

ADVISING LONDONERS PARTNERSHIP

(FORMERLY THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS PREVENTION ADVICE PROJECT)

IMPROVING LONDONERS' FINANCES AND WELLBEING TOGETHER

LEARNING & EVALUATION YEAR TWO REPORT, DECEMBER 2024

“An extremely responsive and trustworthy service. It is essential the service is supported as the work they did was really helpful.” (Client)



PHIL JEW CONSULTANCY LTD



Contents

Introduction	3
Changes between years one and two	4
Advice Service Delivery and Outcomes	5
Delivery data – 24 months: Londoners helped	5
Client feedback	7
Quotes from respondents.....	11
Advice First Aid (AFA).....	12
Partnership and Collaboration for System Change	16
Learning	16
Examples of collaboration and strengthened relationships:.....	17
Conclusions.....	19
Recommendations	20
Appendix One: Client Case Studies	21
Appendix Two: Delivery Partner Case Studies	24
Appendix Three: Advice First Aid Case Studies	32
Appendix Four: Organisations Attending Advice First Aid courses	34

Abbreviations used in this report

AFA	Advice First Aid
AiCS	Advice in Community Settings
CA	Citizens Advice
COEx	Centres of Excellence
CoLCPA	Cost of Living Crisis Prevention Advice
CPA	Crisis Prevention Adviser
EOI	Expression of Interest
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
GLA	Greater London Authority
LCA	Local Citizens Advice
LLST	London Legal Support Trust
PIP	Personal Independence Payment
UC	Universal Credit

Introduction

This report provides an update on the Cost-of-Living Crisis Prevention Advice Project, now called the Advising Londoners Partnership (ALP), following two years of operation. This builds on a [year one Learning and Evaluation Report](#), published in November 2023, and includes aggregated data over two years of delivery.

ALP is a strategic partnership collaboration funded by Greater London Authority (GLA) to support London Legal Support Trust (LLST) and London Citizens Advice to increase the capacity of advice agencies to respond to the cost-of-living crisis and support more Londoners. The partnership funds a total of 41 advice and community agencies across London and a programme of training known as 'Advice First Aid'.

The partnership was designed collaboratively in alignment with the GLA's Robust Safety Net mission to address the growing advice needs of Londoners in a cost-of-living context, build capacity, and address strategic and operational issues which identified in two important reports on London's advice sector: [Advising Londoners \(2020\)](#) and [Addressing the Skills Gap within Advice Services \(2022\)](#).

The conclusion from year one was that that the concept of the project had been proven to be effective, and that the focus of learning and evaluation for year two should shift to demonstrating outcomes for clients, advice capacity and needs, policy issues, informing development of a London-wide advice strategy and providing evidence to support the case for ongoing funding for this partnership model.

The year one learning and evaluation report adopted a similar methodology and approach to the evaluation of the [Advice in Community Settings Programme](#) using a Theory of Change platform, which describes the logic behind the project to extend the sector's reach into communities to support more Londoners. The combined elements of this Theory of Change Approach have remained the same for Year 2, so will not be repeated here.

Changes between years one and two

The core capacity, advice model and delivery partnership arrangements were largely kept in place in year two. The project has continued to prioritise advice sector engagement with faith and community groups and cooperation between advice agencies and across London borough boundaries. It has continued its focus on strengthening and building warm local referral networks between local Citizens Advice services, specialist agencies that are part of the LLST's Centres of Excellence programme (COEx), and community organisations, and the development of capacity to deliver preventative generalist and specialist face-to-face advice for the most vulnerable Londoners.

GLA increased total funding from £2.3million to £2.5million in year two. Additional funding enabled London Citizens Advice and LLST to offer cost of living increases for staff. Other changes that have been implemented over year two were:

- London Citizens Advice introduced one additional adviser role in response to increased demand arising from new groups attending Advice First Aid (AFA) sessions where it has not been possible to open new local referral channels due to constraints on capacity. The new adviser role provided direct support to AFA organisations, and some additional referral capacity, subject to specified criteria.
- LLST have continued to develop apprenticeships. The University House apprentice continued from year one into year two and completed their SQE Level 1 exams at the start of September 2024. Mary Ward Legal Centre SQE apprentice continued from year one into year two and moved to work with the Welfare Benefits team after spending the previous 6 months with the Housing team. Youth Legal, new to apprenticeships, began in Year 2 by taking on a new staff member in December 2023 and supporting them in undertaking their SQE2 in 2024. They also further developed their non-project apprentice offering, securing a levy transfer for another staff member who had a Graduate Diploma in Law and wished to start SQE1.
- Partners have also included greater emphasis on workforce wellbeing. LLST have continued to fund an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and partners have run staff training sessions including two 'Self-care Power Hour' sessions and 'Building Positive Resilience' training for project staff. LLST's February London Specialist Advice Forum was themed around wellbeing in the sector and provided an opportunity for staff to share their experiences and discuss actionable improvements. Regional hub meetings have continued to develop to offer delivery partners from across the project a platform to discuss emerging local policy issues, identify effective practices and develop referral relationships.
- Another notable development in year two has been the extension of Advice First Aid to some COEx agencies (see page 13), demonstrating a further extension of the collaborative working model.
- Finally, there have also been staff changes at the central project management level, with key staff continuing to meet monthly.

