



# Routes out of Crisis

## the story so far

February 2026

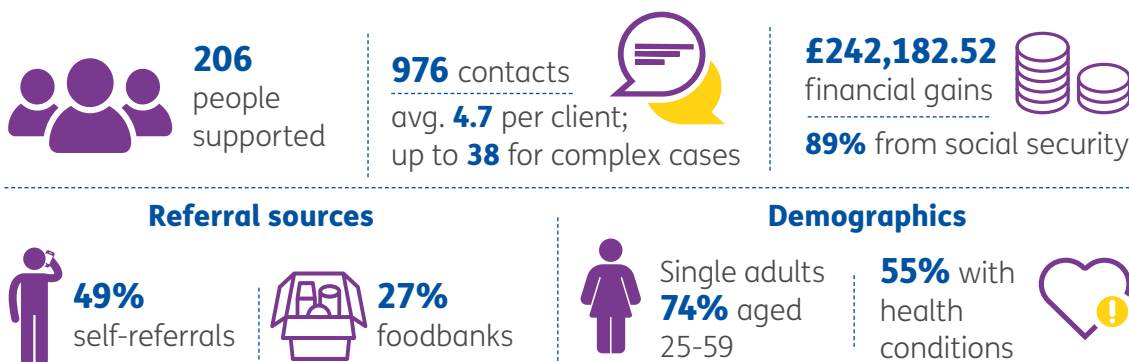
Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) launched Routes out of Crisis (RooC) in September 2024 to deliver intensive support for people experiencing financial crisis to enable access to a more stable future. The project trials approaches, including named case workers and micro grants, alongside gathering evidence to support long term systems change. Phase 1 operated in two Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) **Motherwell & Wishaw** and **Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey** until September 2025, with evaluation by The Lines Between (TLB) and funded by CAS and the Scottish Government.

### Reimagining advice for those who need it most

The Citizens Advice network in Scotland is the largest provider of free, independent, confidential and holistic support advice, delivering help and hope, face to face, to around 200,000 people a year, putting approximately £170 million back in people's pockets. This is unrivalled. Opportunities exist to reimagine how we best support those in the most complex circumstances and lift families and households out of poverty. This has the potential to deliver large scale impact for people in crisis, advice services and the wider economy, by reducing pressure on public services.

### Who did we help?

Focussed on supporting people in the most vulnerable circumstances to find long term solutions that prevent future crises, during phase 1 of this project we helped:



## Advice that changes lives

The key barriers to accessing advice in local communities were:



**stigma and shame, which** deter individuals from seeking help, especially in rural communities, even when faced with real crisis.



**practical barriers:** transport costs, digital exclusion, complex referral processes and low awareness of services all made it difficult to get help



**personal factors:** mental health issues, substance use, and negative past experiences with services all held people back.

Through working alongside a named caseworker, with dedicated time and access to micro grants, people told us what made a difference to them.

- > **A person-centred, empathetic, non-judgemental approach** was everything.
- > **Choice and dignity:** cash-first support (e.g., vouchers instead of food parcels).
- > **Holistic whole family support:** linking people to other services and providing flexible engagement options.
- > **Trusting relationships:** consistent contact with a named caseworker is critical to addressing crisis and preventing future crises.

### Examples of micro grants



New household utilities  
(e.g. a washing machine)



New furniture  
(e.g. a sofa)



SIM cards



**“The caseworker has kept in contact all the time... At some points, I was at my lowest and I got a wee message from her and then that was me back on track, able to get things done and sorted. I know where I am because I have got somebody who’s got my back.”** Duncan\*

### Beyond the crisis: people told us about what the support meant for them

- > **Immediate crisis relief:** meant being able to access food and put the heating on.
- > **Financial stability:** increased income via social security, grants, and tariff reviews.
- > **Wellbeing and mental health:** reduced stress, improved confidence and hope.
- > **Long-term progress:** steps toward employment, education, and volunteering taken.
- > **Increased agency:** people are more likely to seek help earlier and independently.

