

Bellshill & District

Citizens Advice Bureau



Annual Report

2022-23

Bellshill & District Citizens Advice Bureau

(Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC015081)

6 Hamilton Road

Bellshill

ML4 1AQ

Tel. 01698 748615

Fax.01698 841876

E-mail manager@bellshillcab.casonline.org.uk

Hours of Service

Drop to 2.00pm

Tel. to 3.00pm

| | |
|-----------|------------------|
| Monday | 10.00am – 4.00pm |
| Tuesday | 10.00am – 4.00pm |
| Wednesday | 10.00am – 4.00pm |
| Thursday | 10.00am – 4.00pm |
| Friday | 10.00am – 4.00pm |

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Chair's Report

This is my 12th year as Chair of the Board of Trustees for Bellshill & District Citizens Advice Bureau and I would like to record my thanks to the Members for their support throughout the year.

In the last year, costs of living, whether it be energy, food, fuel or rising interest rates, have presented their challenges to all of us; but yet again, I'm immensely privileged to say that Bellshill CAB has more than stepped up to the plate and I look forward to hearing the Manager's Report on our local activity.

As one of the five Citizens Advice Bureaux in North Lanarkshire, it is important that Bellshill & District Citizens Advice Bureau continues the good working relationship with our fellow Bureaux, North Lanarkshire Council and other local and national agencies.

I wish to thank the members of our Board for their work over the last year.

I'm grateful to our Vice-Chair, Kevin Mallon and Treasurer, Duncan McLeod, for their help in representing the Board at North Lanarkshire CAB's quarterly business meetings.

I have also chaired Bellshill Bureau's bi-monthly Trustee and Board Business Meetings. During the working week, I have remained in touch with the Manager by regular email updates, telephone and at our weekly meetings.

Finally, I would like to thank the officers at North Lanarkshire Council and Citizens Advice Scotland for their continued support to the Bureau.

J. Frew, Chair

Treasurer's Report

This is my 4th Treasurer's Report, which I present to the 51st Annual General Meeting of Bellshill & District Citizens Advice Bureau.

As you will see from the financial report of the annual accounts, the year 1st April 2022 to 31st March, 2023 ended with a relatively healthy bank balance.

I'd like to thank our volunteers for all their hard work during the year.

I'd also like to thank North Lanarkshire Council for their continued support of the Bureau & Citizens Advice Scotland for their support.

Funding from Scottish Government has continued to support Money Talk Plus.

Thanks also to the auditors, John Di Mambro & Co., Chartered Accountants, for preparing the end of year financial reports for the 19th consecutive year, in particular Mr Frank Duncan for his continued guidance & support in providing their service.

D. McLeod, Treasurer

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Manager's Report

Over the last year the bureau has continued to reintroduce our services that had been impacted by COVID. There has been a gradual build up in the number of clients presenting at the bureau for face to face assistance.

Thank you to all our staff who have continued to provide service over the last year.

The statistical period of 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 is covered in this report.

Our application to North Lanarkshire Council for provision of Information and Advice services covering the Bellshill locality for the period of April 2023 to March 2025 was successful. My thanks to the Chair and Trustees for their input and support in the application.

Over the last year our main areas of advice and assistance to clients continues to be on benefit related matters.

We are now over a year since the introduction of Adult Disability Payment from Social Security Scotland. Over the last 6 months the process of moving claimants into Adult Disability Payment from Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance has been ongoing and we are supporting clients fully through this process.

The introduction of Pension Age Disability Payment has been delayed.

As a legacy benefit, Tax Credit claims are being closed and clients are now required to engage with claiming Universal Credit.

During this cost of living crisis, it is important to identify all possible sources of help and assistance for clients. In the last year we have engaged as a referral partner with the Fuel Bank Foundation. This provides support to clients in crisis with their pre-payment meters.

The expansion of the Scottish Child Payment to children under 16 years of age has been a further additional support for clients.

Training has been provided by Child Poverty Action Group as well as sessions on Gambling Awareness and various online units from CASLearn.

Ongoing projects with our fellow bureaux:

- Patient Advice and Support Service (NHS Complaints)
- Pan-Lanarkshire Project with the Ethnic Minority Law Centre
- Kinship Care Regional Support
- In-Court Advisor Service at Hamilton Sheriff Court
- North Lanarkshire CABx Housing Support Network
- North Lanarkshire Community Legal Service
- Armed Services Advice Project
- Pension Wise

During 2023, we have reintroduced scheduled surgery time in the bureau for North Lanarkshire Housing Advice Network and Pension Wise.