Case studies illustrating how agencies across London have delivered ALP appear at Appendix Two.

Advice Service Delivery and Outcomes

The primary activity of the ALP project is, of course, the delivery of advice on welfare benefits, housing, debt and other matters for Londoners struggling with the high cost of living. Below are the headline figures for this service. Case studies illustrating the ways in which Londoners have been helped by the service appear at Appendix One.

- In the first two years of service delivery (commencing September 2022), the Advising Londoners Partnership (ALP) assisted **53,646 Londoners**. A further **20,498** Londoners attended cost-of-living events.
- The advice provided led to financial improvements for Londoners totalling **over £24 million**. This represents a **5:1 return on investment**. For every £1 invested in the ALP by the GLA, the finances of Londoners who were advised improved by £5.03.
- With the ALP and its services fully operational for the whole of year two, there was a markedly higher run-rate for numbers of people assisted and financial improvements. Year two has seen over 29,000 Londoners helped, with financial improvements totalling over £24 million. This compares with 24,000 Londoners helped in year one, with financial improvements of £9.5 million. The impact and returns of the service are therefore increasing as the ALP becomes embedded and the benefits of its collaborative, pan-London approach are reaped.

Delivery data – 24 months: Londoners helped

	Generalist advice & casework	Light touch intervention	Specialist advice	Community events/ presentations*	Totals
LLST - Centres of Excellence	15,246	Not recorded	6,377	1,489	23,112
Citizens Advice London - Local Citizens Advice	20,596	8,981	2,446	19,009	51,032
Totals	35,842	8,981	8,823	20,498	74,144
Londoners actively assisted with advice and information	53,646			*People attending events may be included in actively assisted with advice and information figures.	

Financial improvements (including, income gains, expenditure, and debt reductions)

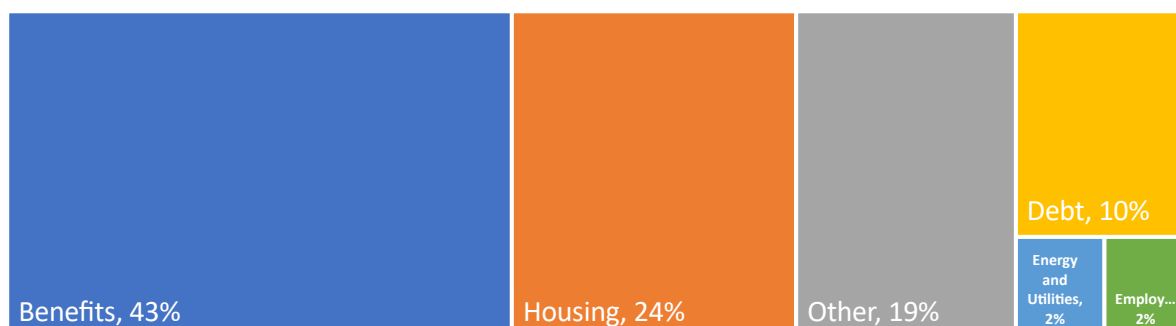
London Legal Support Trust - Centres of Excellence	£10,243,566
Citizens Advice London - Local Citizens Advice	£13,918,547
Total	£24,162,113

- **Return on investment: £5.03 for every £1 invested by GLA.**
- Average of £540.96 for every person advised at generalist or specialist level (not including light touch interventions).

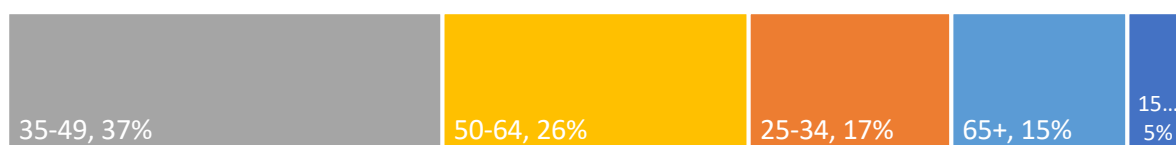
Client profiles

Project delivery partners do not record advice issues and client demographics consistently. It is therefore not possible to provide aggregated data for all characteristics. However, here are some aggregated statistics it has been possible to gather for year two of the project:

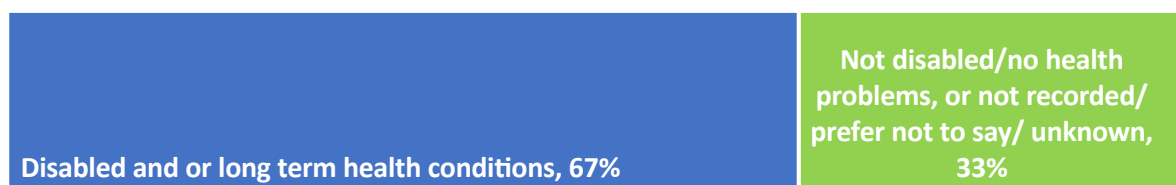
Issues Londoners Were Helped With



Age Ranges of Londoners Helped



Disabled People and People with Health Conditions



Ethnicity of Londoners Helped



Data is not available on general profile of clients and issues across all agencies involved in the partnership and the range of projects and services they provide. However, key statistics for all Citizens Advice services across London is available. Comparison with ALP project data shows:

