

# Citizens Advice Scotland Strategy

## **Working together for a fairer Scotland**

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2022-2025



# Who We Are

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Scotland's Citizens Advice Network provides an essential community service that empowers people in every corner of Scotland by providing free, confidential, and impartial advice through our local Bureaux and national services. We use evidence about people's real-life experiences to influence policy and drive positive change. We are on the side of people in Scotland who need help, and we change lives for the better. At the heart of the Network there are 59 individual Citizens Advice Bureaux across Scotland, all operating as independent charities in their own right and generally focusing on providing support directly to citizens. Each of these organisations is a member of the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Citizens Advice Scotland is a national organisation supporting the Citizens Advice Network in Scotland. Our primary role is to make sure the Network of Citizens Advice Bureaux in communities Scotland have the support they need to deliver on our collective mission. This includes training, quality assurance, co-ordination of national projects, as well as providing the platforms which enable high quality advice provision. We also produce online advice pages that are accessed by millions of people each year, and we deliver a statutory support service resolving energy complaints and delivering positive outcomes for vulnerable energy consumers and micro-businesses across Great Britain. We are experts in debt advice and provide training and second-tier advice to Bureaux and all other free providers in Scotland. We also deliver a range of shared services to Bureaux like Human Resources, Information Technology and Finance. We carry out research, policy work and campaigning on key issues informed by statistical analysis of the advice sought by clients from across the network, which influences the practices of government, regulators and private companies. In everything we do, we aim to work in partnership with Bureaux, respecting their autonomy and ways of working.

The Citizens Advice Network was born in the shadow of the Second World War and we have over 80 years' experience of helping people through crises. During the Covid-19 pandemic the Citizens Advice Network in Scotland helped over 171,000 people and a further 2.5 million people checked our online advice pages. Of those who benefited from income maximization they were on average £4,400 better off as a result of speaking to a Citizens Advice Bureaux. Nine in ten adults in Scotland have heard of Citizens Advice, of which almost one-third had used the service at least once. The pandemic meant emergency legislation and a faster policy making process, which meant the way we used our data to support policy recommendations needed speeding up which delivered real results for people particularly in areas such as housing and debt.

We have emerged from the pandemic lockdowns into the immense challenges of the cost of living crisis which has brought a further increase in demand for advice as inflation soared, energy bills went up and incomes remain flat. This new strategy focuses on rebuilding resilience after the impact of COVID so that the Network can respond to the demands of the cost of living crisis, embedding our progress in digital services achieved during that period, promoting the value of locally led service delivery, and building the Network to deliver more effective outcomes for the people of Scotland. This strategy describes how we at Citizens Advice Scotland will work in partnership with Citizens Advice Bureaux to deliver our vision for a Fairer Scotland.



# Our vision

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Is for a Fairer Scotland where everyone has the advice and information they need to realise their rights, and where the barriers to accessing those rights are effectively challenged.

# Our aims

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The Network has two aims which are equally important:

