Not Given	4%
Physical Impairment (non-sensory)	13%
Visual Impairment	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Ethnicity and language

When compared with core generalist advice, for example, the cost of living project supports a higher percentage of clients who describe their ethnicity as Black or Black British – African; Black or Black British Caribbean and Asian - 41% compared to 32% for core services. This reflects the proactive engagement and working partnerships with community and faith groups.

**Figure 9: Ethnicity data**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Client %</b>
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	4%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3%
Asian or Asian British - Other	6%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	3%
Black or Black British - African	13%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	7%
Black or Black British - Other	3%
Mixed - Other	2%
Mixed - White & Black African	1%
Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	1%
Other - Any Other	3%
Other - Arab	5%
White - British	13%
White - English	1%
White - Irish	1%
White - Other	10%
Unknown	10%
Not recorded/not applicable	4%
Prefer not to say	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

For clients where a first language other than English has been recorded, the following provides a breakdown of languages.

**Figure 10: First languages recorded**

<b>First Language</b>	
Polish	10%
Romanian	6%
Tigrinya	4%
Arabic	30%
Bengali	17%
B. Sign Language	1%
Bulgarian	2%
French	2%

Greek	2%
Hindi	2%
Italian	4%
Kurdish	5%
Lithuanian	1%
Other	2%
Portuguese	7%
Punjabi	4%
Russian	3%
Spanish	4%
Tamil	4%
Turkish	15%
Ukrainian	3%
Urdu	10%
Akan	1%
Albanian	4%
Amharic	3%
Gujarati	2%
Pashto	7%
Persian/Farsi	15%
Serb/Croat/Bosnian	1%
Somali	7%
Swahili/Kiswahili	1%
<b>Total</b>	100

### Language Line support

In addition to their own internal interpretation support (many London LCAs for example have a wide range of languages within their teams and utilise to support clients), all delivery partners have individual Language Line accounts to assist clients for whom English is not their first language. The table below shows the use of Language Line.

**Figure 11: Language Line data**

Language	No of calls
Arabic	25

Farsi	25
Romanian	16
Russian	16
Turkish	16
Tigrinya	15
Albanian	13
Polish	12
Ukrainian	10
Somali	9
Greek	8
Amharic	6
Dari	6
Portuguese	5
Spanish	5
Bulgarian	3
Japanese	3
Urdu	3
Sorani	2
Sylheti	2
Bengali	1
French	1
Lingala	1
Mandarin	1
Moroccan Arabic	1
Punjabi	1
Thai	1
Total	207



## Household composition and tenure

Single Person households are higher than average across core generalist support in London LCAs. Households with dependent children (single and couples) when taken together represent the highest percentage of clients.

Most clients reside in the privately rented and social housing rented sectors and a higher percentage describe themselves as Unemployed – seeking paid employment or permanently sick/disabled. The higher percentages of clients living in rented accommodation and permanently sick/disabled correlates with the data collected on advice issues, which shows that housing and benefits issues are higher, particularly issues regarding claiming sickness and disability benefits and issues relating to unsuitable housing.

**Figure 12: Household type and tenure, occupation status, & skills**

Household Type	Client %
Single Person	26%
Single Person With Dependent Children	19%
Single Person With Non-Dependent Children	4%
Couple	5%
Couple With Dependent Children	11%
Couple With Non-Dependent Children	2%
Other Adults Only	3%
Not recorded/not applicable	28%
Other adults and Dependent children	1%
Other adults and Non-Dependent children	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Housing Tenure	Client %
Own Outright	3%
Buying Home (Mortgage, etc)	3%
Private Tenant	23%
Council/ALMO Tenant	19%
Housing Association/RSL Tenant	13%
Staying with Relatives/Friends (Paying Rent)	1%
Staying with Relatives/Friends (Rent Free)	3%
Hostel	1%
Homeless (incl. B & B Tenant)	3%
Other	3%
Prefer not to say/unknown	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Occupation/Employment Status	Client %
Employed >= 30hrs p/w	5%
Employed between 16hrs p/w and 29hrs p/w	4%
Employed < 16hrs p/w	4%
Self Employed	3%
Unemployed - seeking paid employment	13%
Permanently Sick/Disabled	18%
Carer - Children	3%
Carer - Elderly/Disabled	2%
Looking After Home - Dependents	4%
Retired/Semi Retired	7%
Student	1%
Other	3%
Prefer not to say/unknown	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Literacy/Numeracy Skills</b>	<b>Client %</b>
Does client need support with literacy /numeracy skills? <b>No</b>	55%
Does client need support with literacy/ numeracy skills? <b>Yes</b>	15%
Prefer not to say/unknown	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Similar to health conditions, clients may not disclose they need support with literacy/numeracy skills. The 15% is higher than average of generalist support and anecdotal evidence from advisers is that the disclosure often comes through following a number of appointments.

## Case Studies

The following case studies are illustrative of the type of work with clients undertaken by LCAs as part of this project.

### North London

**Client A** was being charged for Council Tax at two addresses, with bailiffs instructed to recover the arrears. With Specialist Adviser support, Council Tax liability was halved and repayment schedule agreed.

**Client B** a Ukrainian refugee had come to the UK last year with her child; sponsored by her partner, they moved into his home in Westminster. But he became abusive towards her and she had to flee his home with her child; she was then placed in temporary accommodation in Enfield. Olena was struggling to support her child - she can't speak English and doesn't understand the benefits, billing or tax systems.

The adviser arranged an interpreter, checked her benefits and made applications for Child Benefit and Council Tax Support and assisted with other registrations. We assisted in applying for a reduction in her water bills and in obtaining an energy support scheme payment. We also put her in touch with local Ukrainian Community groups. Olena is now much more confident about living independently and able to claim all the support she's entitled to.

**Client C** a single man with physical and mental health issues who was in unfurnished social housing, had accumulated several debts (water, gas and electricity). He was also appealing a PIP decision. A debt assessment was undertaken, we secured him a small charitable grant to buy essential furniture, and are helping with his debts on an ongoing basis.

### Central London

**Client D** was living with her son in a one-bedroom flat with leaks, damp and mould; both have health issues and rely on means-tested benefits as their only income. She contacted her local Citizens Advice for support when she had reached crisis point after her landlord had increased her rent but hadn't been able to get an increase in her Housing Benefit, all her benefits income were now going on her energy bills and rent shortfalls.

Our crisis adviser dealt with the immediate crisis by issuing a food voucher and obtaining a Cost-of-Living award from the local authority, we then appealed their decision not to increase housing benefit in line with her rent increase. She was awarded Housing Benefit to cover her rent in full, backdated to the date of her rent increase. We also advised about landlord's

responsibilities to repair her property. In her thank you email Cheryl said *"I cannot thank you enough for your help... with your letter there was such a turn around and so quickly."*

**Client E**, a Bulgarian man in his 50s with settled status but suffering from health problems, presented as street homeless; he had been sleeping around train stations within the Central London area after he was evicted by his friend. He has problems with English; but a crisis prevention adviser took him through his options and rights, and made a homelessness assistance application on his behalf, advising the Council of his circumstances and providing his medical evidence and proof of PIP entitlement. He was placed in interim, supported accommodation outside the borough, but he felt the property was too far for him, as due to his conditions he can't travel without pain or effort. We advised around his options for challenging this placement and booked him for a consultation with one of our pro bono housing solicitors for further help and advice

### **West London**

**Client F** who was referred in by a community partner (Hestia); she had health conditions and literacy issues and hadn't heard of Citizens Advice before. She had been on the same income (Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support) for over 10 years, but found she was struggling to continue to afford anything. With our crisis prevention adviser running a benefit check we found she was entitled to Attendance Allowance and applied on her behalf; once she was awarded she was eligible for an extra element of Pension Credit (the severe disability element) which increased her income

**Client H**, an elderly lady, presented with difficulties paying for her skyrocketing bills, which were 50% more than last year; she had language barriers, was digitally excluded and struggled to understand her bill letters. Our caseworker established that she was overpaying her rent due to misunderstanding about a housing benefit shortfall, and assisted in creating online accounts for her housing association and the council to help manage her finances. She will be attending further English and digital skills classes to help her use these. We also assisted obtaining a refund (£8,000) for overpaid rent. She now feels much less scared about money and can afford her bills comfortably.

