

Overview of Community Advice Worker Project Trial – May 2026

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Recommendation: To continue the project as it has established a clear need for the service, which is well-utilised with a growing number of clients and proven outcomes.

The advice worker has capacity to see more clients and so CCC should increase marketing and promotional activity to try and target 10 more drop-in clients per month as an initial target.

Consideration of how to foster more partnership working between voluntary sector groups to ensure that the anticipated secondary outcomes of the scheme are delivered needs to be undertaken.

Background

In August 2024 the City Council entered a two-year trial with CAB Arun and Chichester to provide a community advice worker based at the Council House to provide advice and support for residents in crisis.

At the time that the trial was launched, the proposal was expected to deliver the following aims identified in the Council Business Plan:

- Community advice and signposting
- Improved Council House facilities to accommodate services
- Voluntary sector networking

The project expected to deliver the business plan aims by:

- Improving City Council relationships with both the voluntary sector and with residents.
- Offering guided support and help residents navigate a fragmented and confusing landscape for support.
- Helping to establish the case/need for further improvements to the building to incorporate better community spaces and enhanced services.
- Reducing the number of residents in crisis and reduce demand on other services.

Expected outcomes of the project were:

- Greater engagement with residents (measured by number of people accessing services)
- Greater engagement with voluntary sector – project would require close partnership working across the community
- Raised profile of the City Council with residents
- Enhanced reputation of the Council as the representative of the community.

Agreed measures of success were:

Quantitative outcomes:

- Number of people seen
- Value of benefits claimed

- Additional support sourced (e.g. Foodbank vouchers issued, referrals to other organisations, etc.)

Qualitative outcomes:

- Individual case studies
- User feedback and thank you letters, etc.
- Follow up feedback from community partners.

Secondary outcomes anticipated included:

- Development of new services as unmet needs are identified.
- Development of new consortia and partnership projects and funding bids between voluntary and statutory sectors.

To date the trial has cost £79,832.04, with an additional £11,247.50 anticipated to be spent by the end of August 2026 bringing the total trial cost to £91,079.54 over two years.

Results

Quantitative outcomes:

Since the trial launched in August 2024, up until the end of April 2026, the pilot has seen 541 clients, assisting them with a total of 1,310 issues that they needed help resolving. Of these issues, 911 were non-financial issues and 399 involved a financial element.

Of the 911 non-financial issues that the service has dealt with, 789 (86%) have resulted in clients having a better ongoing ability to manage the issue or condition.

399 of the issues dealt with involved a financial element, and in those cases, clients have realised financial gains totalling £1,147,706.87 with the largest single award being the resolution of a tax dispute of £650,000. Even discounting the anomalous award of £650,000, the remaining clients have recovered £497,706.87 in previously unclaimed or disputed benefits and entitlements, tax refunds and other payouts from multiple sources.

The most common issues clients have presented with are

- 1) Benefits and tax credits, including UC (25%)
- 2) Housing (13%)
- 3) Legal (9%)
- 4) Relationships and family (9%)
- 5) Debt (7%)

Comparisons with the CAB service at East Pallant House show a marked difference in the age profile and key issues of the clients, indicating that the CCC service is complementary to the existing offer in the City and is therefore meeting a previously unmet demand. The age profile of users of the service at the Council House is considerably older than users at East Pallant House, where the service tends to deal with more housing related issues and a younger demographic. This is probably reflective of the District Council's statutory duties as a housing provider, which drives clients seeking assistance with housing claims to their on-site CAB advice service.

Most clients access the service via the drop-in facility, with nearly 50% advising that they engaged because they saw the flag outside the building. This indicates that there is ongoing value in having a high street presence for an advice service and that many users would not have otherwise engaged with the service.

In addition to time spent in face-to-face appointments, since May 2025 the CAB have captured the number of hours spent completing follow up and casework activities. This currently totals 382 hours, or just over 20% of the advice workers time for the 12-month reporting period May 2025-April 2026.

A face-to-face appointment generally takes 2.5 hours, which accounts for a further 840 hours or 48% of the advice worker's time. This indicates that there is still capacity within the role to undertake more work, with the role just under 70% utilised. Further promotion and publicity should be undertaken to ensure that the advice worker is running at nearer 90% capacity, which would equate to a further 372 hours of combined casework and/or appointments.