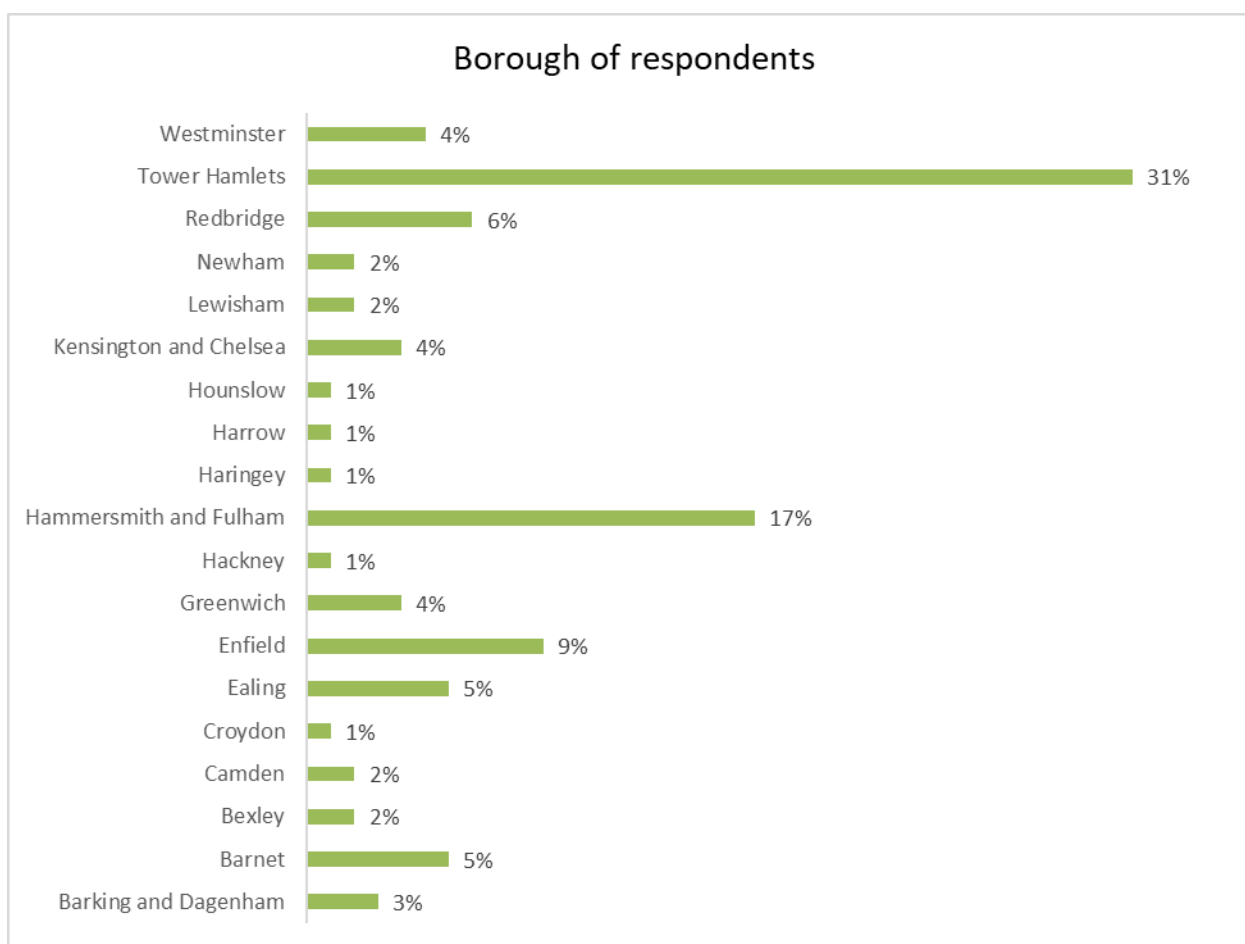
- ALP is helping with a **greater number of housing issues**. This fits with reports from across the ALP that housing issues presented by clients are high.
- ALP is helping slightly **more people in the 50-64** range and slightly **fewer 35-49**-year-olds.
- ALP clients are **more likely to be disabled or have long-term health conditions**.
- ALP clients are **more likely to be Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic**, reflecting the reach of the project into London's diverse communities.