**Client I** was terminally ill and blind. After fleeing domestic violence she had been inadequately housed by the council in temporary hostel accommodation where her belongings were stolen by other residents as her door was left open by care staff and as she couldn't see she was unable to stop the thefts. She was referred to Citizens Advice when she was taken to hospital and hospital staff helped her contact us. Our specialist adviser urgently intervened with the council to relocate her, following discharge from hospital, to more suitable accommodation. She has now been housed in fully accessible accommodation which she can keep secure. A care package is also in place with regular carers she can get to know. We are providing ongoing casework regarding the theft and complaints about inappropriate accommodation; we are also assisting the client in obtaining new ID documents and opening her own bank account, reclaiming her financial independence since leaving her ex-partner.

### **South West London**

**Client J** picked up a Cost of Living project flyer at their local church and attended one of our drop in sessions. The client bought a carrier bag of letters, a number of which were unopened. The client shared with the adviser that everything had become too much, she couldn't open letters and was struggling to manage; she had a number of debts and was facing eviction.

The initial advice assessment also revealed the client had cut back on basic foods. Over a number of appointments (ongoing), the adviser supported the client with debts, eviction,

completed a benefit check and arranged food bank vouchers. For eviction, the adviser arranged for a service delivery partner's pro bono housing solicitor to advise. Client came to our office and attended a remote appointment with the solicitor and adviser supporting (client asked for adviser to join as felt unable to do alone). Eviction proceedings were halted and an agreed repayment schedule was arranged with landlord. Debt and cost of living support continues for the client.

## **South East London**

**Client K** whose first language is Yoruba, made contact via a foodbank. She had a query about their job centre appointment and issues with ID verification having had income and unable to access benefits as their passport and residency card were retained by the Home Office. Our Crisis Adviser supported the client by contacting in turn the Universal Credit Helpline, the client's immigration solicitor, and their landlord – who as a result agreed not to pursue possession whilst the issues are resolved. The adviser booked in appointments with our partner agencies the Council's welfare rights team and a specialist local housing rights agency. The client is now receiving emergency financial support, and Greenwich Housing Rights are helping with their housing issues.

**Client L** was supported by a specialist adviser in challenging a DWP decision to incorrectly award him the standard rate for Daily Living PIP. After helping the client submit an SSCS1 to appeal, compile medical evidence and by writing a submission letter for him, the DWP changed their decision and awarded the client the enhanced rate Daily Living and the enhanced rate Mobility, which means the client will avoid going to tribunal and the award is backdated to 28 April 2022. The client is now £95.05 better off per week (£4,966 per year), and he will receive a backdated payment of £4,372.30.

## Advice First Aid

As well as providing direct social welfare advice and support, the project works with community and voluntary sector partners, training volunteers and staff from those organisations through 'Advice First Aid' (AFA), to connect people experiencing hardship with the support they need to improve their circumstances. All LCA delivery partners are expected to support a programme of AFA delivery across London which is being led by a training manager based at Citizens Advice Wandsworth. There is an expectation that this engagement activity will result in the development of new referral pathways, and better reach by advice services into particularly disadvantaged communities, thus supporting the wider objectives of the project.

AFA involves providing Citizens Advice training to frontline workers and volunteers in other local partner organisations, faith and community groups to become 'Advice First Aiders' and equip individuals and groups with the skills they need to triage for advice, deliver initial support and guidance and refer into Citizens Advice when needed, building trust and developing community networks. Citizens Advice Wandsworth have developed this approach to capacity building with local partners over some years.

The Advice First Aid Pan-London Delivery Manager was recruited in November and has developed new training materials, which have been used and piloted with Wandsworth community partners. Prior to recruiting the delivery manager, CAW had worked out a delivery strategy for Pan-London AFA reach by scoping out two approaches to offer LCA delivery partners.

1. *Centralised delivery*: CAW as lead LCA produces the materials, manages and delivers the training to partners, and leads on the community engagement across the project supported by information from LCA delivery partners. Crisis prevention advisers from local delivery partner LCAs support the CAW trainer on each course, adding local information
2. *Cascaded delivery*: CAW as lead LCA develops 'template' materials (including presentations exercises/case studies etc. and trainers notes – with clear gaps for local information to be added) and then delivers 'training for trainers' to all participating LCA delivery partners and centres of excellence; CAW supports this delivery of the AFA training across the individual boroughs, quality assures it, and analyses feedback, but the delivery partners LCAs will deliver the training in their areas, adding local information to the course and marketing it locally.

The training sessions are highly interactive, with participants encouraged to ask questions and give examples of need in their community. Participants learn about thematic content such as debt, housing, benefit and income/expenditure referrals, as well as how to engage to get the right details, listening skills, Participants are introduced to online resources, and supported to use them when responding to case studies e.g. CA national site, turn2us, National Debtline.

An AFA induction session for all delivery partners was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022, which was very well attended. An outline of AFA aims and project expectations was presented as well as giving LCAs the opportunity to raise their suggestions, challenges and support needs. The Delivery Manager has then followed up with individual conversations. Between January and most LCAs had completed individual or group AFA induction, and have either started initial delivery steps or are planning delivery in the next quarters. 50% of LCA delivery partners have chosen the cascade model, i.e., leading AFA delivery locally supported by AFA delivery manager; a number of "train the trainer sessions" have been provided to support this.

For many LCAs, providing training and structured information sessions and induction for local community partners is not a new activity. Across London there have been many best practice examples of bespoke training sessions run by LCAs on financial capability, income maximisation, introduction to Citizens Advice etc for community partners, and some of these training initiatives have been running for years. So in addition to developing new content and sessions to extend AFA delivery across London boroughs, the AFA delivery manager has also been working with LCAs to explore delivery synergies with their existing community training.

Consistent with the overall approach of the cost of living project, the AFA delivery model is localised so that courses contain information about local sources of support – and how to access them, for example accessing help from the Household Support Fund, localised welfare schemes and charitable support. However, some content elements (eg., introductions to debt, benefits etc) are the same regardless of geography, so the AFA Manager has been exploring the potential of delivering some Pan-London sessions.

### Advice First Aid Summary Report January – March 2023

Advice First Aid training sessions delivered or supported by the Pan-London Training Delivery Manager are summarised as below (these figures are just for the AFA training sessions delivered to community partners, they do not include AFA induction, train the trainer sessions, or other pre-training engagement). As it is recognised that the programme necessarily runs behind the schedule for advice delivery and is developing, the March figures are also included.