Assuming that the casework load remains at 20% of their time and an average appointment last 2.5 hours, this means we should be aiming for an extra 10 drop-in clients per month to fully utilise the value of the role. CCC communications activity should adopt this as a target for the coming 12 months.

Qualitative outcomes:

A library of case studies has been collected over the duration of the trial, which are attached at appendix 1. They show the diverse range of issues and outcomes that the service has been assisting with and the impacts that they have had on individuals.

Secondary outcomes:

New services identified and developed have been limited, but the project did identify a need for a Hygiene bank distribution point in the city centre, which is now hosted at the Council House.

The City Council is continuing to grow its role as a community hub and connector, hosting regular community forums and key events such as the Arun & Chichester CAB AGM, which are helping to build community networks across the city, but more work is needed in this area.

Conclusion

The service has delivered clear and measurable benefits to residents and has ensured that £1,147,706.87 has been returned to their pockets. 86% of service users are now better able to manage their issues and have seen improvements in their day to day living conditions.

There is still capacity within the existing post to increase the number of clients seen and further promotion and publicity of the service should be a target for City Council communications activity.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the service should be continued beyond the 2-year trial period as it offers an essential lifeline to vulnerable groups. Clear targets should be set with the communications team at CCC to ensure the role is fully utilised.

Appendix 1: Case Studies

Q2 (July 2024-September 2024)

The client is an 87 years old, female who owns their own home but is living alone after the passing of her husband a few months ago. The client's presenting issue was concern over some calls she had received as she believed they were a scam. After discussing details of the calls and what action the client had taken within the call our adviser was able to determine these were likely scam calls, as a result our adviser discussed the latest scam awareness signs to look out for and supported the client to contact their bank to get a charge-back on the money and an investigation started. Our adviser also identified that the client was suffering from loneliness since the passing of her husband, however, she was uncomfortable going to group sessions/clubs and only occasionally had contact with one much younger neighbour, who works full-time. Our adviser was able to make the client aware of Age UK's home visiting scheme, which supports clients to ease their loneliness without having to put themselves in situations where they are not comfortable, such as such as attending large group events. The client was happy to be referred to this service.

The client left feeling more confident dealing with scam calls going forward and optimistic to engage with support services for her loneliness.

Q3 (October-December 2024)

The client was 62 years old, single and unemployed. There were discussions over their late mother's estate and how their older sister was handling things that worried the client. The client was stressed and the issues with the estate were adding to their stress and worries about finding employment and being able to afford their rent and bills.

With our advisers support the client was able to understand their rights around their late mother's estate, understand mediation support that is available should the situation become too difficult for the sisters to discuss alone and provided support to start their Universal Credit claim. By starting their claim, the client now understands that they will get the employment support they are seeking. The client said they were less worried and felt relief knowing how they will pay their bills and make ends meet and they are confident moving on the discussions with their sister.

Q4 (January 2025-March 2025)

The client is an 81-year-old, retired man, who lives with his wife in a home they own outright. They have been struggling to get the help needed on understanding their pensions, and wanted to know if there was any support out there as the husband's health was worsening and the strain this put on his wife/the household both financially and otherwise.

Our adviser supported the client and his wife to get a lasting power of attorney in place as the husband recognised the rapid decline in his health. Our adviser also supported the couple to make an application to Attendance Allowance as they were worried about filling out the form incorrectly and weren't sure of some of the information to provide.

Since engaging in the service, the client has started to receive the higher rate of AA at £108.55 per week. The couple have now started to get the help they need with a carer funded by the attendance allowance. They are delighted to have had the help as it allows them the ability to plan for their future and be more in control.

April 2025

Client was 58 years old, married, unemployed and a homeowner. They were seeking support with a Personal Independence Payment application form for their partner who they had Power of Attorney for. The client stated they did not understand the question or their relevance to them needing support.

Our adviser was able to go through the PIP application form with the client and explain the need to have this information. After speaking with our adviser, the client was happy to fill in the form and with our support completed and sent the form to DWP.

The client found out they have received the lower rate of PIP daily living (73.90 per week) and can now afford to pay for a carer to support their partner when they need to leave the house for personal appointments and errands.