Client feedback

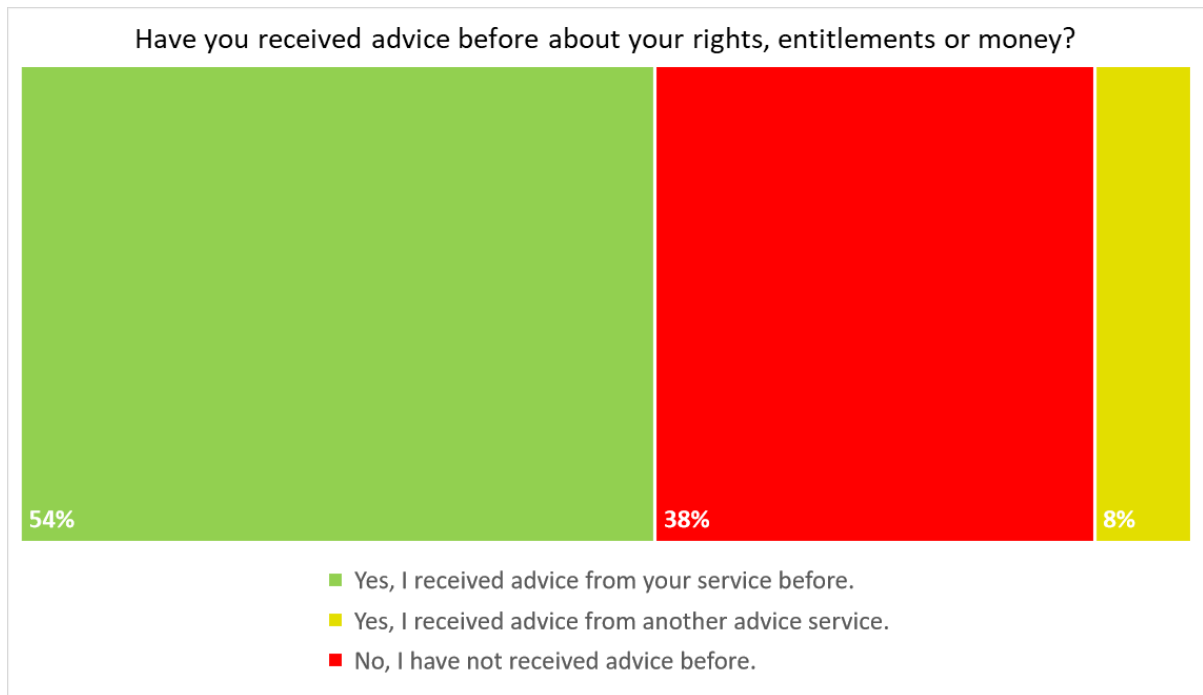
A survey of clients using ALP services was conducted in March and April 2024. Clients using the service during this period were asked to complete a simple feedback form, which they could complete on paper or online. The form was available in English, Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Farsi, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi Indian, Punjabi – Pakistani, Somali, Spanish, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Urdu.

120 clients returned the survey: 53 local Citizens Advice Clients and 67 Centres of Excellence clients. This provided a snapshot of the experience of the service for around 5% of clients seen during this period. This is a small sample, and caution should therefore be exercised in extrapolating results, but it gives an indication of the impact of the advice service on clients.

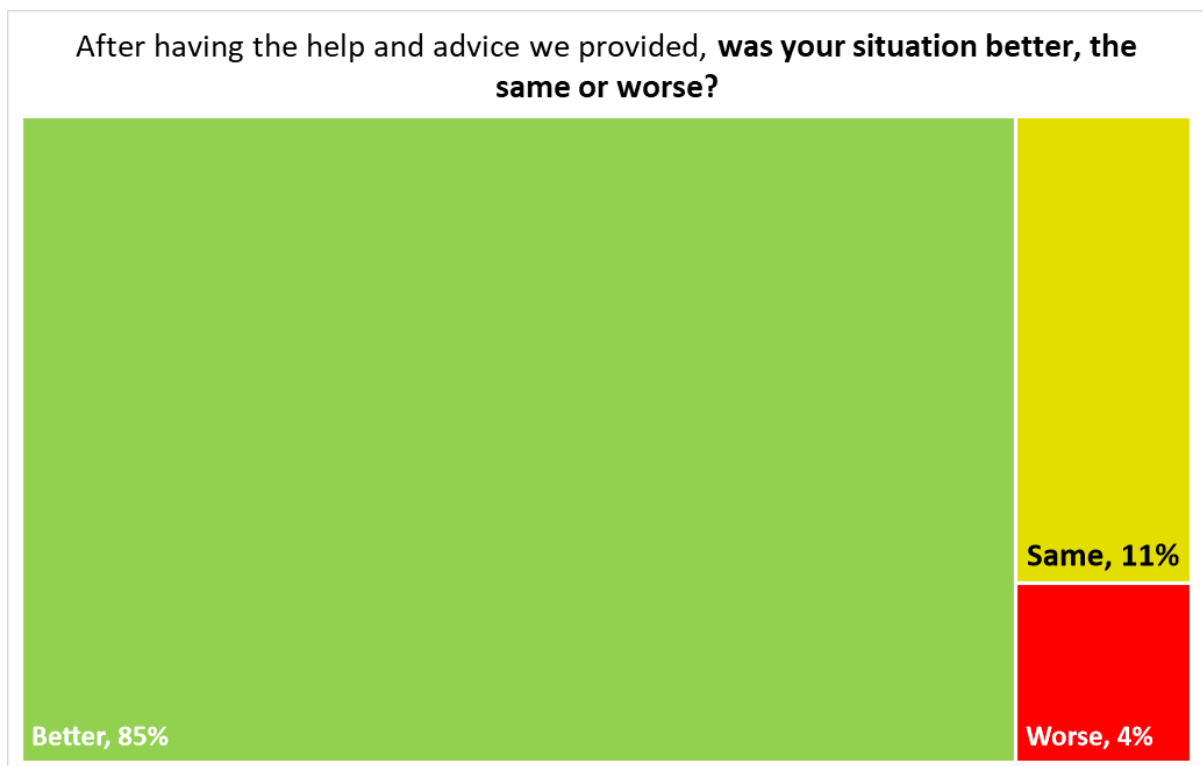
Respondents came from 19 London boroughs. Advice services in Tower Hamlets and Hammersmith & Fulham clearly had more success in encouraging clients to respond.



38% of respondents had not received advice before they accessed ALP project services.