Figure 13: AFA sessions

Session Type	Date	Borough	Main Trainer	Channel	Venue	N. organisations	N. attendees
AFA 2 day (Pilot)	24th/25th November	Wandsworth	AFA Mgr	in person			10
AFA 1 day	15/02/2023	Hounslow	AFA Mgr	in person	AACA	2	18
AFA 2 day	20&27 Feb	Harrow	LCA	in person	CA Harrow	2	10
AFA 2 day	6&7 March	Harrow	LCA	in person	CA Harrow	2	8
AFA 2 day	20&21 March	Harrow	LCA	in person	CA Harrow	6	9
AFA 2 day	21&22 March	Lewisham	AFA Mgr	online	Zoom	8	8
AFA 2 day	20&27 March	Croydon	LCA	online	Zoom	7	14
AFA 2 day	30&31 March	Enfield	AFA Mgr	in person	All People All Places	5	15
					<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>92</b>

Other AFA planning, preparation and promotion activity across the period includes:-

- Jan-Mar – Train the Trainer sessions: 6 LCAs completed “Train the Trainer” sessions. They are ready to deliver adopting the cascade model.
- 2 Feb 2023 - City Hall event with Mayor of London and Martin Lewis: More than 10 organisations enquired about Advice First Aid. These are being followed up.
- 23 Feb 23 - Lewisham Advice Partnership forum: Delivered ‘What is AFA’ presentation. Forum attended by more than 20 Lewisham organisations.
- 27 Feb 2023 - COL Learning Event at South West London Law Centres. More than 15 organisations enquired about AFA. These are being followed up.
- 7 March 23 - Hillingdon Citizens Advice: AFA induction with Hillingdon Citizens Advice. Train the Trainer session scheduled.
- 16 March 23 - Trussell Trust meeting: Initial planning meeting with Trussell Trust to plan tailored Pan-London AFA for foodbank volunteers.

Discussions have also started with other Pan-London networks, including the Kitchen Social programme facilitated by the Mayor's Fund for London, the Thrive London Mental Health Partnership, and the London Social Prescribers network (via Bromley by Bow Centre.)

The types of community groups and organisations that have attended/benefitted to date are varied, including the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association (ACAA), the Bridgelink Community Centre, North Enfield Foodbank (Jubilee Church), All People All Places (APAP), East European Hub and the Romanian Cultural Centre, North Harrow Library, Harrow Carers, Rethink, Who is Hussain, Alexandra School, the Skills and Training Network, Croydon social prescribers.

### **Feedback from AFA delivery to date**

Feedback has been unanimously positive, including the following comments from attendees in feedback forms.

*I learned a lot of things I didn't know. And where to find information not only for my service users but also for myself*

*Everything was clear and concise, not much could be improved, maybe timings of the breaks and the lessons.*

*Housing and immigration sessions were very helpful!*

*I'm confident where I can signpost my service users*

*'Everything was excellent, I'm so happy that I participated in this course. Thank you so much. Well done everyone!'*

### **Development and barriers**

Successful delivery of sessions in the second quarter is demonstrating the added value of the AFA programme to date. However the planning and delivery of AFA across multiple boroughs is a huge undertaking for one Training manager; they have been supported by the Project Manager who is also an experienced AFA trainer, and has assisted with some sessions. Citizens Advice Wandsworth have now recruited a second trainer to support the

programme (starting in April 2023). GLA funding does not extend to a second trainer post, this means that CAW will effectively subsidise this aspect of the contract.

How AFA sits alongside or complements LCAs existing training and support for community partners (eg., financial capability workshops) has been a challenge for some delivery partners. It is not the intention for AFA to duplicate or replace, but rather to build on good practice and existing community engagement. Adding AFA content and practice to existing partnership work and support for community groups is an approach we are exploring.

Advice First Aid is seen as really positive but there is insufficient funding to cover the costs of delivery partners to run courses themselves. Also if advisers or other staff are delivering AFA courses, this reduces capacity to support Cost of Living clients. A number of delivery partners have raised concerns as to impact on client support and project KPIs. For this reason, some delivery agencies are preferring the AFA courses to be delivered by the AFA lead agency or Project Manager.

Finally, whilst this project is of course focused on London, we are aware of the very considerable interest that the London AFA programme is generating outside London, and the team have had a lot of approaches from agencies and funders elsewhere interested in the AFA methodology, including from Bristol, Essex and Greater Manchester.



## Project Learning to Date

For London Citizens Advice this project is the first pan-London project since we came together towards the end of 2021 as an alliance of 28 local Citizens Advice charities to develop our partnership work and the London network. The project has involved working in a very different way encompassing both grant distribution and service delivery, co-ordinating at a London level between 20 LCA delivery partners and LLST partners.

The period covered by this report encompasses development, mobilisation and implementation of a new, innovative advice support project across London. To end-February, GLA Advisers and Caseworkers supported 3,547 Londoners, with 15,334 advice issues and 5,528 advice appointments. We supported a further 1,650 Londoners through engagement events and one-off enquiries and the project has helped to raise awareness/understanding of the Cost of Living crisis and support available to over 4,000 Londoners attending events. This engagement, alongside Advice First Aid training, is strengthening London Citizens Advice links with community partners, enabling new referral pathways and extending reach at an unprecedented scale.

We look at both what's going well and the challenges in the following analysis.

### Project successes - what's working well

**A new and innovative London Cost of Living advice support project - developed, mobilised and supporting thousands of Londoners in need including those who historically would not proactively seek professional advice support until the point of crisis.**

### **Meeting local need - residents, community organisations and London boroughs**

A key element to this project was always about reaching out, engaging with and supporting Londoners who perhaps previously would not have sought advice support until a point of crisis. This project is innovative in that although pan-London, we focus on local need. This is not a one size fits all approach (as highlighted below this is also a challenge).

### **Partnership working including establishing and building new working relationships (including referral pathways and networks) with community/faith groups and others**

The partnership's focus on engaging and working with communities has been an exciting initiative, with LCAs embracing the opportunity to deliver a project on an ambitious pan-London scale, complementing their existing strengths of local service delivery and links to voluntary and community sector networks. Examples include:-

- Citizens Advice Westminster running advice sessions at the Abbey Centre, St Vincent's Family Project, Walthamton and Elgin Community Homes and the Venture Centre. St Vincent's has joined Westminster Refernet Partnership, facilitating referrals between agencies, as a result of their engagement with the project.
- Citizens Advice Islington working with Brickworks Community Centre, Choices (an agency that provides pregnancy and parenting support for women), Help on Your Doorstep (a support service for Islington residents), Islington BAMER Advice Alliance, Islington Faith Forum and IMECE Women's Centre (which supports Turkish, Kurdish, Cypriot Turkish and BAMER). These agencies are already part of Islington Strategic Advice Alliance, but new referral routes have been created with this project.
- Citizens Advice East End now has a referral pathway with this project through Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network - THCAN (which is led by Island Advice Centre)

which offers a centralised web-based referral network in Tower Hamlets. Social prescribers, Local Authority departments, schools, and community setting organisations have joined the network to improve referrals across members and into the advice sector

- Citizens Advice Hounslow has built new outreach and referral arrangements with foodbanks and community agencies including the Afghan and Central Asian Association (ACAA) and Bridgelink Community Centre (BCC) in both Hounslow and Ealing. These did not exist before the project started, and have been facilitated through AFA sessions. CA Hounslow is also building a good relationship with Ealing Law Centre as a result of the project – including a referral route.

