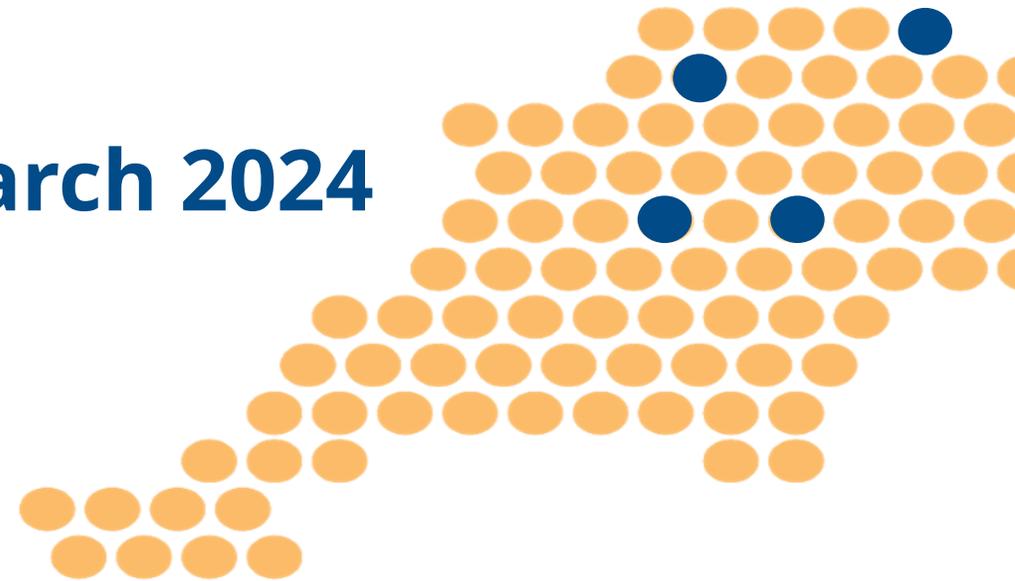


The difference we make in Somerset: our impact

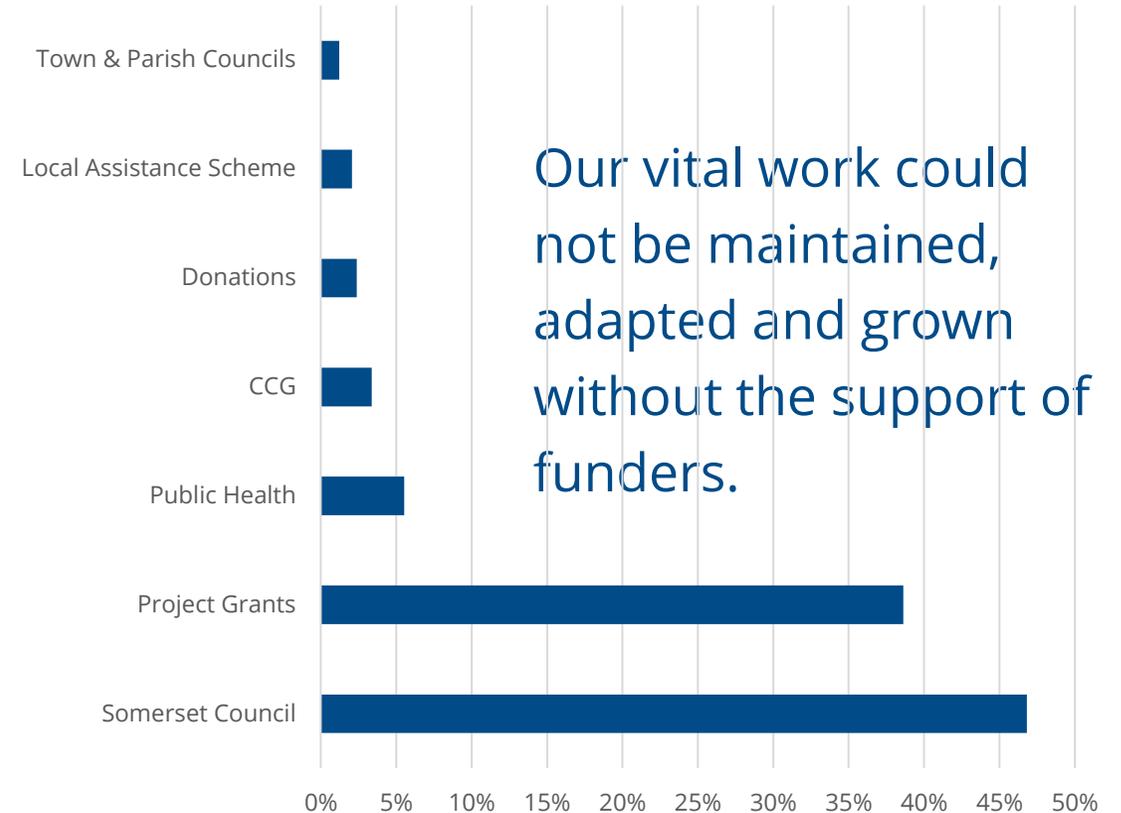
1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024



What we do

We provide a high quality, responsive advice services that meet clients' needs to:

- act early to prevent a problem becoming a long-term issue
- get help to address critical issues and crisis
- tackle the under-lying causes of financial distress and inequality