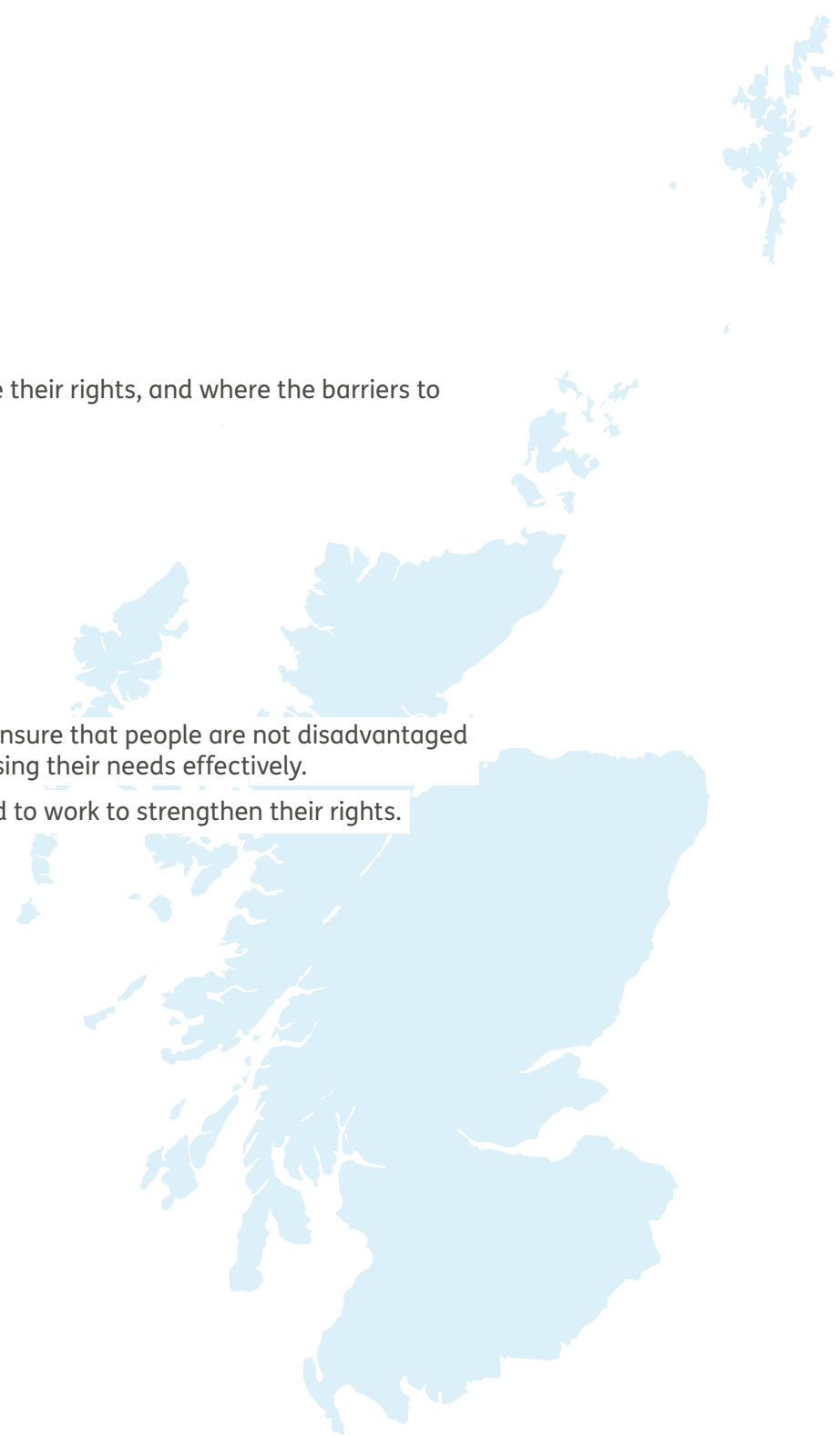
- > We provide free, independent, impartial and confidential advice and information to ensure that people are not disadvantaged by lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, or through difficult in expressing their needs effectively.
- > We campaign and influence to tackle the root cause of the problems people face, and to work to strengthen their rights.

# Our mission

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We have four mission statements that describe what we do as a Network:

- > We help people navigate systems and access their rights.
- > We build resilience in local communities.
- > We support the realisation of human rights.
- > We help change policies and practices to ensure they work for people.



# Our values

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Our values capture who we are, how we work and what we believe in. They were identified through discussion with people working within Citizens Advice Scotland as well as volunteers, staff and trustees from Citizens Advice Bureaux across Scotland. They describe how we treat other people, and how we expect to be treated in return. Everyone in Citizens Advice Scotland has a contribution to make to ensuring we deliver on this strategic plan and for continuing to live our values. We believe that these values help us work with direction and purpose in a way that builds strong relationships, delivers positive outcomes for the people of Scotland, and which makes Citizens Advice Scotland a rewarding place to work. In delivering the strategic plan through turbulent times we will all make decisions in line with these values about what we must prioritise and what we can leave to the side. In doing so we look after our health and wellbeing, find a healthy work-life balance and develop our skills and capabilities.

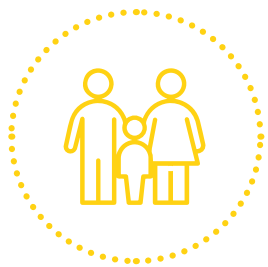
**Person-centred** We are committed to the wellbeing of our clients, volunteers and staff and take a whole person approach to our work.