### **Stronger working relationships with LLST Centres of Excellence**

Our partnership working with LLST encompasses new referral channels and outreach delivery that prior this project not even anticipated. Examples include:

- In East London, University House have extended their outreach offer, and are now delivering outreach appointments at Citizens Advice Redbridge.
- In South London, Southwark Law Centre (a COEx in this project) and Cambridge House Law Centre have met with Citizens Advice Southwark to discuss and agree referral Pathways between them. Southwark Law Centre also works closely with Citizens Advice Lewisham to offer specialist advice to Lewisham residents (with 'Lewisham Law Centre' operating as an outreach of Southwark Law Centre but from Citizens Advice Lewisham's premises).
- Greenwich Housing Rights have been working with Citizens Advice Greenwich and are offering referrals to them via email, including for residents of Bexley and Bromley who have any housing issues via email; some of the outreach locations in which Greenwich's crisis prevention adviser is working are on the borough boundaries.

### **Financial outcomes and impact**

The project has already generated more than £1,7m in financial outcomes for Londoners. This demonstrates the benefits of both reach/engagement and range of advice support including specialist casework.

### **Strengthening London's voluntary sector understanding of advice and building capacity**

Both partnership/collaborative working and the Advice First Aid programme supports capacity building across the voluntary sector in London, strengthening the information and practical support that wider community organisations can offer their users, and the knowledge of how and when to refer into advice services.

### Project Challenges

There have also been a number of challenges both in the mobilisation period and beyond.

### **Impact of Cost of Living Crisis**

The cost of living crisis is more severe and enduring than any forecasts (including Bank of England) anticipated 12 to 18 months ago. The Cost of Living Crisis has and continues to impact Londoners, voluntary sector organisations and project delivery.

## **Recruitment in mobilisation**

Adviser recruitment during the mobilisation period was more difficult and prolonged than anticipated. The cost of living crisis has seen a significant rise in recruitment and retention challenges across the voluntary sector in the UK. Lower - relatively speaking - voluntary sector salaries when compared with public or private sector organisations resulted in valued staff moving out of the charity sector in 2022. With high cost of living in London, many London based charities including project delivery partners experienced significant changes.

Our experience also reflects a wider systemic challenge for advice services in London as identified in the London Funders report published last year on the advice skills gap.<sup>ii</sup> We highlighted recruitment challenges to GLA at an early stage of the project and GLA colleagues agreed delivery partners could have different, staggered start times over the first delivery quarter.

## **Establishing, building and maintaining working relationships with new community partners**

Developing new outreach and referral routes with community partners takes additional time and capacity, including significant involvement of delivery partner senior managers. Logistical challenges included suitability of outreach venues, timing outreach sessions for maximum footfall and working out whether they are best delivered by drop in or booked appointments, and getting local partnerships arrangements/agreements into place. Some delivery partners have not achieved all that they hoped for to date in developing outreach, amidst competing priorities in small and overstretched LCA management teams.

The challenges are around getting 'traction' in and with community and faith agencies, and then securing a flow of referrals. This can depend on the skills, experience and capacity of the community/faith agency. Many community and faith agencies lack the resources to engage on a regular basis. Their engagement depends on building a trusting relationship with the delivery partner – this can take time. Relationships don't necessarily flow from a single phone call to a community agency – it requires generous investment of time by both parties - site visits, clear explanations of how the advice agency works, interpreters to break-down language barriers, on-site in-person outreach and training. For example, Citizens Advice Harrow sent a Somali speaking supervisor to speak with a local Somali group. The feedback was positive, and CA Harrow set up a referral facility for the group – but no referrals have yet been received.

## **Specialist Welfare Advisers working across regional hubs**

Combination of recruitment challenges and for the majority of delivery partners a new approach to partnership working, specialist adviser support took longer than expected to fully implement. Some delivery partners were slow to engage with the opportunity given by the project to refer cases to the specialist caseworkers. In discussing the new reporting framework with service delivery partners, we're now also aware that some crisis prevention advisers have been supporting clients with casework, so are less inclined to refer clients to specialists. London Citizens Advice Project Manager continues to work closely with LCAs and specialist advisers to ensure recent months improved performance continues.

## Consistent and relevant reporting given range of delivery models

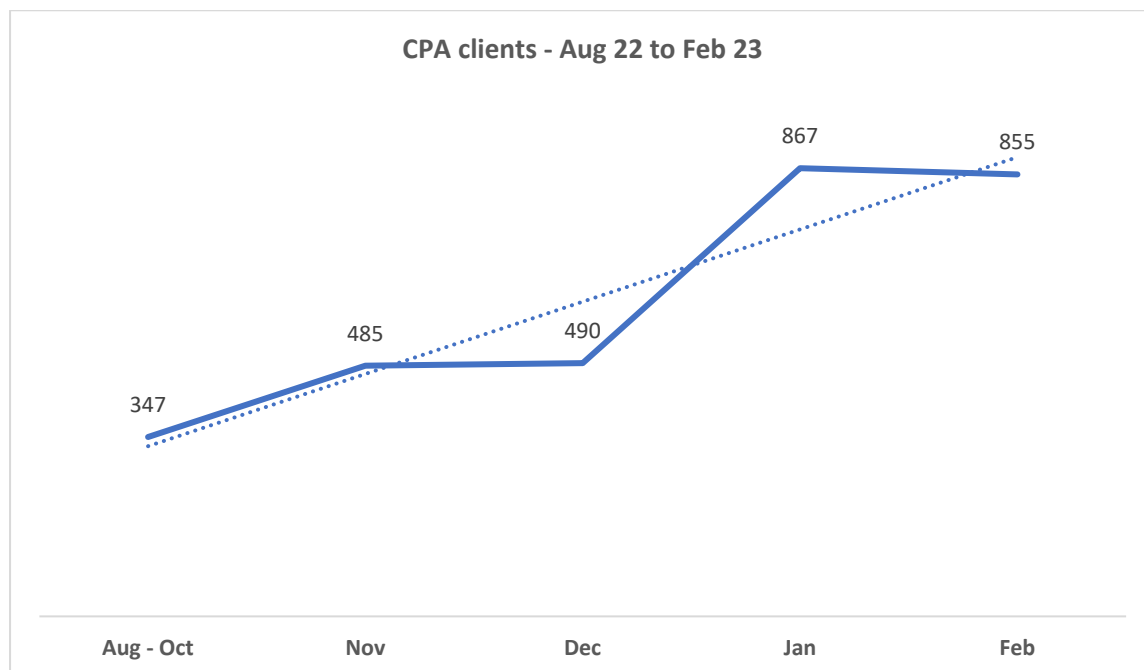
The focus on local need, has resulted in a range of delivery models and advice support. Whilst this “bespoke” approach is addressing gaps in vital support and benefiting Londoners in need, the different models and ways of working meant it has been difficult to capture relevant consistent data using Casebook (Citizens Advice client advice management system) alone. The client advice and engagement reporting framework developed and agreed with GLA in March 2023, addresses these challenges.