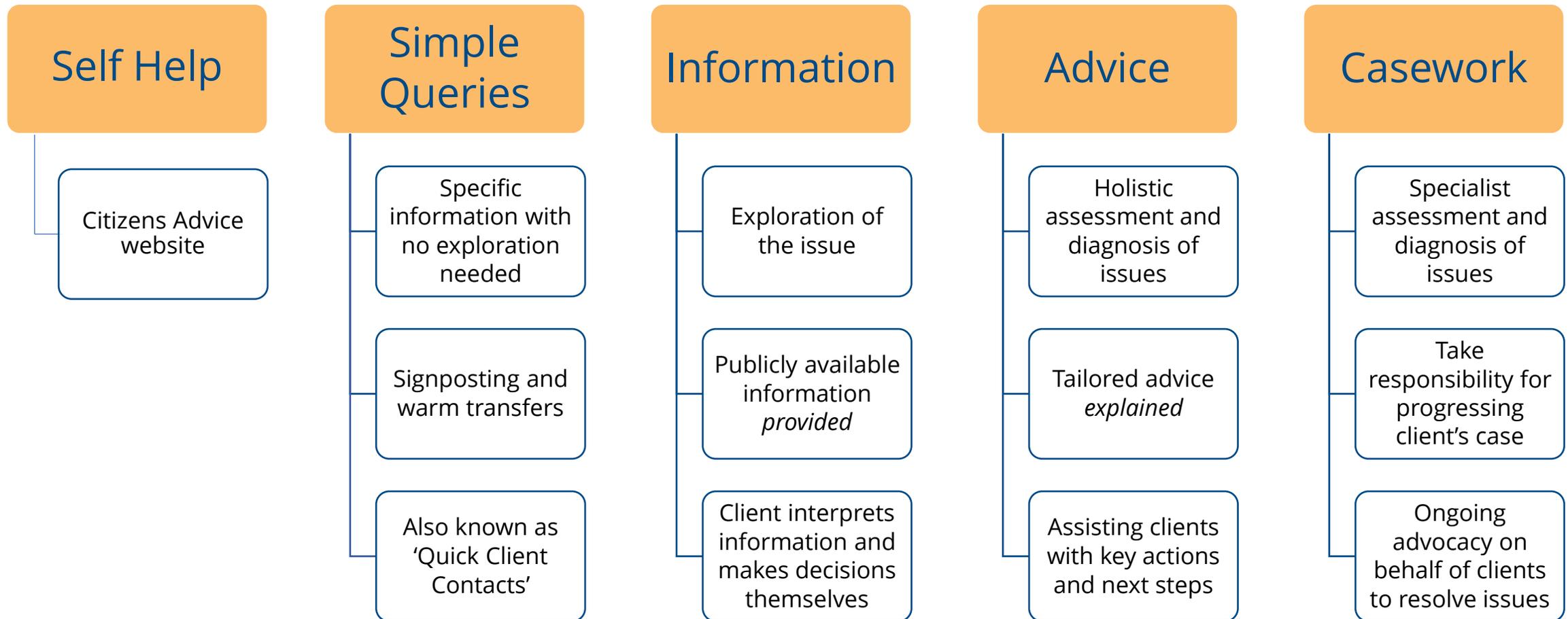


Our service is complex.

We collect a large amount of information to measure how our various projects deliver advice.

How we help

Our service assists people in different ways, depending on their needs and issues. Many people receive multiple 'tiers' of help.