**Empowering** We invest in people and support them to take action on the challenges they face.

**Supportive** We are caring and respectful and make sure that people receive the support they need to improve their lives.

**Inclusive** We are a non-judgemental, friendly and offer expert service to anyone who is in need of our help.

**Collaborative** We work together as a network and with other partners in an open, respectful way, to build trust even when opinions differ.



# Who is Citizens Advice here for?

The Citizens Advice Network in Scotland is here for everyone

We contribute to building a Fairer Scotland by helping people with low incomes who are at risk of poverty – our income maximisation and debt management advice can be key to helping people avoid their situation spiralling out of control

This is reflected in the main reasons why people seek advice from Citizens Advice Bureaux, which in recent years have been:

- > Help with social security or benefits payments.
- > Debt advice.
- > Finance and Charitable Support including foodbanks.

Our multi-channel advice offering is designed to support as many people as possible to self-help, which allows us to use most of our resources to support people who need extra assistance or who have particularly complex problems.



Clydesdale  
CAB

# Our Network

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The Citizens Advice Network is Scotland's biggest advice provider, made up of Citizens Advice Bureaux serving communities across Scotland and Citizens Advice Scotland. Citizen Advice Scotland's role is to ensure Bureaux have the support they need to deliver on our collective mission, as well as providing some advice and information directly. We recognise that by working together as a Network we are better able to deliver outcomes for individuals and for Scotland as a whole. By sharing services where we can, we maximise the resources that are available at a local level for high quality advice provision to support individuals to work through their problems. We improve our practice and develop our services through collaboration. Our national footprint and robust data gathering processes put us in a powerful position to influence law and policy makers and to drive social change. We are committed to respecting the local autonomy of Bureaux and working together collaboratively using co-design and co-production methods.



# Citizens Advice Scotland priorities

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These priorities set out Citizens Advice Scotland's role within the Network

1. We will support our network to provide high quality advice on a wide range of issues including through training, online advice and quality assurance.
2. We will work with bureaux to help them develop and to build their resilience to ensure that advice is available in local communities across Scotland.
3. We will work with our network to offer multi-channel advice including face-to-face so that people can access advice in a way that suits their needs.
4. We will innovate to ensure that people receiving remote advice benefit from local knowledge on a breadth of issues, including through better integration of the Extra Help Unit.
5. We will raise awareness of people's rights, and ensure that people can access those rights and have access to channels of redress when necessary.
6. We will work as a network to speak out on behalf of people at a local and national level who do not otherwise have a voice, and will use our evidence base to challenge policy and practice that works against people.
7. We will work to strengthen the Citizens Advice Network in Scotland, promoting reciprocal relationships between bureaux and protecting our footprint in communities across Scotland.
8. We will commit to action to tackle climate change that makes Scotland a fairer, greener and more equal society, and we will advocate on behalf of individuals most affected by climate change and the net zero transition.

# Our Strategic Delivery Areas

Our Strategic Delivery Areas set out what Citizens Advice Scotland is going to do to deliver our role within the Network. Across five different areas we set out our ambitions and some of the key things we will do to achieve them. These ambitions have been identified by our Board, reflecting on the outcomes of extensive engagement with Citizens Advice Scotland; staff, trustees and volunteers from Bureaux across Scotland and other stakeholders. People from across Citizens Advice Scotland and the wider Network will be involved in the delivery of each of these strands as we work towards greater collaboration.

	What we want to achieve	Key activities and projects
<p><b>Funding and Income</b></p>	<p>We have set the challenge of encouraging funders to focus on outcomes for individuals and communities (rather than measuring inputs and outputs) to give Bureaux flexibility to deliver what works best for their communities.</p> <p>In order to secure the future of our services we will also develop the business development capacity across Citizens Advice Scotland and the Bureaux so we are more successful in bringing in new funding and securing existing funding. We will also explore new ways of funding the Network.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using our influencing and campaigning skills to attempt to shift the way funders measure success.</li> <li>2. The development and delivery of a new outcomes-focused Social Justice project to demonstrate this way of working.</li> <li>3. Establishing a new Business Development function in CAS to work across the organisation and provide support to Bureaux.</li> </ol>