## Quality of advice support vis-a-vis client numbers

This cost of living project was always ambitious - a completely new one year project involving extensive partnership and collaborative working across London supporting Londoners in need affected by what is now recognised as the worst Cost of Living crisis for decades.

Initial discussions to potential reach of the project over a full year were based on informed estimates at the time. As discussed in the report, the impact and scale of the cost of living crisis likely means the project will not meet the indicative client supported figures. However, the London wide engagement, working partnerships, professional and comprehensive advice support means we’re meeting Londoners needs, many of whom are in crisis. This is also evidenced with the financial outcomes achieved to date.

**Figure 14: Increase in client support over time**



We have seen a significant increase in the number of clients supported by the Crisis Prevention Advisers, following on from the initial mobilisation period between August and October 2022. This can be attributed to developing and embedding referral and outreach pathways with local community organisations and in some LCAs adopting a flexible approach to client engagement i.e. drop in sessions, telephone appointments, outreach, cost of living and community events.

## Final observations on delivery challenges

Mobilising across so many partners within a complex ecosystem of advice and community networks has inevitable challenges. The challenges have been similar to those identified in

the GLA's previous Advice in Community Settings Programme (AICS). The AICS evaluation identified mobilisation and partnership 'teething' issues that delayed some delivery, these included (i) Establishing partnership agreements (ii) Recruiting managers and advisors (iii) Difficulties accessing some community settings and venues (iv) establishing data sharing protocols (v) Establishing referral and signposting agreements.

There are also other factors within the ecosystem as well as the external environment that can impact on project delivery, but are often unexpected, beyond delivery partners' direct control or problems to which quick fixes can't be applied. For example some agencies have faced potential or actual loss of core funding sources, whilst others have been undergoing changes in executive leadership or service restructures. We have implemented project management structures to ensure that the project is ring-fenced and sits apart from core services (and other workstreams), but that does not mean that it operates in a vacuum. In a connected ecosystem of advice provision project work can be vulnerable to external factors.

## Learning and Development

London Citizens Advice is committed to incorporating the ongoing learning and strengthening partnership across London's advice sector, building the working relationship with GLA, LLST and other stakeholders. London Citizens Advice and LLST continue to meet at least monthly, and there are regular catch-ups between the project managers.

The joint London Advice Development Group with London Citizens Advice, GLA and LLST is an important element of partnership working, learning and development. The group has met three times and identified common issues including managing and collating data, and gaining a better understanding of advice categories (eg., generalist, specialist). A half day workshop on data issues is being planned. London Citizens Advice and LLST have also pooled their resources allocated in respective agreements for research and evaluation. Following a tender process, Phil Jew was appointed as our joint learning partner/consultant in January. The evaluation framework developed by the consultant is aligned to the same theory of change that was used in the evaluation of the GLA's Advice in Community Settings (AICS) Programme.

In early February, LCA delivery partners joined an online meeting to discuss project progress and share experiences and best practice to date. Our learning consultant and LLST partners also joined the discussion. This report incorporates London Citizens Advice participant contributions.

An in-person midway learning event jointly developed with GLA and LLST was held toward the end of February with South West London Law Centres hosting at their Croydon office.

The independent project evaluation report after a year of operation will focus on learning of the entire project with conclusions. Our initial assessment of the challenges, including drivers of divergence between the delivery data and initial expectations is that it's almost impossible to isolate a single driver, or even set of drivers underlying this divergence. The wider operational context and localised approach is key; the project is complex, not only with multiple delivery partners but also a range of delivery models reflecting local expertise, local knowledge and local residents/organisations needs and demands resulting from the cost of living crisis.

### Lessons learned to date

**Mobilisation.** If working with a one-year project timetable, be realistic. For planning and resourcing incorporate a contingency from the start. New projects take time. If possible, separately specify the mobilisation period and then full 12 months service delivery period.

**Recruitment.** Successful recruitment usually takes longer than expected.

**Partnership working.** It not only takes time to establish and build new community partnerships, but it requires significant involvement of delivery partners' senior managers (not only at the start but also in supporting ongoing relationships).

**Cost of Living Crisis.** No one forecast the depth and length of the current cost of living crisis. Projects should be able to flex if external factors impact project delivery and clients supported.

**Relevant and consistent data.** If organisations' usual case management system is not capturing full project work, think wider, work with project partners and develop a framework that provides what is needed.

#### Lessons being learned and relevant for ongoing project development

**Strategic Partnership working.** The partnership basis for the commissioning of this project is a welcome way of working. As the approach is different from other commissioners/funders London Citizens Advice charities work with, both parties are still learning about their respective priorities and how to co-produce the best outcomes for Londoners. The continuing development of strategic partnership with GLA, London Citizens Advice and LSST is a key element to the ongoing success of the project and the future development of London advice provision.

**Pan-London advice project prioritising local London needs.** With the benefit of hindsight, should we have adopted a simple, more straightforward advice delivery model that applied across London? From a management perspective alone, absolutely yes. However, we are charities. Our focus is people in need. This project includes supporting Londoners who would not readily seek professional advice support. The local needs focus, whilst complex, is working for the benefit of Londoners.

**The scale of the project, however, means we need to be realistic to resourcing the project management team.** The London Citizens Advice Steering Group are actioning proposals to further support Project Manager and London Development Manager with nominated SG Chief Executive members on an ongoing basis.

**Managing and supporting delivery partners.** Given the range of delivery models and local mobilisation there has inevitably been some differences in service delivery performance. Performance across delivery partners ranges from some that are meeting and exceeding expectations, some that have struggled and reported only low client numbers, and some that are within a mid-range. Those delivery partners reporting low client numbers clearly impacts on the overall data and regional variance.

Consistent with the localised model and partnership basis of the project, London Citizens Advice's approach to addressing underperformance is through shared learning, peer support and follow-up conversations with the local project leads about challenges faced, rather than through instructions to advisers and their managers. A paper is being prepared for April Citizens Advice London Steering Group meeting with proposals if delivery challenges are not resolved, utilising a wider toolkit such as requiring benchmarked improvement plans and applying sanctions. As a final sanction, funds can be withheld or re-allocated by RCJ Advice in line with sub-agreements. Conversations are already underway with under-performing delivery partners. We hope that through this work we will begin to see improvements over the next two months.

**Client support and Advice First Aid.** The AFA model incorporates significant involvement of project advisers. The model has and will continue to be revised incorporating lower involvement of project advisers (to enable them to support clients). AFA works best where a

bespoke approach is adopted so that the training is well tailored to the needs of different groups in different areas, however the more it is tailored to suit local partners, the more work is involved. As a wider community of practice evolves around AFA there will be the opportunity to rebalance the local and pan-London approach.

**Policy and Campaigns.** An important focus of the project is to identify issues coming out of the cost of living crisis for Londoners that raise wider policy concerns, and what actions that partners can take forward to address these. The risk is that given the immense demands supporting clients and advice delivery, this important strand of work might be squeezed.

The London Development Manager organises a Research & Campaigns cluster group of London LCAs (bringing together staff and volunteers with an interest in policy) to share insight, case studies, research and campaigning work across London LCAs. The issues that have emerged are that:-

- Housing and housing debt stands out as a massive issue for low income Londoners - anecdotally advisers have flagged several issues from seeing increased eviction threats, disrepair, and problems of temporary accommodation. As housing is a specialist area of law, there is concern that there are not enough specialist housing advisers in London to refer to given the scale of this issue.
- Amongst the hardest to help Londoners are those that have no recourse to public funds due to immigration status.