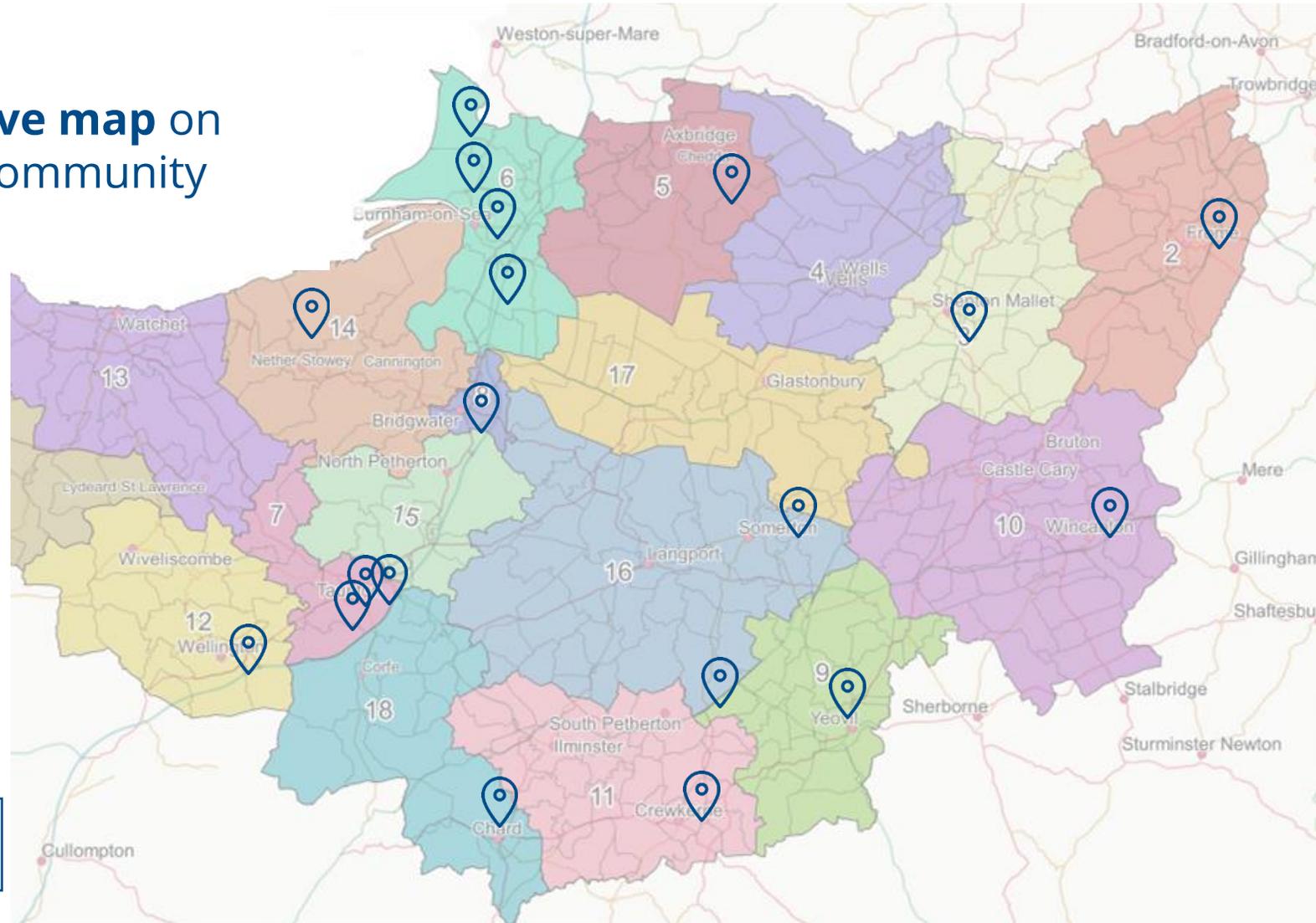


Where we help

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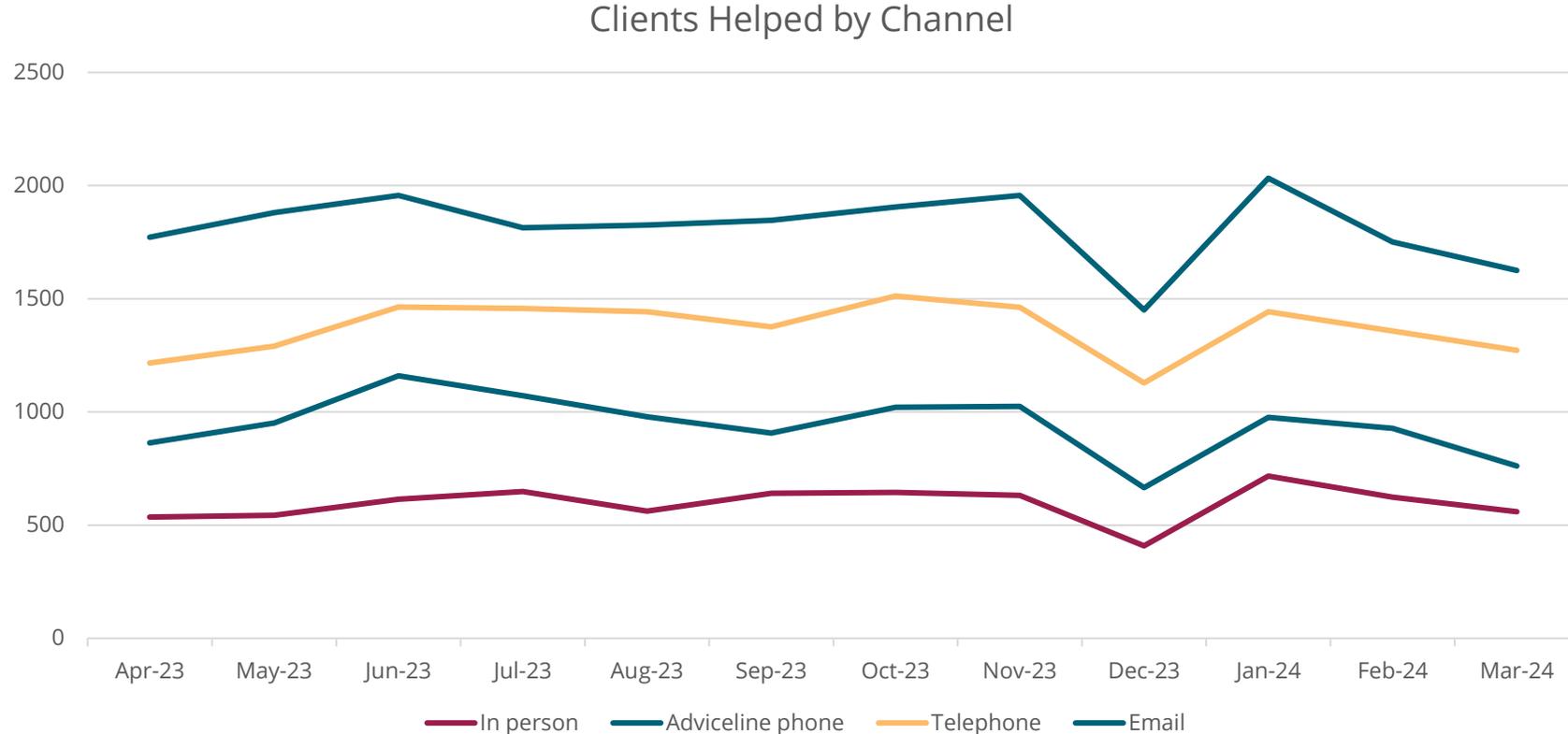
Please see the **interactive map** on our website for all our Community Access Points



