



Belfast

Annual Report 2016-17

CHAIR'S REPORT



It is hard to believe that I am coming to the end of my 3-year tenure as Chair of Citizens Advice Belfast. I can honestly say that I have enjoyed every part of my time with this amazing organisation.

I have learned so much about the complexities within Citizens Advice and the very challenging times our team consistently has to face, most especially during the period of uncertainty around welfare reform. In Linda's message, the statistics show how our people make a difference to lives every day, always motivated and dedicated to help, support and guide the citizens of Belfast. None of this we could do without our funders for whom we thank sincerely.

The Board has supported me in delivering the best for Citizens Advice Belfast, they have been a joy to work alongside and I wish them every success for their Citizens Advice and other professional roles.

In truth the Board has indeed been guided by Linda whose style has created the culture of openness, straightforwardness, professionalism and care. She has shown amazing patience and forbearance to her volunteer Chair and I thank her most sincerely for being an excellent Director and a very special lady who has taught me so much. I must single out Pat who has been a rock to the organisation and to me, always fiercely loyal and passionate in delivering high quality services alongside Patricia Lyons in her new role of Service Manager. You are a very strong team to take the organisation through the next business plan.

To the wider team thank you most sincerely for what you consider as just doing your job but we know you are bringing solutions, hope and easing the stresses and difficulties that people cannot address alone. You should all be very proud of yourselves. You are brilliant.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Traynor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lucy Traynor, Chair

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



I never cease to be amazed by what we achieve as a team for citizens across Belfast. We have accomplished so much this year – contact with almost 44,000 people helping them resolve over 58,000 issues and

increased our clients income by a staggering £8.9M across all of the services we offer.

We are so lucky to have a real loyal bunch of volunteers who work in tandem with our paid staff. If we didn't have you all we couldn't open our doors every day. You bring a freshness and vitality to our offices every time you come in. We get lots of really positive client feedback about the difference you all make. So thank you for everything that you give.

Whilst we are on the subject of volunteers, I cannot move on without thanking the trustees. They guide us in our work with their skills, knowledge and experience. We have had a fantastic Chair in Lucy. For the past 3 years through her passion for people,

achievement and excellence she has left us with a huge legacy. Her unique leadership style will be sorely missed and will be a very hard act to follow!!!!

Talking of achievement, we were delighted to be recognised by Macmillan in winning an Excellence Award for Service Integration, transforming services for people affected by cancer across NI. These achievements drive our services forward. New business is created when others hear of our success and we have a number of new developments in the pipeline that I will look forward to telling you about next year.

I would like to personally thank everyone who has supported Citizens Advice Belfast particularly our funders, we can't exist without you.

Linda Williamson, Director

MISSION STATEMENT

Through service excellence, we exist to create positive impacts for individuals and communities, by providing clarity and solutions on the issues affecting them

What service excellence means to us

*Dear All at Citizens Advice Belfast
Sincerest gratitude for your kind help and support in the past months. Your kindness and advice has been invaluable. Your assistance has had a positive effect on my mental health and you have made a huge difference to my life. Sincerely*

Client comment

"Citizens Advice Belfast were great with me, after speaking with the advisor I feel I can now address my problems as they have given me a direction. Going to Citizens Advice was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do but I am glad I did as my health has improved."

OUR AIMS AND WHAT THEY MEAN IN PRACTICE

Citizens Advice Belfast exists to

- To provide the advice people need for the problems they face in Belfast and beyond
- To improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives by building strong relationships with those who are affected and with the decision makers who create them



Gerard aged 51 worked with Translink for 15 years as a Bus Driver. He began to get pains in his arms and neck which was diagnosed as degenerative. He found himself increasingly unable to work and after his SSP expired he applied for ESA and PIP. He was turned down for

both benefits at first instance and the decision did not change after a Mandatory Reconsideration. However whilst awaiting the outcome of the Mandatory Reconsideration he was not getting paid and had to make the decision to claim Jobseekers Allowance. Mandatory Reconsiderations are putting clients in the awful position of having to claim benefit which says you are fit for work. However, Gerard continued his fight with the help of Citizens

Advice Belfast and his ESA was awarded on appeal with representation from our Welfare Reform Team. His Personal Independence Payment also went to appeal but he got awarded only 4 points in a disappointing decision, where the Tribunal made the assumption that he was able to walk further than he said as he had a dog. The Tribunal reasoned that owning a dog entails walking the dog which in turn implies a good degree of mobility. They ignored that Gerard's daughter and her family had taken over walking the dog during Gerard's illness. It appears the question of pet care had also raised its head at the medical assessment and similar assumptions were again made at this juncture. Gerard remains extremely disillusioned with the process and feels he was not listened to and was wilfully misrepresented by the Capita assessor. Citizens Advice Belfast are currently looking at taking the case to a Commissioner.

OUR JOURNEY IN WORDS AND PICTURES

APRIL 2015

Supported by Citizens Advice NI, we were able to offer a dedicated money advice service across all our offices in Belfast.



MAY 2016

We launched our website in partnership with Belfast Met, citizensadvicebelfast.com.



JUNE 2016

During Volunteer Week we hosted a lunch in our Central Office for all Volunteers including the Trustee Volunteers – it's a time when we could say thank you and remind everyone of the important role they play in helping the organisation achieve its aims.