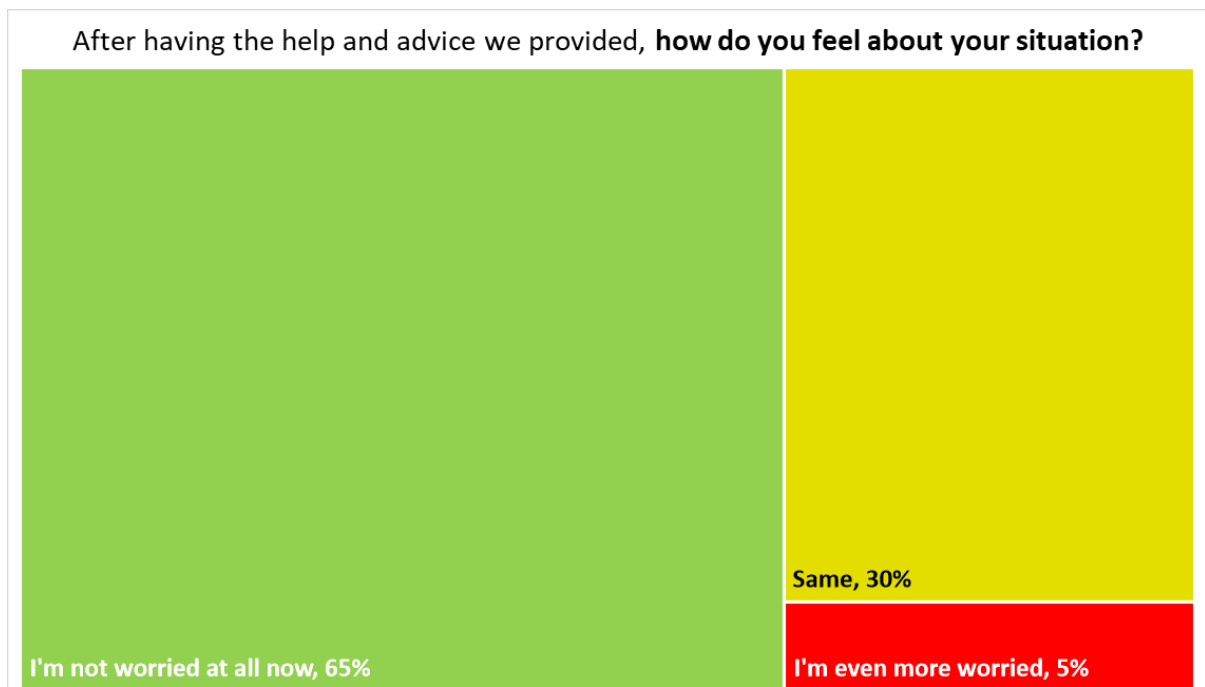


Respondents felt overwhelmingly that the advice they received made their situation better and that they had a better understanding of their rights, money, and ways to get help.

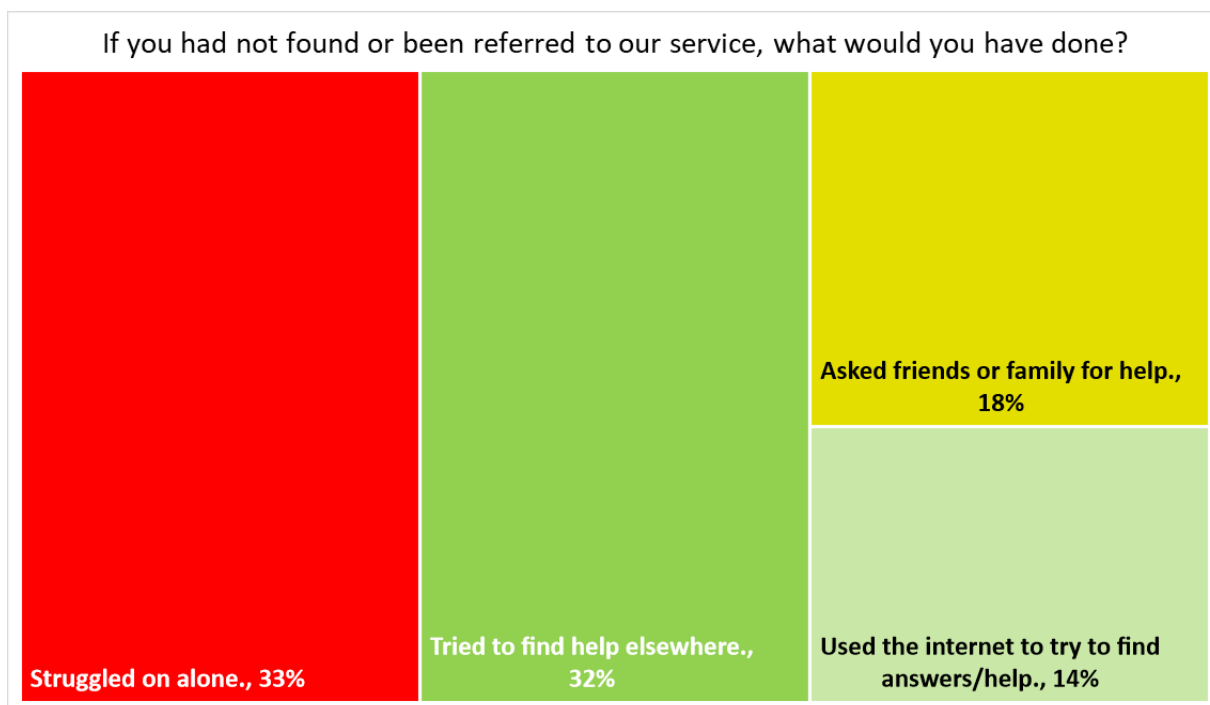




Nearly two thirds of respondents were also less worried than before they received advice.