at 31/03/24

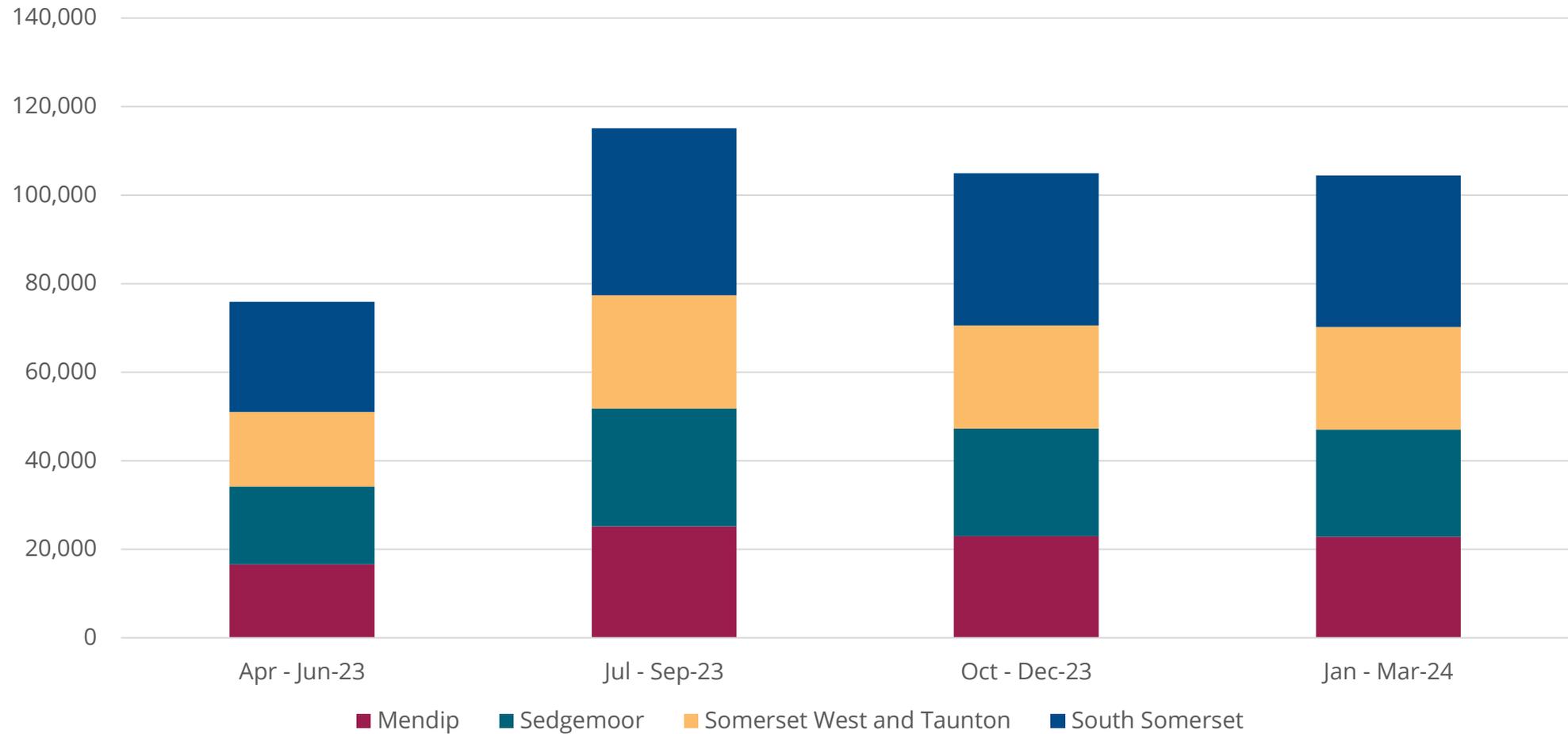
Channels of advice

We record the channel for each interaction between advisers and clients. If a client and adviser interact across more than one channel (e.g. a phone call and an email), a count of one will be added to each channel.



Self-help

Number of visits to Citizens Advice website from Somerset (estimated)



Who have we helped?

Between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024 our service was open to anyone in need of advice.

For people with complex problems or specific needs, specialist help was available through our variety of funded projects.



