

Citizens Advice South Somerset's Business Plan 2017 – 2020

Summary

We aim to be a service that is recognised locally and nationally for its impact, quality, innovation and contribution to addressing inequality and disadvantage.

Timely and trustworthy advice is a powerful and indispensable enabler, helping people move forward towards greater independence, prosperity and wellbeing. Our work complements and enhances the wider policy objectives of many other agencies (health, social care, housing and employment).

However we, like other local charities, cannot be complacent about our future as we face increased demand and reduced funding. In order to sustain advice services over the longer term we will need to work differently and more efficiently to be more enterprising and innovative.

Our intention is to increase joint working arrangements and shared delivery alongside a growth in the provision of digital services. Together these strategies will help us to ensure that Citizens Advice South Somerset continues to go from strength to strength reaching and helping more clients each year.

The 2017 – 2020 Business Plan has been developed at a time of unprecedented change including UK's withdrawal from the European Union, major transformation within public agencies (Somerset County Council, South Somerset District Council and NHS) and the roll out of social welfare reforms and Universal Credit. We aim to align ourselves within this change agenda as we believe that it will be advantageous not only to our clients but to our staff and volunteers. When we work closely with other agencies we can ensure that it is quick and easy for clients to access our services. Other benefits from greater collaboration include reducing delivery costs through eliminating duplication of effort.

The 2017 – 2020 Business Plan sets out 5 strategic priorities:

1. **Digital Expansion** – more options for clients to access early help & and advice through an increased range of channels (access options)
 - a) Develop assisted information services using web-based channels
 - b) Simplify and expand email and telephone advice services
 - c) Introduce webchat and increase advice by skype
 - d) Increase geographic access options on priority of needs basis
 - e) Focus advice delivery, supervision, quality, impact on efficient resolution

2. **Increased Focus On Early Help, Prevention and Improved Outcomes for Clients** – benefits to clients/society
 - a) Educate clients so that they are able to use self-help advice independently
 - b) Promote early help to reduce the risks of clients facing welfare or financial crisis
 - c) Improve monitoring and evaluation to enable better responsiveness to clients' needs
 - d) Raise awareness of our work, the difference we make and our web services
 - e) Strengthen our role and influence as an advice service and champion for equality

3. **Expand Targeted Programmes – bringing advice and casework to those in greatest need**
 - a) Extend partnerships and bring advice alongside (or within) other services supporting priority groups (long term health conditions; older people, carers, MHSUs)
 - b) Develop and implement mobile advice surgeries (pop-ups) in geographic areas of greatest need to run within key community events or peripatetic surgeries
 - c) Engage an even more diverse range of clients with our service
 - d) Offer tailored services and easier access to assistance with form filling

4. **Greater Collaboration, Increased Resources and Improved Financial Stability**
 - a) Integrate core and project activities so that we plan and act as one service
 - b) Develop back-office systems & collaborations to improve efficiency (HR , Training)
 - c) Pool expertise to bring new knowledge to our team (IT, expert advice)
 - d) Undertake joint developments (fundraising, volunteer recruitment) to increase resources

5. **Rewarding Place For People To Work and Volunteer**
 - a) Establish an Alumni to develop new sources of support for our work
 - b) Strengthen continuing professional development training for staff and volunteers to refresh existing skills and to broaden the team's expertise
 - c) Increase levels of volunteer recruitment and improve volunteer retention
 - d) Develop and extend training capacity to expand the number of active volunteers year on year and to broaden volunteer and staff roles
 - e) Promote diversity and inclusion in our role as an employer and volunteer involving organisation and reduce barriers that prevent some people joining our workforce

Outcomes Framework and Benefits To Clients From Our Services

Service Design Features Benefiting Clients

- ❖ Free, quick, local and easy access to all services
- ❖ Clients receive a full and accurate explanation of their rights and responsibilities
- ❖ Clients receive a trusted, impartial and well informed assessment of their options
- ❖ Links provided to clients so that they can use the national advice guide website
- ❖ Assistance given to clients to plan their next steps and address/ resolve problems
- ❖ Further, on-going, assistance given to those clients that need additional support
- ❖ Clients guaranteed continuity of advice (care) with their records available to them wherever they go in England and Wales
- ❖ Clients receive a professional and quality assured service

Client Outcomes

Clients Are Empowered And Able To Move Forward With A Reduced Risk of Crisis

- *Fully informed and better able to understand their rights and responsibilities and their options in order to decide on their next steps.*

Clients Are More Resilient

- *Knowledgeable and well prepared and able to take action to manage day to day and through key life events and changing circumstance*

Clients Are More Independent

- *Well connected, resourceful and self-reliant and able to help and act for themselves*