If they had not found, or been referred to the ALP advice service, one third would have struggled on alone. Less than one third would have tried to find help elsewhere.



Respondents were asked if they had any comments or suggestions about the service. The main themes of the feedback comments are as follows:

- **Positive experience and supportive advisers:** many comments express gratitude for the support received from advisers who are knowledgeable, friendly, and understanding. Clients appreciate feeling comfortable, open, and reassured during their consultations.
- **Appreciation for the service provided:** numerous comments express satisfaction and gratitude for the service received from various advice centres. There's a consistent appreciation for the helpfulness, professionalism, and efficiency of the advice service. Clients value the advice given, the sense of being heard, and the assistance in understanding their rights and options.
- **Appreciation for clarity and support:** clients value the clarity and helpfulness of the advice provided. They feel supported and reassured in dealing with their issues and express confidence in the advice received.
- **Specific mention of advisers:** several comments specifically mention the names of advisers who provided excellent assistance, highlighting their effectiveness and empathy in addressing clients' needs.
- **Gratitude and hope:** clients express gratitude for the help received, often stating that they feel more hopeful and relieved after seeking assistance. They acknowledge the importance of the service provided by the citizens advice service and express a desire for continued support.
- **Criticism and suggestions:** while most of the feedback is positive, there are a few comments expressing dissatisfaction or suggesting improvements. These include concerns about perceived limitations of online services and dissatisfaction with automated responses. Some comments include suggestions for improvement, such as the need for more regular updates, clearer communication, or addressing specific issues.

The feedback underscores the importance of the advice service in providing valuable support and guidance to individuals facing various challenges. The feedback reflects the valuable support

provided by the advice centres and the positive impact they have on the lives of those seeking assistance.

Quotes from respondents

"[The Adviser] was very helpful and professional I felt really comfortable and open on sharing my current struggles, I am not the type to share my personal life but doing so made my anxiety feel better, I never felt judged and I got help on my issues plus advice on other issues/matters and where I could go and what I was entitled to, I felt more aware and a great sense of help, also I felt that someone just listened."

"An extremely responsive and trustworthy service. It is Essential the service is supported as the work they did was really helpful."

"I feel much better about how I will pay my bills now I am retired."

"I got a lot of help from citizens advice.....I was struggling before and did not have proper knowledge about my rights. I was introduced to the service by Community Solutions, since then I received a lot of help.....and I now recommend it to my others friends."

"I'm grateful for all the support I've received so far. Nobody else has been this helpful and I feel more hope than ever before. I hope I continue to receive support from you."

"Thank you for listening and being empathetic. It provided with hope that there are people out there who care."

"Advice given was fantastic! Easy to understand. Very professional! No wasted time! My situation was resolved very quickly! Thank you so much!"

"Thank you very much for everything! I can't manage these things without you!"

Advice First Aid (AFA)

The Advice First Aid programme delivered under ALP, and led from Citizens Advice Wandsworth, aims to share knowledge and skills to increase the ability of community and faith groups to help people in hardship. The programme of training aims to support people in non-advice roles to:

- Gather information and spot advice issues
- Use online tools and information resources
- Provide information and signposting
- Know when and how to refer for advice
- Find relevant local and national services
- Meet other local organisations and share information
- Topics include benefits, debt, housing, cost of living help and immigration signposting.

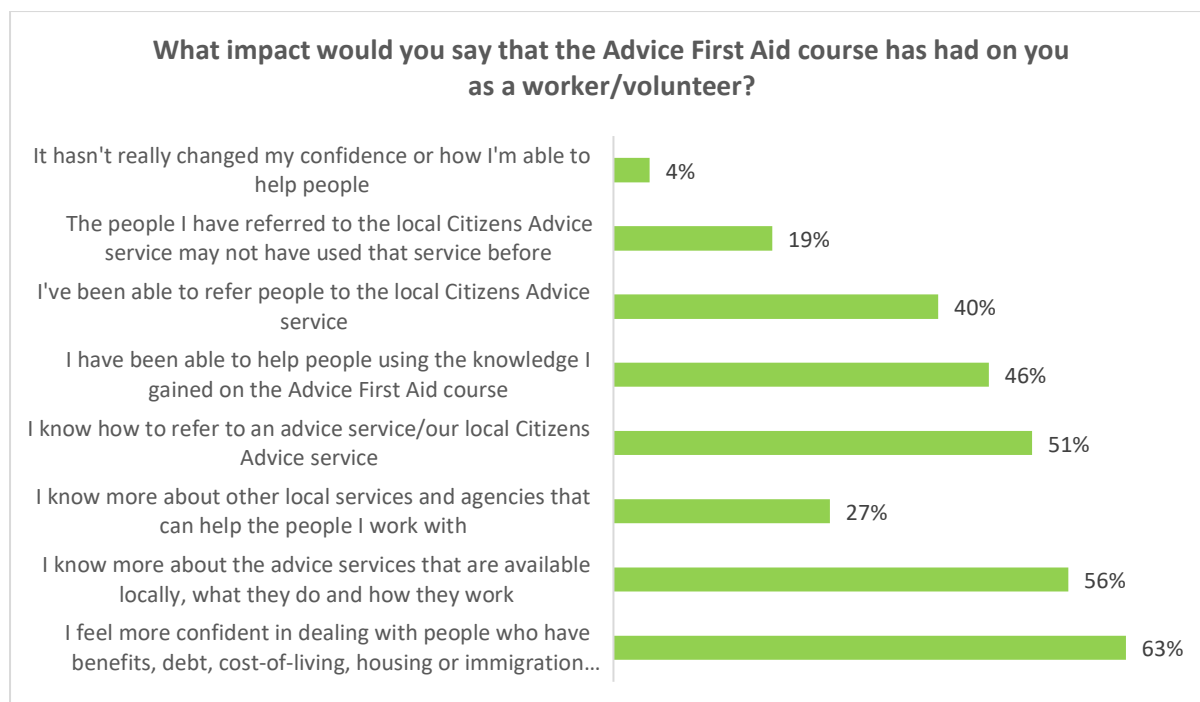
The training programme starts with a one-day Introduction to Advice First Aid course, followed by a half-day Advice First Aid Update course. Advice First Aiders can also access online bitesize training sessions throughout the year.