22,634
Clients helped

Activities



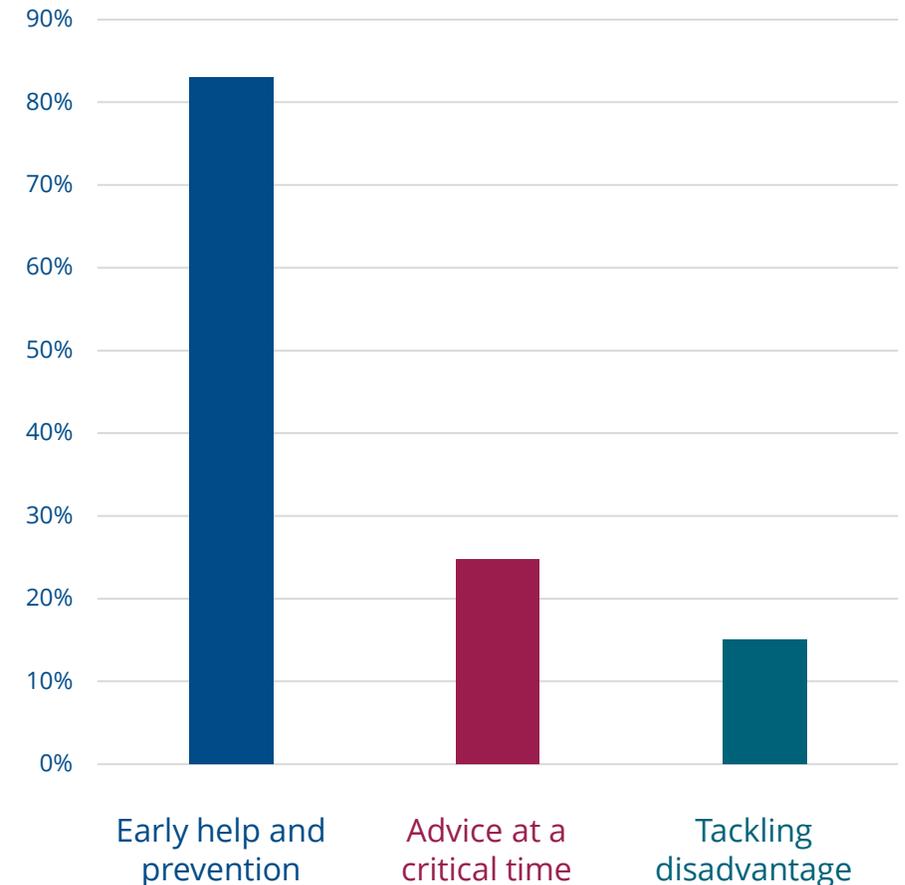
124,743

Issues



85,152

Clients helped by type of advice



For everyone

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Our service is open to anyone in need of advice.

For some people, we provide immediate advice at first contact to prevent problems escalating.

For others, accessing our core service opens the door to follow-on advice or casework until their problem is resolved.

The 'Advice at first contact' percentage is based on advice provided during the reporting period.

**Advice
at first
contact**



43%

**Follow
on
advice**



57%

Advice at first contact

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The impact of the advice and follow-on support our advisers deliver can be significant

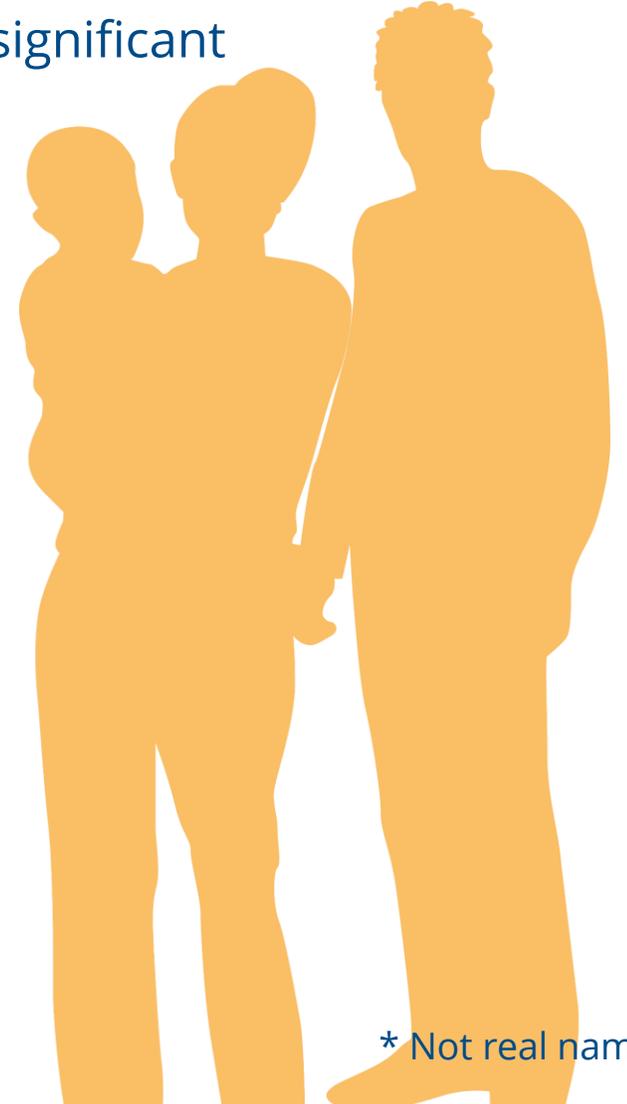
Mary contacted us because she had received unexpected additional payments that she wasn't expecting, and she was concerned that she was being overpaid her Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) work-replacement benefit.

Having checked the figures, the adviser was able to reassure Mary that the additional payments were legitimate and correct. However, the adviser also identified that Mary may not be receiving all possible entitlements.

A benefit check was completed which showed that Mary would be significantly financially better off claiming Universal Credit (UC) rather than ESA.

Mary was advised about the pros and cons of making a UC claim and she decided she would like to make the claim. The adviser gave Mary advice that enabled her to effectively make and manage her claim.

Since we advised Mary, she has updated us that UC is in payment.



* Not real name

Follow-on advice

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Timo* needed additional support due to anxiety and PTSD linked to past trauma. We had to break down each element of advice over several appointments so that we didn't negatively impact his mental health.

Timo was struggling financially and felt isolated which was worsening his mental health. Timo wanted to go outside, but his only footwear had holes in the soles.

We helped Timo to apply for local assistance to obtain the footwear needed. We then went on to maximise his income and provide money/budgeting advice to prevent a similar situation arising in the future.

We ensured Timo had access to nutritious food and liaised with professionals to book a Crisis Safe Space appointment to facilitate ongoing wellbeing support.

Timo said of our help 'Thank you so much for your kindness. I have been able to go out to the woods as I have new boots. It means so much.'