The sub-regional cluster groups are also engaging in policy issues; for example CA Bromley run a month 'pod' meeting to discuss project issues with colleagues in CA Southwark, CA Lewisham and CA Greenwich - policy issues have been discussed at these meetings. They include disabled students accessing Universal Credit,<sup>iii</sup> Maternity Allowance vs SMP and UC - how Maternity Allowance is failing women and low income households.<sup>iv</sup> Policy and Campaigns work will continue to develop. Given operational demands, this important area of work will be led by the London Development Manager.

**Well-being and rising risk of burn-out.** The Cost of Living crisis follows two years of global pandemic. Whilst always managing high demands, advice support organisations have been providing front line services for over three years. Staff/team well-being across the project remains a priority. In the words of one of our Chief Executives "We continue to do our very best. We cannot do the impossible."

## Conclusions, recommendations and next steps

The project is progressing well on overall objectives, extending the reach of advice services and support to Londoners, and building strong foundations of partnership between London Citizens Advice, the Greater London Authority, the LLST Centres of Excellence, and the community sector.

However, there are systemic issues. The major issue for all advisers and delivery partners is supporting and managing the complexity of client demand. It should not therefore be concluded that challenges in meeting the outcomes for this project are the result of LCAs and advisers working at under-capacity. Rather the data and frontline feedback is challenging the assumption that much of the crisis service would involve triage and referral or one-off information and advice interventions. In reality, more complex advice and casework is needed by many clients to address cost of living issues. Unique client numbers alone do not tell the whole story.

The impact of the Cost of Living Crisis has been more significant than any forecasts anticipated 12 to 18 months ago. Delivery partners are working to meet demand and original

targets but this reach is unfeasible due to the complexity of client demand and community outreach logistics. Sometimes choices need to be made between reaching more Londoners, or reaching those Londoners who need the support the most.

This brings into scrutiny the project indicative client support outcomes/KPIs – recognising this is a completely new advice project and these were previously understood to be indicative only, as estimates of potential aggregate reach. It would be helpful for both partners to have a better understanding of priorities for this project going forward, with benchmarks that are co-produced.

For any benchmarking exercise, the AICS programme which supported 11 partnerships provides a useful point of comparison. To the end of September 2022, 1,766 Londoners were seen as part of the AICS programme (as we understand the data is inclusive of the initial pilot over 2019/20).<sup>v</sup> Notwithstanding mobilisation delays, twice the number of Londoners were seen within six months through the COLC project than were seen over the much longer duration for the AICS programme. However, projections and benchmarks need to be realistic, with consideration given to both scale and impact.

Building the community networks is one aspect of this project that we anticipate will have an enduring legacy, especially as we continue to scale and develop Advice First Aid training and embed advice in community settings. Yet even with a project of this scale, resources only stretch so far, especially for a project that is only of one year duration. It is important that the resources are directed to the frontline, as there is a risk that disproportionate resources get taken up with management and monitoring.

Another legacy from the delivery and experience to date is identifying policy issues, the drivers of financial exclusion and systemic problems that need to be addressed at a more public policy level, and to engage with decision-makers who can make a difference. Whilst this is not an advocacy project, unless some of the problems we see are tackled like rogue landlord practice, aggressive debt enforcement, are addressed it is hard to see what will change.

A final conclusion that we draw is about communications, at least at the strategic and chief officer level, and about shared understandings with all partners of project objectives, reporting frameworks, developments and challenges, and adjustments. There can be a gap between the strategic and the operational levels, to the extent that it becomes difficult to understand the relationship between the two. London Citizens Advice may also have been insufficiently integrated within the London Advice development group, and with the wider relevant discussions and initiatives that are mediated through other fora such as the London Specialist Advice Providers Forum, and the Advice workforce group.

## **Recommendations**

Incorporating the learning and responding to challenges to date, we are making the following recommendations.

- London Citizens Advice to maintain the agreed enhanced reporting framework in March, the new system of reporting on a shared google spreadsheet enables delivery partners to benchmark against each other
- London Citizens Advice Steering Group to implement an action plan to address areas of under-performance. This action plan will be led by a designated Chief Executive member and has three components.
  - Requiring an written improvement commitment against agreed benchmarks to be reached within a given period
  - Putting in place peer management support



- If necessary activating sanctions, including withholding or reallocating funds
- London Citizens Advice operational sub-group will be reformed and re-enforced, it will focus on and supporting delivery partners to get the best out of the project and supporting the Project Manager.
- There should be an enhanced role and remit for the London Advice Development Group; a Lead CEO for the London Citizens Advice Steering Group will join London at these meetings. This group should be tasked with some specific outputs on
  - Realistic expectations of reach
  - Planning further earning events, incorporating policy and data insights
- Given the delayed mobilisation and subsequent impact on delivery, London Citizens Advice can explore the option of providing an additional one to two months of service delivery beyond the formal cessation of the project.

## Appendix: Service Delivery Models

East	
Barking & Dagenham	<p>CP Adviser capacity supports residents with cost of living crisis support through assessments, pre-booked appointments and ongoing casework. Residents can be referred to advice by community partners or from B&amp;D colleagues; the project works closely with local “Cost of living alliance” linking agencies and community partners. Appointments and support provided both in person and via telephone, video conferencing dependent on clients’ needs and requirements.</p>
East End	<p>Crisis Prevention Adviser and Specialist Welfare Adviser work in communities, with partners and Centres of excellence (COEx), including:</p> <p>Key CofEx – Island Advice (TH), University House Legal Advice centre – TH, Tamil Welfare association (Newham), Mary Ward legal centre (Newham), Community Links (Newham). There is no centre of excellence in Hackney.</p> <p>Community organisations: Hackney – Turning Point &amp; Riverside, Newham – Tamil Welfare association. For Tower Hamlets, community organisations refer residents via the THCAN referral portal.</p> <p>The specialist has 9 Appointments booked throughout the week with 1 day for follow up work. Appointments for the specialist Adviser are for Welfare benefits specialist advice e.g. Appeals &amp; multiple debt work. Crisis prevention – General advice with limited casework. The crisis Adviser focuses on taking calls from Adviceline with support from trained volunteers. It is also the Crisis Adviser’s responsibility to co-ordinate referrals from community partners &amp; book them in for the specialist as well as refer to CofEx if appropriate. One off appointments are also undertaken by the crisis Adviser a couple of days a week and mainly includes one off advice with limited casework &amp; help with form filling.</p> <p>Keys challenges faced included early mobilisation difficulties &amp; engaging of community partners as well as setting up referral routes with Centres of excellence.</p> <p>Information sessions mainly in Newham as well as publicising of project at key cost of lining meetings in Hackney. Advice first aid &amp; time to support the trainer is a challenge particularly given high demand for CP Adviser and high contract targets for client support.</p>