39 AFA training sessions were delivered in the first year of the ALP, involving a total of 508 attendees. 319 people attended 1- or 2-day introductory training courses and 189 people attended follow-up and bitesize sessions. In year two, 58 introductory courses, 35 bitesize sessions and 14 AFA follow-up/update sessions were delivered. These were attended by 1,496 individuals from around 400 community agencies. A list of agencies attending Advice First Aid training appears at Appendix Three.

In total, 146 AFA courses have been held, involving 2,004 participants across London.

All participants are invited to provide feedback via an online survey form. 113 course participants had completed the survey up to November 2024.

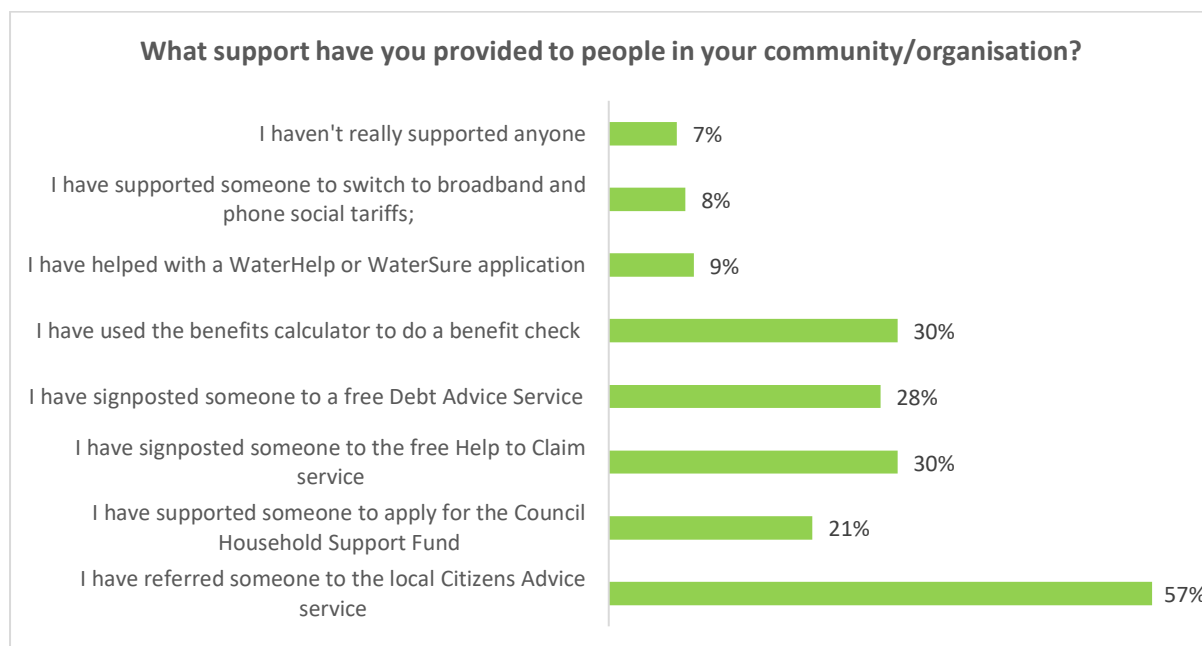
The course has improved confidence and knowledge for most participants.



It has also **strengthened referral routes and relationships** between participating organisations and local Citizens Advice in particular. In year two of the ALP, AFA was opened to delivery by Centres of Excellence (COEx), with Ealing Law Centre and Island Advice taking this up (see appendices). The feedback questionnaire was not, however, amended to invite comments on relationships with COEx agencies.



AFA has led to participants being **able to provide extra/new support for people** in the community they serve, particularly making referrals to local Citizens Advice.