Timo's adviser said: 'A client with mental health support needs at times, can struggle to communicate effectively what they really need. Therefore, being misunderstood on a regular basis by all services.'

* Not real name

Specialist advice projects

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We analyse the advice needs of the community to identify where more specialist help, or services is needed and lacking.

We bid for funding to fill these advice gaps.



We are a lead partner enabling access to advice for people with significant mental ill health

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

Our Macmillan benefits advice team support people affected by cancer



**Money &
Pensions
Service**

Accredited money/debt advice and casework team

Specialist advice projects

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Specialist litigants in person service for survivors of domestic abuse who are unable to get Legal Aid



Somerset
Council

Housing /homelessness prevention money and debt advice and casework service



Direct access to advice for people affected by Multiple Sclerosis

FOR YOU. FOR LIFE.

Wessex Water
YTL GROUP



Support to manage water bills and access to social tariff schemes



Our advisers work within food banks to provide advice during the food crisis

and several more!

Strategic projects

This project builds on the foundations of existing food partnerships in Somerset to facilitate food and cooking workshops alongside wraparound support, deliver small grants, expand the Food Alliance model, and further strategic conversations about Food Resilience in Somerset.

The goal – an expanding and sustainable network.



Since Covid, young people have experienced an increase of mental health difficulties and poorer wellbeing outcomes.

We know that issues with money, housing, work and other things have a knock-on effect for health and wellbeing. But we also know that they are less likely to turn to us for advice when they need it – we are working to bridge the gap.

We also campaign for change

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Council Tax Support?

A benefit determined by postcode not need.



An unfair share

Local Housing Allowance is failing young people



People face far more problems than they should because policy fails them.

No-one sees that more than we do: we help more people with more problems than anyone else. That gives us a unique insight into the challenges people in Somerset are facing today.

We use our knowledge, evidence and insights to show decision makers where things aren't working and make the case for change - so we can live in a society where people face far fewer problems.

Local government, regulators and companies have all made changes when we've shown them the evidence that policy can solve problems.

What do clients say?

National Citizens Advice conducts a regular Client Experience survey to help us understand how well we're meeting the needs and expectations of clients and to identify where improvements could be made. These are the results for Somerset.

84%



would **recommend** our service

78%



found it **easy to access** our service

86%



were **helped forward** by our service

75%



had a full or partial **resolution** of their issue

64%



felt less **stressed, anxious or depressed**

Recorded financial outcomes

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Where we know the financial outcome of advice, we record this under the four main categories below. **It is important to note we often do not know the financial outcome.**

Income maximisation

Additional cash in client's pocket
e.g. benefits awards, appeals won

£10,206,000

Debt written off

Money no longer owed
e.g. Debt Relief Order

£1,657,000

Repayments scheduled

Affordable debt repayments agreed
and set up to the total value of

£88,000

Reimbursements / reductions

Financial benefit but not gain,
e.g. social care costs reduced

£151,000

Our people

The teams delivering our service at 31st March 2024:

118 volunteers

29.0 FTE

69 paid staff

54.8 FTE

Estimated value **£1,033,000** pa

Cost-benefit analysis

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As we cannot know the financial outcome of our advice for all clients, we also estimate the value of our advice using a [Treasury approved model](#) developed by New Economy (now merged with Greater Manchester Combined Authority).

For every **£1** invested in Citizens Advice Somerset in the financial year **2023/24**, we generated:

Fiscal value

£3.78

Financial savings to local and national Government due to fewer payments for out-of-work benefits, costly evictions, re-housing evicted tenants and less demand on the NHS.

Public value

£27.30

When people have fewer problems they have higher levels of wellbeing, participation in society and productivity.