Where required, Armed Services Advice Project shall meet clients in the bureau.

The outreach drop-in sessions at Burnhead Church has operated throughout the year without interruption. The church now run a coffee and tea morning alongside the CAB drop in. This has proven to be a successful partnership with clients attending the bureau often taking up the invitation to have a cuppa and chat while waiting. It has also corresponded with an increase in the number of clients seeking assistance through the Outreach drop in route.

We continue to work in Partnership with the Viewcare Project based at Viewpark Church. Throughout the year we have signposted clients towards their services. The bureau provides an Outreach service at Viewpark Church on request where the project team identify a need.

Going forward the ambition is to fully re-establish similar strong partnerships with other local organisations including the Salvation Army and Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre.

During the course of the year the service was promoted and represented at a number of community events.

These events included:

- North Lanarkshire Council event held at the Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre, the purpose of the event was to promote local services to young people with disabilities.
- NHS Health Improvement events held in venues throughout the area, the purpose of the events was increasing awareness of services available to support health and wellbeing.
- A Routes to Work event held in Bellshill YMCA to introduce jobseekers to services that could provide support as they move back into the workplace.
- VANL Joint Locality Network Meetings at Forgewood Community Hub and Bellshill Salvation Army.

We continue as active members with North Lanarkshire CABx Committee, North Lanarkshire Advice Network, West of Scotland Regional Equality Council and Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire.

I wish to thank the trustees, staff and volunteers for all their efforts and support over the last year.

I am grateful for our continued working relationship with external organisations, North Lanarkshire Councillors, local MPs & MSPs, helping us to continue to provide service to the community.

I would like to thank the officers at North Lanarkshire Council and Citizens Advice Scotland for their continued support of the Bureau and all the members of the Board for their work and support to all staff over the last year.

S. Rees, Manager

Statistical Report

The total number of enquiries dealt with from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 was 3 524. This was a decrease from previous year total of 4 087.

| Category | Total (21-22) |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Benefits Tax Credits & NI | 1457 (1932) |
| Consumer Goods & Services | 72 (157) |
| Discrimination | 0 (1) |
| Debt | 450 (562) |
| Education | 4 (14) |
| Employment | 136 (184) |
| Finance & Charitable Support | 237 (139) |
| Health & Community Care | 104 (56) |
| Housing | 149 (264) |
| Immigration Asylum & Nationality | 11 (19) |
| Legal | 89 (112) |
| NHS Concern or Complaint | 5 (4) |
| Relationship | 115 (113) |
| Tax | 179 (147) |
| Travel transport & holidays | 105 (94) |
| Utilities & communications | 411 (289) |
| Total | 3524 (4087) |

Our largest category remains Benefits, representing 41%. This is down slightly from previous year's 46%. Finance and charitable support represents an increase to 6.73% from 3.40%.

As Welfare Rights engagement continued to increase, the bureau represented 13 clients at benefit appeal hearings.

Enquiries in Bellshill Locality

82% of all our enquiries are identified as from Bellshill Locality within North Lanarkshire, represented by the 3 council wards as below:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Thorniewood</i> | <i>18%</i> |
| <i>Bellshill</i> | <i>52%</i> |
| <i>Mossend & Holytown</i> | <i>29%</i> |

Staff & Volunteers

Bureau Staff

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Manager | S. Rees |
| Outreach Development Officer/ Welfare Rights Officer | M. Sagar |
| GP link Worker/Administration | J. Graham |
| Money Advice Officer | M. Craig |

Volunteers

| | |
|------------|------------------------------|
| N. Gray | M. Hennessy |
| S. Lawrie | N. Spiers |
| I. Madden | K. McLean |
| F. Drammeh | S. Petricakova |
| J. Craig | C. Tomlins (left March 2023) |

Members of Bellshill & District Citizens Advice Bureau

Charity Trustees – Members of Board

| | |
|----------------|------------|
| Mr. J. Frew | Chair |
| Mr. K. Mallon | Vice-Chair |
| Ms. W. Kennedy | Secretary |
| Mr. D. McLeod | Treasurer |

Members

North Lanarkshire Council

Bellshill Community Council

Represented by Mr. D. McLeod

Ms. I. Hunter
Mr. S. Bettley
Ms. G. Frew
Mr. N. Gray
Mr. S. Holmes
Mr. S. Lawrie
Mr. K. McCusker
Mr. K. McKeown
Ms. J. Whip