Redbridge & Havering	<p>In mobilisation period CP Adviser appointed with initial period of training. Also liaised with organisations to discuss potential referrals and outreach sessions. We deliver outreach sessions at Ilford Islamic Centre and Cardinal Heenan Centre in Seven Kings. We also attend advice sessions at cost of living marketplace events arranged by Redbridge Council and held across the borough since October 2022. CP Adviser supports clients referred by external partners and R&amp;H team. We work with our local Centre of Excellence, University House, with weekly outreach advice sessions at Central Library in Ilford. We have established contact with a number of local community and faith groups and have had discussions regarding the AFA training offer, we are in the process of following these up and arranging the initial round of AFA training sessions.</p>
<b>North</b>	
Barnet	<p>Specialist adviser joined project and started supported clients in December. Agreed each LCA partner has access to 2 specialist slots per week.</p> <p>The adviser has 8 appointments per week, leaving them with 2 half days of admin or follow up work as required. In main provide telephone appointments and partner LCAs have the option of the adviser attending their offices when clients prefer face-to-face support. LCA partners are aware that if their CP advisers need to speak to the specialist for supervision or second tier advice, this is available. In terms of advice issues, highest demand benefits and debts, closely followed by housing matters. Depending on the needs of the clients and advice capacity, we have been able to provide appropriate advice and steps to support client to next steps or provide casework advice as needed. Our specialist is an accredited IMA member and also able to support clients with DROs. The number of referrals we received from partner LCAs have been lower than expected. With high cost of living demand in Barnet we now utilise any spare appointment to support local residents in need. We start AFA delivery in April and engagement to date has generated a lot of interest from community organisations.</p>
Brent	<p>Clients are referred to GLA service by partners and residents who have contacted CA Brent directly for cost of living support. Appointments are usually via telephone or face-to-face appointments, including at outreach locations. In appropriate cases, clients with complex issues needing further intervention are referred for GLA specialist advice service at CA Barnet.</p>

<p>Enfield</p>	<p>Crisis prevention role is supported by 2 PT (Job share) who started in November '22. Advisers are based in a single homeless outreach, foodbank and libraries, with 1 day in the office. Local libraries are Warm spaces and therefore appropriate outreach for cost of living support. We schedule 4 appointments per day. We use this delivery model because it prioritises new clients accessing our service through community partners seeing residents most in need - food poverty, homelessness, or Warm hubs.</p> <p>We average 1-2 referrals per week to Barnet specialist caseworker. We also make benefit and debt referrals to Mary Ward (centre of excellence). Referrals are sent by secure email with an agreed code and protocol. We are fortunate in having a British Gas funded project which has high targets for us to issue fuel vouchers for clients (in addition to FB Fuel vouchers). We issue a maximum of 3 per person in a 6 month period and focused issuing of vouchers for the December to March period. We have provided some follow up advice appointments by phone where possible. Clients have also been referred to our other specialist services including Disability Advice, Digital Exclusion, housing, and homeless prevention advisers.</p> <p>We have been promoting AFA with partner agencies and have not undertaken similar group sessions for a number of years, so this is relatively new for the team.</p>
<p>Haringey</p>	<p>We have engaged with 9 partners who send direct referrals; these include a number of food based organisations as well as a toddler group, a community centre and church. They have committed to setting up an advice network through which we can provide ongoing support to the individual services and their users. We are booking in Advice First Aid training with each of them. In addition we are attending local events and have attended 3 in total, however there has not been a large number of clients attending.</p>
<p>Harrow</p>	<p>CPA advisers (1 FTE over 3 roles) based in Harrow LCA and also outreach sessions at and deliver the project from our office mainly but also deliver monthly outreach sessions at Hillingdon LCA. We delivered outreach sessions to HASVO (local Somali organisation), Alexandra School, East European Hub and the Romanian Cultural centre and set up referral pathways for them as well as other organisations, including the Afghan social worker group who work for Harrow council. We produced a flyer/leaflet which was distributed at Harrow Advice Network meetings as well as Harrow Voluntary organisations, advertising the GLA COL project as well as offering AFA training. We accept referrals from external organisations as well as internally. CoL clients also benefit from Harrow's in-house benefits and debt caseworkers. We refer to Harrow Law centre as our centre of excellence and also Barnet CITA for their benefits and debt caseworker. We have publicised and independently delivered (with support) all 3 sessions for AFA training to various groups and this has been very well received and there is further demand for this.</p>
<p><b>Central</b></p>	

<p>Hammersmith &amp; Fulham</p>	<p>CP Adviser delivers 9 pre-booked appointments per week to clients referred by our network of 10 referral partners. These are Hestia, Turning Point (drug rehabilitation), CGL Alcohol service, West London Welcome (migrants), Mind Safe Spaces (in three locations), Barons Court Project (homelessness), Upper Room (homelessness), Midaye (Somali Support Group).</p> <p>The adviser also spends two days a week at our Help Hub, our outreach project in Shepherds Bush where they see up to 20 people per day on a drop in basis (with some then scheduled a booked appointment as appropriate). Specialist Adviser is receiving few referrals from our partners than expected but takes on the more complex issues from our CPA as well as more complex cases from across our borough. Our original specialist recently left the charity but has been replaced by two equally experienced advisers who job share, delivering the role in a similar way.</p>
<p>Islington/Camden</p>	<p>Camden - 0.5 FTE adviser delivers face to face and telephone advice from community locations. At the start of the project we contacted 15 local faith and community organisations to invite referrals. Since January 2023, we've been joining Camden's Advice Bus. The weekly mobile advice sessions are held in various locations in the community. The sessions have proved very popular, with over 100 residents attending some weeks to seek advice and support from advice organisations or council services. The advice needs of the residents seen on the bus range from benefits, housing, debt and more. Our adviser delivers holistic advice or carries out in-depth casework, depending on the clients' support needs. Complex cases are referred to our Centre of Excellence or the project's specialist adviser. Our adviser also gives information and hands out leaflets at these events to ensure residents are aware of the support available.</p> <p>Islington – 0.5 CP adviser supports advice delivery model based on referrals directly from community &amp; faith based groups (including Islington BAMER Advice Alliance &amp; Kurdish &amp; Middle Eastern Womens Organisation &amp; others). Delays in successful recruitment meant our CP adviser didn't start as early as planned. Adviser is proactive in meeting community groups, building referral relationships. Initially referrals were slow &amp; some no shows resulting in lower numbers than anticipated. Many clients supported require a casework model due to their complex needs. One case covered PIP appeal, referral to GLA specialist, COL payments gas &amp; electricity checks, warm home discount, rent arrears (&amp; referral to our debt team), RSS referral and local grant funder application made. The adviser has led on engagement attending COL council run events and being available on the debt bus. Engagement included speaking at IFF Networking events and in ISAP &amp; Community Board meetings. More recently our delivery model has shifted focusing on increasing access in our communities including referrals in the central &amp; south localities. The Spring edition of Islington Life, a magazine with large circulation includes an article about this project.</p>