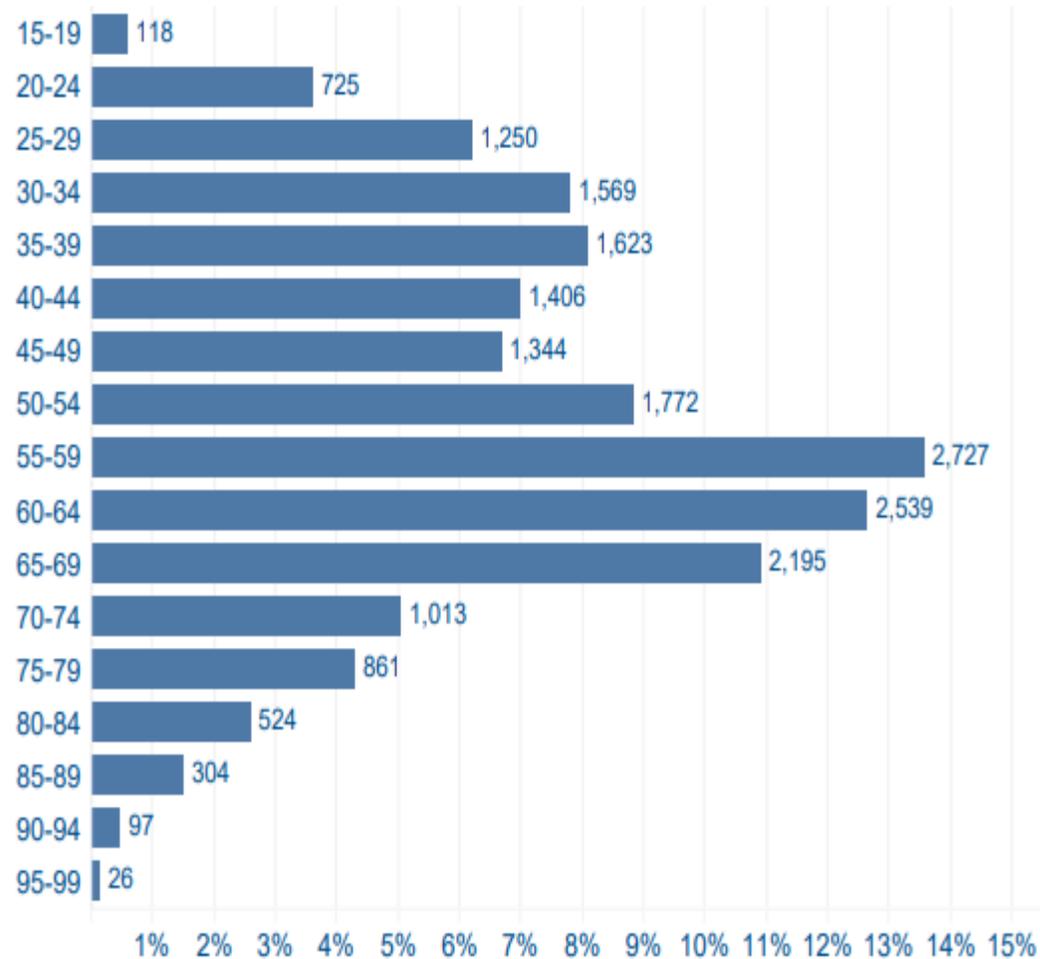
Personal value

£13.42

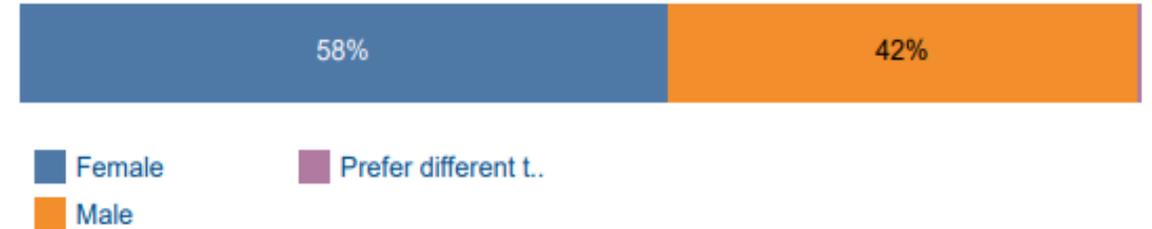
We help individual clients to achieve individual financial outcomes like getting back-dated benefits, writing-off debts and refunds for consumer issues.

Client demography

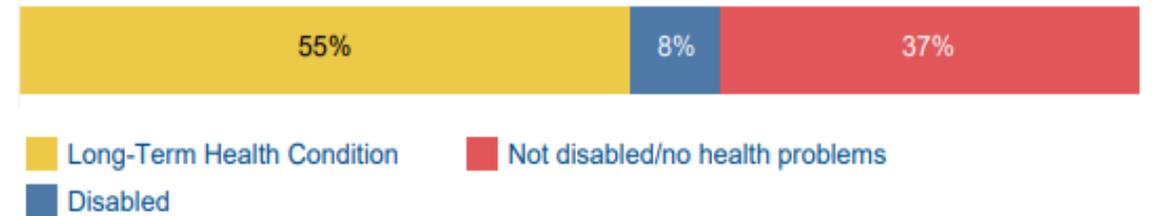
Age



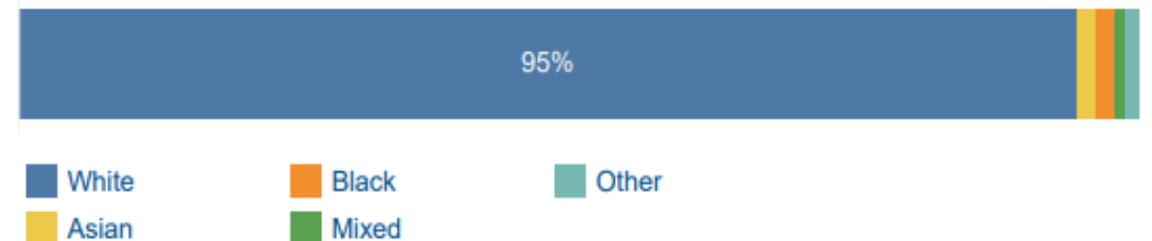
Gender



Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity



Issues

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Clients have complex, interrelated problems due to their circumstances and support needs.

We refer to these as issues and record three levels of information:

Category: (see right) this is the main category of the problem e.g. benefits, debt or housing.

Subject: this is more detailed information like the type of benefit e.g. Attendance Allowance, or debt e.g. rent arrears

Detail: this is the type of advice we give e.g. eligibility for benefits

April 2023 to March 2024 Issues (category)

	Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	24,238	7,116
Benefits Universal Credit	6,800	2,863
Charitable Support & Food Ban..	5,223	1,944
Consumer goods & services	2,083	1,064
Debt	13,025	2,929
Education	289	167
Employment	3,635	1,527
Financial services & capability	6,679	4,642
GVA & Hate Crime	908	405
Health & community care	1,238	682
Housing	7,854	3,036
Immigration & asylum	901	416
Legal	2,923	1,647
Other	540	310
Relationships & family	4,352	2,072
Tax	1,359	1,167
Travel & transport	1,092	825
Utilities & communications	2,013	1,174
Grand Total	85,152	