\* All names have been changed



### Amanda's experience

Amanda\* needed to access temporary accommodation after a relationship breakdown. Things were extremely difficult for her and her baby, with no money for the everyday essentials they both needed, taking a huge toll on Amanda's wellbeing. Fearful of being judged for her situation, Amanda agonised about reaching out for help, until a trusted voice recommended her local CAB and she was able to access Routes out of Crisis.

For Amanda, knowing her case worker was there 'to help her with absolutely anything' allowed her to breathe again. Emergency supermarket vouchers and a thorough social security check gained access to payments she was not aware she was entitled to. This not only enabled her to afford the essentials but provided a firm foundation to begin rebuilding her life. Transforming her situation from one where she feared her baby may be taken into care, to stability and applying for a college course.

## What did we learn?

1. **Intensive whole family support works** and requires significant investment to do well.
2. **Caseworker role is pivotal**, it requires strong interpersonal skills, boundary-setting, and specialist knowledge to build meaningful relationships.
3. **Intensive support for people who need it benefits everyone** as CABs can help more people when those in the most vulnerable circumstances receive dedicated support.
4. **A wrap-around model is preventative**, with long-term solutions securing income, education or employment as well as building confidence. In turn this reduces pressure on statutory services by preventing further crisis.
5. **Budgets for micro grants are essential** for immediate crisis relief enabling people to 'unstick' problems and move forward.
6. **Partnership working** with external agencies improves outcomes for people.
7. **Awareness raising** of services must balance demand with capacity.
8. **Rural challenges:** a tailored approach is required in remote and rural communities
9. **Precarious funding:** pilots mean exit strategies and support ending.
10. **Need for systems change:** caseworkers could not resolve the broken structures within social security, energy and public debt and some people still faced real hardship.



**"Mirren was struggling academically due to a lack of internet access at home. We got the family a SIM card, allowing her to catch up on schoolwork. She went from failing her subjects to being on track to pass her Highers and attend university. Financial support from Young Carers' grants and her Education Maintenance Allowance enabled her to go on a school trip to Italy. I'm so glad Routes out of Crisis was able to help turn things around for Mirren."** RooC Caseworker

## Recommendations



**Scale learnings** across the CAB network in Scotland with the right investment

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**Deliver systems change** through upstream interventions to social security, energy etc.

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**Enhance caseworker wellbeing support** given the intensity of the role.

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**Resource micro grants** to deliver impact for people quickly and creatively.

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**Disseminate learning widely** to influence policy and practice.

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## Phase 2 – learning in action

ROOC Phase 1 demonstrates that **intensive, person-centred support** can help individuals overcome crises, achieve stability, and move toward independence. While highly effective, this model is resource-intensive and requires sustained funding and systemic change to scale.

Phase 2 of ROOC commenced in June 2025, with two more CABs – **East Renfrewshire** and **Southwest Aberdeenshire** delivering this service for a year, funded by CAS and Trussell. This second year for the project was commissioned to action key learnings on service delivery and to gather further evidence for the purposes of scaling. This has included looking at ways to strengthen partnerships and referral pathways and improving data collection to better understand who needs support and why.

## About Citizens Advice Scotland

The Citizens Advice network in Scotland is Scotland's largest independent advice provider. Advisers across all corners of the country work in Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) to provide free, impartial and confidential advice. Our Extra Help Unit (EHU), based in Glasgow, helps people resolve complex and time-sensitive energy problems. Each year our network supports hundreds of thousands of people, unlocking millions of pounds worth of financial gains. By looking at a person's complete circumstances, CAS gains an unparalleled insight into the scale and complexity of what's happening in communities throughout Scotland.

### For more information please contact

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To see more of our work, please visit

[www.cas.org.uk/what-we-do/our-areas-work](http://www.cas.org.uk/what-we-do/our-areas-work)