Westminster	<p>CP adviser works in outreach locations with new partners including the Abbey Community Centre Food Pantry, St Vincent's Family Project and WECH housing association. Each of these partners is located in an area of multiple deprivation, and the first two are in areas of South Westminster where we have not had a regular presence previously. Our model is to pilot a mix of drop in and pre-booked appointments, with frequency of service determined by demand. In addition, the adviser attends regular CAW advice shop drop-in sessions, which are also attended by other advice agencies including Shelter, Carers Network, Age UK and Asylum Aid. The project is also enabling us to respond quickly to demand and to offer crisis advice at one off community activities and events such as a parents evening at a local school. We are looking to develop new relationships in order to continue to reach residents who have not yet come into contact with Citizens Advice services, including 2 new food pantries opening in North Westminster. We have successfully recruited to our first Advice First Aid session, which will train a number of community champions from our partner organisations. The main challenge is that it is hard to predict the number of clients at each session, and it is not possible to restrict clients to one appointment only in a community drop in setting. Referral to caseworkers is not always possible where the client is only comfortable in a specific face to face setting, e.g. a children's centre or food pantry.</p>
<b>South East</b>	
Bromley	<p>Specialist adviser. Delivery model includes monthly meetings with our SE London 'pod' – Greenwich, Lewisham, Southwark and Bromley. Referrals from partner CPA'S and internally (vulnerable clients affected by cost of living crisis). Appointments delivered in multi channel from F2F, telephone to video calls. Clients capacity and capability is taken into account when accommodating appointments. CIs are booked in for returning appointments which again can vary depending on clients needs. CA Bromley is extremely flexible with appointment bookings and is dictated with support the client and CPAs needs. Referrals to 'centres of excellence' (LRMN and SLC, LLC and GHR) for ongoing casework where more relevant/specialised/on other advice areas such as housing, debt, family and immigration. There have been challenges to find and utilise time to refer clients to centres of excellence when managing vulnerable clients with complex needs.</p>

Greenwich	<p>CP adviser works in Welcome Centres alongside food banks and at Advice hub one day a week. Also accept referrals from local agencies.</p> <p>Challenges include establishing sessions at Welcome Centres (very low take up at the beginning), building trust with the Welcome Centre staff and leaders, encouraging users of food banks to speak with adviser (many people still attach stigma to using a FB and as a result want to leave quickly), and receiving referrals from our partner agencies.</p> <p>We adopted this model as we believed a targeted approach at Welcome Centres would be effective, considering the discussions had with WC leaders highlighting repeat users of food banks needing advice support. We recognise that the time at the WC's, though productive for those users, is limiting in terms of a wider catchment of clients' who may need help and advice. More recently, we added a drop in at a busy community centre with a view to increasing our presence around the borough in similar settings.</p> <p>We are currently planning the AFA training.</p>
Lewisham	<p>Delivery model aims to identify the clients that can self-help through signposting and assisted information. This enables us to empower many clients to help themselves. We complete an initial assessment and identify the clients that are not capable of progressing on their own. These clients are then booked adviser appointments. We have completed DHP's, section 13a's, MR's, judicial review, appeals and applications for charitable support. We have met challenges with capacity.</p>
Southwark	<p>CP Adviser receives referrals through a number of channels i.e. email (which can be directly from the public or third party organisations), face-to-face drop-in and community events, and telephone. Adviser assesses these for need, capability and eligibility for the project and to provide advice as needed at an initial assessment. Our Adviser has up to 10 hour long appointments per week for more in-depth appointments where further support is needed either initially or as a follow up. We are looking at implementing two outreach venues very soon to service a hard-to-reach community south of the borough and a centre for migrants. We also run regular CoL Advice events, currently monthly/6-weekly as well as take part in other advice events across the borough to support other organisations and the council where we provide information and advice.</p>
<b>South West</b>	

Croydon	<p>CP Adviser supports referrals from a range of community organisations including Social Prescribers. Around 15 agencies make referrals into our service, with MIND, Age UK, Carer's services, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence charities amongst them. The mechanism for this is a simple online referral form (suitably GDPR and consents compliant). We then contact the clients by phone/email. We support clients by telephone and face-to-face using SWLLC offices and have undertaken a number of CoL surgeries with the Croydon Central MP, Sarah Jones. The level of advice is often advice and casework - casework that can be debt, benefits or of a generalist nature. We have a task list set up for internal referrals from Sutton and Kingston LCA's.</p>
Merton and Lambeth	<p>We provide a mix of open drop in sessions and pre-booked appointments depending on needs of community/faith organisations we're partnering and communities we work in. In Merton we partner with Merton Carers. They do not have space within their venue and they refer carers to adviser for pre-booked appointments in nearby CAML office. We developed CoL referral form for Merton Carers to support their staff when completing their (MC) carer assessment. Our CP Adviser also joins MC monthly team meetings so all aware of GLA project, CoL support and other CAML/support services. In Tooting we partner with Mishkil Aasaan. Their preference is for CAML adviser to be based at their organisation one day a week providing pre-booked appointments for service users. In Lambeth a faith alliance we initially approached to partner was experiencing internal challenges and ultimately did not proceed with project. We then reached out to a church very involved in their local community. Their preference was to raise awareness of project support via leaflets in their various groups/activities with CAML providing open door sessions with adviser based at our Kennington office. CAML also has a specialist welfare adviser who supports residents across 5 London boroughs (three our crisis prevention adviser works in, Hounslow and Croydon). Whilst referrals from LCA partners has been lower than anticipated, demand for specialist support from CAML's community partners, centre of excellence and CAML team has been higher. Our engagement work is extensive covering community group talks/sessions, raising awareness sessions for CoL support with voluntary sector/other organisation teams, Cost of Living presentations and supporting public Cost of Living events. Similar to a number of London boroughs, Merton Council runs Cost of Living events open to all residents. These are on Saturdays, approx every 10/12 weeks with average of 10-15 organisations/council departments attending. Demand for CAML's support at these events is the highest of all organisations. The main challenges - establishing and then developing new partnership working with organisations who work in a very different way to accredited advice organisations and balancing capacity demands client demand/support, engagement work, and more recently request to support AFA training.</p>



Hounslow	<p>The project is delivered from our offices and 5 new outreach venues spread across the boroughs of Hounslow and Ealing, at the heart of some of the most deprived areas in the boroughs. From the outset, we focussed on forging new collaborations to expand our presence in the community, working alongside other frontline services. We are operating from religious centres and community centres on a drop-in basis, working primarily with foodbanks and minority ethnic groups, such as the Afghan and Central Asian Association (ACAA), where we help many refugees including many Ukrainians as part of a recent initiative of the ACAA. Moreover, we regularly attend a series of CoL marketplace / roadshow events held at different venues, jointly with the local authority and VCSE organisations, where our advisers provide information and advice to residents on the spot. We also accept email referrals from new partners. We utilise 2 advisers (1 FTE paid combined) and 1 volunteer, which helps us distribute support geographically. Clients are first assessed on initial contact with our GLA advisers at outreach or office drop ins; those who need more support are booked appointments with our GLA advisers or supported internally by our pool of advisers when our GLA advisers have no capacity. We have been making some referrals to our local Centre of Excellence, though this was mainly for other emerging issues (housing, immigration) as many of our clients need legal support with these. We have also made some referrals to the specialist caseworker at CAML, though perhaps not enough referrals; we realised this is because the issues we are presented with are more of a generalist nature and can be dealt with in house. However, we have held meetings with the specialist caseworker and discussed how to make better use of her appointments and her knowledge going forward.</p>
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#### Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Advising Londoners An evaluation of the provision of social welfare advice across London (GLA & Advice Services Alliance) July 2020

<sup>ii</sup> Addressing the Skills Gap within Advice Services (London Legal Support Trust) May 2022

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/disabled-students-excluded-from-claiming-universal-credit-smith/?trackingId=EqhajSx0Tn2Um959MsB1hw%3D%3D>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/flaws-maternity-allowance-vivien-smith/>

<sup>v</sup> Advice in Community Settings Programme – initial evaluation, Wavehill, February 2023