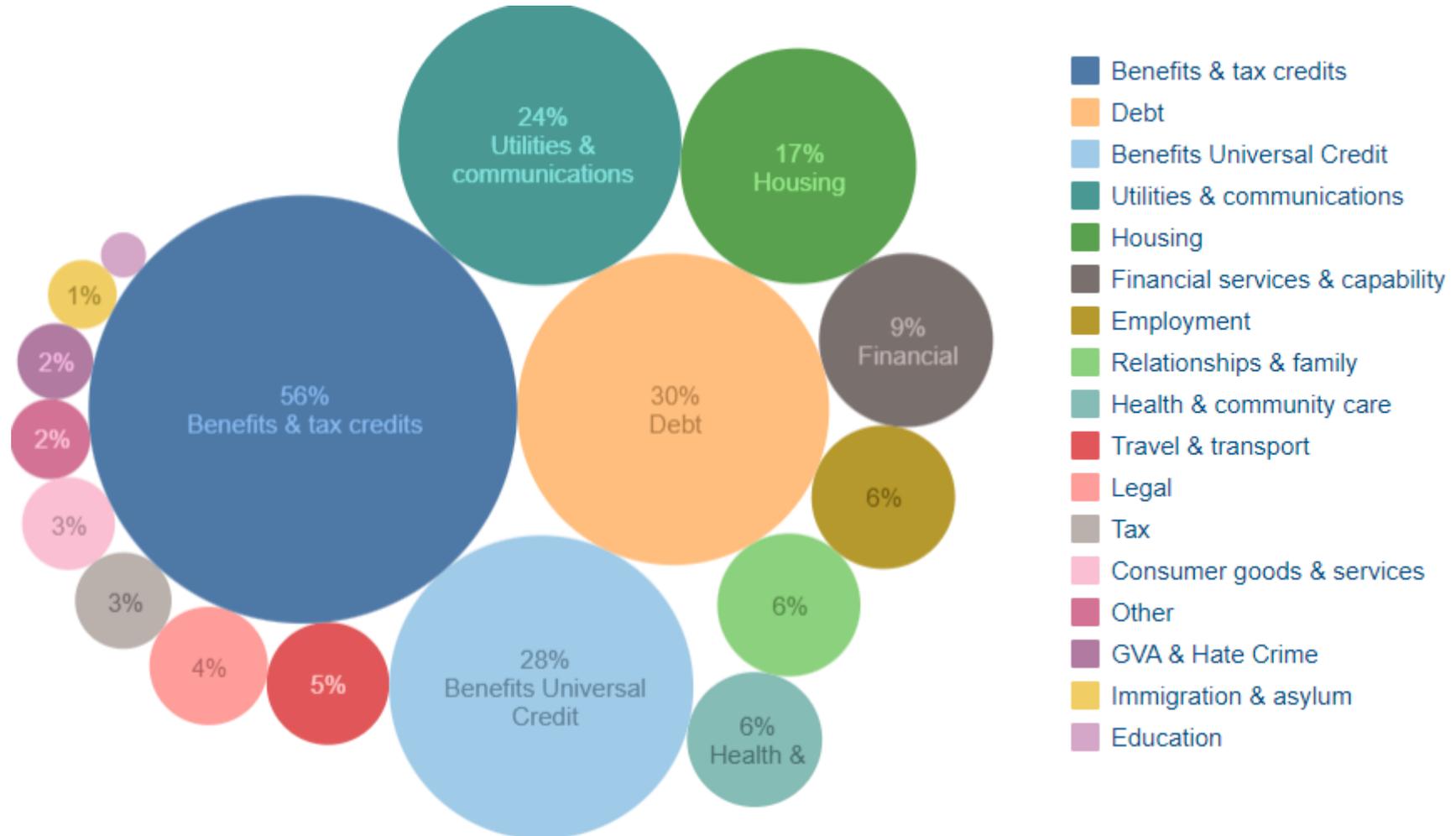
What issues co-exist for clients?

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When someone has an advice issue, it's common for there to be linked issues – we call these advice clusters.

This chart shows the **linked advice needs** of our clients with **charitable support & food bank** issues, across the whole service between 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024.



Quality of Advice



We use the national Quality of Advice Assessment framework to ensure our work meets and is maintained at a good standard.

Sample cases are reviewed for **accuracy and appropriateness of advice** and **case administration**, assessing:

- How well the needs of the client have been understood and what their issues were.
- The advice given, and the research recorded, to ensure accuracy and relevancy.
- Whether there were related or missed advice issues and how this impacted the client.
- Whether appropriate next steps were identified, and a plan agreed with the client.

These cases are scored using RAYG to enable conversations between advisers, supervisors and the quality team about how to work together to ensure that clients get the best advice we can give.

Quality of Advice

The RAYG scores are defined as follows:

73% or higher	Green	You can be confident your advice or case administration is good quality
66% - 72%	Yellow	Your advice or case administration is likely to be good quality
59% - 65%	Amber	Your advice or case administration is not likely to be good quality
58% or lower	Red	You can be confident your advice or case administration isn't good quality



We continue to attain **green** for both **accuracy and appropriateness of advice** and **case administration**.

Future focus

Our key concerns for the coming year(s)



Increased crisis work



Our funding



Council capacity



Housing



Displaced people



Cost of living evolution

Free, confidential advice. Whoever you are.

We help people overcome their problems and campaign on big issues when their voices need to be heard.

We value diversity, champion equality, and challenge discrimination and harassment.
We're here for everyone.



www.citizensadvice Somerset.org.uk