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Service Delivery</b></p>	<p>We have committed to supporting the Network to remain Scotland’s advice provider of choice by supporting the delivery of quality-assured advice.</p> <p>We have also committed to ensuring that our services are inclusive by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; taking a person-centred approach to service design.</li> <li>&gt; developing an innovative, multi-channel advice offering (including face-to-face) that connects people to local advice and breaks down barriers to access.</li> <li>&gt; supporting people who are able to self-help to do so we can prioritise more intensive help for those who need it most.</li> </ul> <p>We will also work to demonstrate the wider benefits advice can have in terms of public policy objectives such as employability and health and wellbeing.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work to support Bureaux to meet quality of advice audits.</li> <li>2. Implementing learning from the CivTech 6 project to use no-code to accelerate our digital augmentation/ transformation work.</li> <li>3. Using the CivTech 7 challenge as an opportunity to establish how technology can support advisers to quickly deliver the best possible outcome for their clients using data and collective expertise.</li> <li>4. Developing and integrating Extra Help Unit services in order to provide more holistic advice service to vulnerable energy consumers.</li> <li>5. Developing and evolving our co-design techniques.</li> <li>6. Developing partnerships and using our influencing skills to better position ourselves as contributing to public health and employability work in Scotland in order to attract funding.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Advocacy and Influence</b></p>	<p>We have committed to build upon the success of our evidence based approach to advocacy and influencing, by using our data to influence policy, practice and legislation and create better outcomes for people. We will also develop our ability to undertake predictive analysis to better understand what challenges may be ahead.</p> <p>We will continue to develop our strategic relationships with Government and service providers so that we are well positioned to achieve our advocacy goals. To achieve this we will use data to highlight the challenges people face so that such challenges can be addressed before they escalate.</p> <p>We have also committed to work with CAB to build capacity and capability so that they can undertake effective advocacy and influencing work within their own communities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rolling out Power BI – a powerful analytical tool – so that CAS Staff, Bureaux and other key stakeholders can better use our data to influence policy, planning and practice.</li> <li>2. Publishing Cost of Living Dashboards which can influence emergency policy making and legislation.</li> <li>3. Integrating Extra Help Unit data into the data hub in order to better represent the impact of the energy crisis on vulnerable consumers.</li> <li>4. Supporting the recruitment and retention of specific volunteers to take forward policy and influencing work at a local level.</li> </ol>

<p><b>Building Brand</b></p>	<p>We have committed to updating how we communicate about Citizens Advice Scotland and the Network in light of the new strategy. We will also work to ensure that the public are aware of how our services have developed as a result of the transformation work that has been undertaken over the last 5 years, and that our brand has broad enough appeal to reach people who would benefit from support.</p> <p>We also aim to position advice as an essential service by communicating the wider benefits it has to people’s health and wellbeing so the service is valued by funders and the general public.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working with CAS Staff to embed the new strategy vision and values across the organisation and the wider network.</li> <li>2. Undertaking brand research with the public to gain a wider insight into how we are perceived. This builds upon 3 years of annual polling on brand engagement and we will use this to inform a Building Brand action plan.</li> <li>3. Launching a new website or ‘digital shop front’ that showcases our digital services.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Network</b></p>	<p>The new Strategic Delivery Area which focuses on Network commits us to building a culture based on partnership working between CAS and bureaux in line with our values; establishing a partnership agreement that sets out the nature of the network and the roles and responsibilities of Citizens Advice Scotland within that network and reviewing our governance arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose for network working.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing and evolving our co-design techniques.</li> <li>2. Co-designing the next version of the Membership Handbook with Bureaux.</li> <li>3. Reviewing the approaches of governance committees with the aim of ensuring Bureaux representatives can engage in a meaningful way.</li> <li>4. Conducting a wider governance review to make sure our committees support network working.</li> </ol>

# Cross-Cutting Issues

There are two big issues within our Strategic Framework that cross-cut each of the Strategic Delivery Areas.

## 1. Net Zero

“We will commit to action to tackle climate change that makes Scotland a fairer, greener and more equal society, and we will advocate on behalf of individuals most affected by climate change and the net zero transition”

## 2. Human Rights

“We support the realisation of human rights”

We will develop actions plans to demonstrate how these are being taken forward.



A family being supported with immigration advice by Glasgow North West CAB



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[www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk)

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 CitizensAdviceScotland

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