NOVEMBER 2016

We celebrated in style, winning a national award for service excellence in service integration from Macmillan Cancer Support.



DECEMBER 2016

We began our new partnership with Cedar Foundation, supporting them in enabling people with disabilities to get the most out of life and to be fully included in their communities.



JANUARY 2017

We began to deliver our specialist Welfare Reform service.



FEBRUARY 2017

We embarked on an ambitious and far reaching overhaul of our volunteer strategy introducing new roles and making sure our processes were robust and in line with our ambition to achieve Investing in Volunteer accreditation.

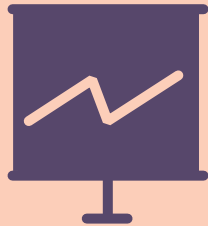


MARCH 2017

We commenced an ambitious training programme to give our staff and volunteers the knowledge to carry out their role as well as to enhance personal development.



WHAT WE ACHIEVED AND WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT



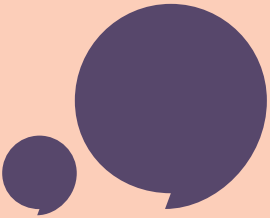
GROWTH

We have grown our income from £734k to £893k over three years with an emphasis on sustainability, an increase of over 20% in what is a difficult funding environment through the development of new business opportunities and maintaining strong relationships with our current funders.



PEOPLE STRATEGY

We have grown our staff and volunteer numbers by 10. We currently work with 45 volunteers and 27 paid staff. We overhauled our volunteering strategy to make Citizens Advice Belfast a fantastic place to volunteer filled with learning and opportunity.



ADVICE SERVICES

We expanded our services through the introduction of specialist debt and welfare reform services. We developed relationships with new partners – National Energy Action and Cedar Foundation and engaged with Chest Heart and Stroke in providing a client centred service.



PROMOTING THE ORGANISATION

We increased our social media presence on Twitter, @BelfastCAB with 1837 followers and on Facebook: /citizensadvice, highlighting the issues affecting our clients.



EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL PRUDENCE

The Trustee Board have continued to guide and direct the strategic direction of the organisation shown by its strong financial position that we have worked hard to achieve.

HOW WE HELPED

£8.9M

Money that clients received in benefits because of our intervention

43,696

Contacts with clients

HOW WE HELPED PEOPLE

Number of problems that we dealt with

58,470

Issues such as: benefits, consumer, debt, education, employment, finance, health, housing, immigration, legal, relationships, signposting, tax, travel and utilities.

7%

Increase in
telephone enquiries



60,611

Calls in partnership, to
our single number for advice
0300 1 233 233



6%

Increase in
contacts



8%

Increase in problems



17,524

Volunteering hours



100%

Client satisfaction



ACCOUNTS

Citizens Advice Belfast. Company Limited by Guarantee.

Statement of Financial Activities (including income and expenditure account) 31 March 2017

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	2017 Restricted funds £	Total funds £	2016 Total funds £
Income and endowments					
Donations and legacies	5	4,379	-	4,379	4,427
Charitable activities	6	104,554	896,893	1,001,447	886,707
Investment income	7	587	-	587	152
Total income		109,520	896,893	1,006,413	891,286
Expenditure					
Expenditure on charitable activities		96,160	875,175	971,335	806,414
Total expenditure		96,160	875,175	971,335	806,414
Net income		13,360	21,718	35,078	84,872
Transfers between funds		35,384	(35,384)	-	-
Net movement in funds		48,744	(13,666)	35,078	84,872
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		297,757	35,384	333,141	248,269
Total funds carried forward		346,501	21,718	368,219	333,141

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

ACCOUNTS

Balance sheet as at 31 March 2017

	Notes	2017 £	2016 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible fixed assets	14	157,330	143,114
Current assets			
Debtors	15	24,469	3,968
Cash at bank and in hand		222,726	212,213
		247,195	216,181
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	16	36,306	26,154
Net current assets		210,889	190,027
Total assets less current liabilities		368,219	333,141
Net assets		368,219	333,141
Funds of the charity			
Restricted funds		21,718	35,384
Unrestricted funds		346,501	297,757
Total charity funds	18	368,219	333,141

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies' subject to the small companies' regime.

These financial statements were approved by the board of trustees and authorised for issue on 13 December 2017, and are signed on behalf of the board by:

Philip Reid
Director

Lucy Traynor
Director

Citizens Advice Belfast Board Members 2016-2017

Lucy Traynor *Chair*

Philip Reid

Treasurer and Company Secretary

Rosy Billingham

Michele Crilly

Julia Logan

Christopher O’Rawe

Richard Holmes

Julie Meredith



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Silver



Citizens Advice Belfast
Merrion Business Centre
58 Howard Street
Belfast, BT1 6PJ

Tel: 0300 1 233 233

f /citizensadvicebelfast

🐦 @BelfastCAB

www.citizensadvicebelfast.com



Belfast
City Council



Belfast Health and
Social Care Trust



Cedar
Opportunity Choice Inclusion



Department for
Communities
www.communities.gov.uk



extern
CHANGING LIVES EVERY DAY



WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT



NEA
Campaigning for Warm Homes



POSITIVE
LIFE