The client was glad and incredibly grateful that we were able to help them understand and complete the necessary forms.

May 2025

Single man, unemployed, living in student accommodation although he did take a year out due to poor mental health, he was seeking support with a homelessness application to the council.

The client was refused access to emergency accommodation due to no local connection, no work in the area over the past 2 years, and no registered address in the local area, due to being a student and still being registered at home. The client wanted information as to his next options.

After exploration it seemed the client was not clear on the reason for the refusal, once the council explained this to our adviser over the phone we were able to go through the options with the client as the council decision was correct. We discussed possible benefit entitlement, gave the client details of possible alternative accommodation, discussed rental options, discretionary housing payment (DHP) and the access to work scheme.

Although the client was unhappy that the District Council would not re-house him, he was satisfied that he had a variety of options that he could take further and was confident in actioning them himself.

June 2025

The client is a 72-year-old female, retiree who owns their home.

They initially approached the service as they were confused over the process for divorce and were worried about their finances as their ex-husband controlled the finances throughout their 34-year marriage.

The service supported the client by providing knowledge of the divorce proceedings and direction on what to do next. As well as support with budgeting.

This gave the client a sense of relief that she knew the process; the client also felt empowered and more confident in their financial independence.

She said she is very grateful for the services help and feels listened to, which was important for her, as her ex-husband has been very difficult to deal with.

July 2025

The client is self-employed but retired, aged between 66-76 (client did not want to share their specific age), they own their home outright. The client dropped into the service as they had a question about Universal Credit regarding migration from tax credits as they were initially confused as to how or what they could claim for.

Our adviser supported client to understand their entitlement to Universal Credit, which was not straight forward to begin with as they were over state pension age. Our adviser also explained to client the migration process, ensuring they were less apprehensive about the process and knew what to expect.

As the client was concerned about their finances our adviser also completed a benefits check, although it did not show any additional entitlement at this stage the client was given the knowledge around self-employment expenses, the minimum earning threshold for Universal Credit and if their circumstances change the eligibility criteria for Pension Credit and the link to apply.

The Client said they felt better as they knew the migration process which eased their anxiety, and they had been supported with knowledge around potential options in the future should their circumstances change.

August 2025

The client was a single, 32-year-old male, who was privately renting and currently unemployed. The client came in as they were struggling with the cost of living and were concerned with falling into debt.

The service supported the client to undertake a benefit check and found client was eligible for new style Job-Seekers Allowance, new style Employment Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

The client said they were confident in completing the PIP form after some information from the service. The client has since informed us they have completed their PIP form and they are waiting to hear back about a decision. They are aware that if they are turned down, we can support them to challenge the decision.

The client was incredibly grateful for the service and said he hopes he will be in a better situation going forward.

September 2025

The client was a single, retiree who lives in a housing association property with multiple complex health conditions.

The client approached the service after they received a migration notice to move from legacy benefits to Universal Credit, due to clients complex health conditions they were not able to manage/start their Universal Credit claim online.

Our service supported the client with their carers to access an iPad which they could keep and use to make and manage their Universal Credit claim online going forward.

Our service was able to support the clients migration to Universal Credit and ensure they received their transition protection meaning they were not financially disadvantaged by moving over to Universal Credit.

Client said they were grateful for the support from Citizens Advice and the iPad the service was able to acquire for client as they now feel more independent and in control of their finances.

October 2025

The client was a pensioner, single, owned their own home and disabled. They approached the service to gain a better understanding and further information on the different types of discrimination. Specifically, they needed more understanding of direct and indirect discrimination before proceeding with potential action they might take.

Whilst the service was able to support with this we also highlighted to the client the additional rules for disability under the Equality Act 2010 which they thought were particularly relevant to their issue.

As the client had previous experience working within the justice system, they felt confident actioning the information they had been given themselves but were grateful to the service for giving them the confidence and empowerment to move forward and advocate for themselves.

November 2025

Client A

The client visited the Chichester City Council (CCC) drop in, they were a parent with children, one of who had additional needs, and were facing homelessness after being told to leave accommodation provided by the home office and given two weeks to find alternative accommodation. The client was distressed about the situation and came into the drop in seeking support in gaining a response to their situation.

The adviser contacted Chichester District Council (CDC) on the client's behalf and raised the issue blocking the client from the register and the fact that the client had only been given a very short time to get accommodation for them and their children and could not get a response from the homeless help at CDC. The client had tried to contact and get clarification repeatedly with no avail and only with the help of the CCC Adviser was the client promised a response as a matter of priority.

The client returned to the drop in the next day, and the Adviser further supported the client by contacting CDC and speaking to someone from Housing Allocation who agreed to investigate and fix the issue of not being able to access the Homemove register. The Adviser also advocated for the client asking if they could pursue the homelessness application for the client due to them only having two weeks remaining at the property and two children living with them. The person at CDC agreed to request a callback for client. The Adviser advised the client of the next steps once the Homemove register was reactivated.

Without this support of the CCC Adviser the client may not have had the capacity to deal with this stressful situation alone, especially with two children to care for. This drop-in service

was an important resource for this client to seek support in a challenging moment and move forward their situation which they were stuck in.

Client B

The client is an older client, living alone in the house that they own. They are retired with no partner and children who have grown up and now live away. The client wished to apply for AA but was struggling with the completion of the forms and understanding clearly what the questions were about. The client needed help to discuss each question and clarify their replies. They explained to the Chichester City Council (CCC) Adviser that they would not have completed or applied for AA without help.

The CCC Adviser helped the client to complete the forms, added the relevant information and advised the client regarding time scales for receiving AA and any appeal process. The Adviser also provided the client a copy of the forms for their own information. By the support provided by CCC to help fill in these forms, the client achieving the minimum for AA will enable them to use this money to aid their quality of life. Such as to be able to arrange a taxi to go out, to be able to have a gardener or cleaner and to meet friends for a coffee.

The client stated that they would not have been able to complete the forms without CCC assistance. It took the Adviser two hours to complete the forms, and the client felt that this would have been overwhelming to do on their own. The client will benefit from the AA to enable them to be freer in their social activities and choices, and without this service and the support of the CCC Adviser this would have been far more challenging to achieve or may have never happened.

December 2025

The client visited the Chichester City Council (CCC) drop in, they were a parent with 2 children, one who had additional needs. The client attended the drop in as they were facing homelessness after being given two weeks' notice to leave their temporary accommodation provided by the home office, the client was distressed about the situation and came into the drop in seeking support.

The adviser contacted Chichester District Council (CDC) on the client's behalf and supported to resolve the issue blocking the client from getting on the housing register. The client also explained they had not could not get through to the council for homelessness support; with the help of the adviser the client was contacted by Chichester District Council and provided a response as a matter of priority.

The client dropped in again later in the month as they could not access the Homemove register, the adviser supported the client by contacting CDC and speaking to the Housing department who agreed to investigate and fix the issue as a matter of urgency

Due to the support of the adviser the client was able to make their homeless application, get onto the housing register and access the platform to start bidding for properties. Without this the client may not have had the capacity to deal with this situation alone, especially with two children to care for. The drop-in service was an important resource for this client to seek support in a challenging moment and move forward their situation.

January 2026

Background

The client, a long-term private tenant, had lived in their rented home for eight years. After the recent passing of their landlord, management of the property transferred to the landlord's child and a letting agent. Shortly afterwards, the letting agent informed the client that the rent would be increasing by £300 per month, providing no written notice and giving less than one month's verbal notice.

The client, who is dyslexic, felt pressured and overwhelmed. Although they initially agreed verbally to pay an additional £100 for a couple of months, the letting agent insisted on a permanent increase of £300 per month going forward. No written confirmation or amended tenancy agreement was provided. The client became distressed when the letting agent threatened eviction if they did not comply, stating they could easily secure a tenant willing to pay £300 more per month.

Issues Identified

- The client did not receive written notice of the rent increase.
- The tenancy agreement did not contain a rent review clause.
- The client, due to dyslexia, struggled to communicate their concerns in writing.
- The letting agent's behaviour raised concerns about unlawful practice and potential revenge eviction.
- The client lacked knowledge of their rights under an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST).

Support Provided by the CCC Adviser

The CCC Adviser offered extensive practical and informational support:

- Tenancy Agreement Review - The adviser went through the client's tenancy agreement with them and identified that no clause permitted a rent increase, meaning the letting agent could not lawfully insist on the proposed rise without proper procedure.
- Clarification of Tenant Rights - Using information from the Shelter website, the adviser explained the client's rights under an AST, including:
 - The correct legal process for rent increases
 - Requirements for written notice
 - Protection from retaliatory (revenge) eviction
 - Changes under the new Renters' Reform legislation introduced in May
- Communication Support - Due to the client's dyslexia, the adviser helped draft a formal letter to the letting agent addressing:
 - The unlawful nature of the rent increase

- The lack of written notice
- The client's request for all future communication to be provided in writing
- Their rights concerning eviction threats
- Housing Options Guidance - The client was given information about:
 - The CDC housing register for over-55s
 - Housing associations that accept applicants aged 55+ without requiring prior registration

Outcome

With support from the CCC drop-in service, the client gained clarity and confidence in managing a situation that had caused significant distress. They were able to challenge the letting agent's actions through clear written communication—something they would have struggled with independently due to their dyslexia.

Without this intervention, the client may not have accessed the information and advocacy needed to protect their housing rights and could have been at greater risk of unlawful eviction or financial hardship.

February 2026

Background

The client is a 74-year-old man, a homeowner, recently retired after giving up a part-time job. He is the primary carer for his wife, which places additional pressure on his time and wellbeing.

The client sought support because he was struggling to understand a tax letter from HMRC and needed help with applying for both a Blue Badge and Attendance Allowance (AA). He does not use the internet, does not own a mobile phone, and had become increasingly confused and distressed trying to navigate services that are primarily online.

He reported feeling frustrated and overwhelmed. Although he attempted to resolve the situation on his own, he was unable to locate the HMRC helpline number on the letter and had no means of accessing guidance or application forms online.

Presenting Issues

- Difficulty understanding correspondence from HMRC regarding outstanding tax
- No digital access and low confidence navigating administrative processes
- Need for support with Blue Badge and Attendance Allowance applications
- Confusion about tax payments, tax coding, and where his P45 was held
- Increasing emotional distress caused by inability to resolve issues independently

Actions Taken

HMRC Support & Financial Clarification (duration: 40 minutes)

The client was supported to contact HMRC by phone during their drop-in session. This enabled him to:

- Confirm the exact tax amount outstanding
- Verify that HMRC held his P45
- Understand that his tax banding would be adjusted once arrears were paid
- Time included navigating automated menus, waiting in the call queue, and discussing his case with an HMRC adviser.

Support with Paying the Tax Owed (duration: 20 minutes)

Following the HMRC call, the client was assisted in gathering the correct payment details, including sort code, account number, and reference numbers. These were written down clearly for him, and the process for completing a bank transfer was explained step by step.

Guidance on Attendance Allowance & Blue Badge (duration: 30 minutes)

The client was informed of the Attendance Allowance process and eligibility. We called the telephone claim line and requested a paper form with him, given his lack of online access he could not complete the online version of the form himself. The client will get in contact once their form arrives to book an appointment to complete their AA form. He was also informed of the Blue Badge process and eligibility, this is another online form and once we have completed the AA form we will also support to complete the Blue Badge form.

The adviser is then required to write up their notes of the interaction which took 40 minutes in this case due to multiple issues and its complexity. This brings the entire interaction with the client at the drop-in to 2 hours 10 minutes.

Outcome

With support, the client gained a full understanding of his tax situation. He was able to speak confidently with HMRC with support, make payment, and received reassurance that his tax code would be corrected for the coming year—resulting in reduced tax payments.

He now has a direct route to begin his Attendance Allowance claim and Blue Badge form. The client expressed significant relief, stating that he would not have been able to navigate any of these steps without in-person help due to his limited access to technology.

Impact

- Improved financial stability through corrected tax banding
- Reduced anxiety and increased confidence in dealing with HMRC
- Access to essential financial and mobility support pathways (AA and Blue Badge)
- Greater understanding of how to manage official correspondence

Enhanced wellbeing through reassurance, practical guidance, and the ability to move forward with previously overwhelming tasks.