Comments made by participants

Based on analysis of comments made by respondent to the post-course survey, here are the key themes and recurrent feedback:

Key Themes:

1. Increased Confidence

- Participants repeatedly mentioned feeling more confident in:
 - Supporting service users
 - Signposting people to appropriate services
 - Providing advice on complex issues like housing, debt, and benefits
 - Understanding local support systems

2. Knowledge Enhancement

- Training significantly expanded participants' understanding of:
 - Available support services
 - Referral processes
 - Local resources and organisations
 - How to help clients with various challenges

3. Team and Organisational Benefits

- Many noted they could:
 - Share learned information with colleagues
 - Improve internal processes (e.g., developing triage forms)
 - Train other team members
 - Network with other organisations

4. Practical Application

- Participants indicated they:
 - Applied training insights directly in their work
 - Refer clients to Citizens Advice
 - Feel better equipped to support service users

Recurrent Requests/Suggestions:

1. Continue providing training slides and resources
2. Consider offering more advanced/high-level training
3. Improve referral process clarity
4. Enhance accessibility of advice appointments

Overall, the training was overwhelmingly perceived as valuable, particularly for smaller charities and organisations with limited training budgets.

Requests for follow-up training and information

1. **Housing** emerged as the most frequently mentioned topic for follow-up training. Specific requests included:
 - More in-depth training on housing issues
 - Understanding housing law
 - Information about permanent and temporary tenancies
 - Clear referral routes for housing problems
 - Support for private tenants
2. **Benefits and Financial Support:** Respondents expressed interest in additional training on:
 - Benefit assessments

- Universal Credit applications
 - Council tax reduction
 - Cost of living advisory services
 - Debt management
 - Capability for work questionnaires
3. **Specialised Support Services:** Participants requested training on:
- Immigration issues and migrant employment rights
 - Casework skills
 - Communication skills
 - Safeguarding
 - Support services for parents of young children
4. **Training Delivery Preferences:** Several suggestions were made about training format:
- More accessible delivery methods (online, flexible scheduling)
 - Refresher courses
 - Spreading courses over multiple sessions
 - Case study-based learning
 - Regular knowledge review sessions
5. **Miscellaneous Training Needs**
- Information about local services and agencies
 - Advanced/next-level training
 - Updates on service changes
 - Volunteer support (e.g., voucher systems while on Universal Credit)

The comments suggest a desire for continued professional development, with a strong emphasis on practical, specialised knowledge that can directly improve volunteer capabilities in supporting clients.

Partnership and Collaboration for System Change

The Advising Londoners Partnership prioritises engagement between advice agencies and community and faith groups, aiming to:

- **Enhance engagement:** Strengthen connections between the advice sector and faith/community groups.
- **Increase capacity:** Empower faith/community groups to triage and refer individuals to crisis support and expert advice.
- **Build stronger referral routes:** Improve pathways for referrals from faith/community groups to advice services.
- **Strengthen referral networks:** Enhance connections between Local Citizens Advice (LCAs) and London Legal Support Trust (LLST) funded agencies to provide crisis prevention and specialist advice.
- **Increase advice provision and extend reach:** Broaden the reach and accessibility of advice services for Londoners affected by rising living costs through outreach, capacity building, and establishing robust referral routes.
- **Have a policy impact:** Enhance the influence and impact of policies through these partnerships.

The ALP does this by:

- Encouraging the advice agencies that are funded under the ALP to **work with local community, social and faith agencies**. The Case Studies at Appendix Two illustrate how some of this work happens, and some further examples are set out below.
- **Funding some community agencies**, such as Haringey Migrant Support Centre and Community Links.
- **Advice First Aid training** is offered in all London boroughs to build the capability of community-based agencies. (See previous section.)
- **Enabling joint working between advice agencies:**
 - **Sub regional hubs** have been established to bring advice agencies working under the ALP together to discuss social policy and practice issues.
 - **Referrals routes** between generalist and specialist agencies have been created.
 - **A central advice referral resource** to take referrals from community agencies (based at Citizens Advice Merton & Lambeth) has been created.
 - **ALP events** bring agencies working in the Partnership together at a pan-London level to discuss policy and practice matters and share best practice.
 - Citizens Advice London and London Legal Support Trust jointly manage the ALP, in partnership with the GLA.

Learning

- **Initial challenges:** Many community and faith groups couldn't participate due to capacity constraints. Referrals and inter-agency relationships were slow to develop due to staggered start times and the need for trust-based relationships. High demand on specialist caseworkers also limited their ability to accept external referrals initially.

- **Overambitious expectations:** Rapid development of relationships between community, faith agencies, and advice agencies was unrealistic. However, relationships and partnerships did develop over the first year of the ALP and have borne fruit particularly in year two.
- **Progress and impact:** Despite early challenges, the ALP has strengthened inter-agency referrals, with new routes and relationships formed across LCAs and LLST/COEx networks, supporting the ALP's broader goal of pan-London collaboration.
- **Capacity and trust issues:** Inter-agency partnerships are relational, not transactional. Effective engagement requires significant time and resources. Relationships often depend on specific individuals, making them fragile.
- **Referrals flowing:** Despite positive interactions, referrals from community groups were slow at first. Trust-building and understanding of the advice services is critical. However, 73% of agencies involved created new referral pathways in year one, and these have grown in year two. Establishing clear guidelines for referrals and casework services is crucial. Regular discussions between agencies facilitate better referral flow.
- **New relationships forged:** The ALP enabled the development of new engagements, with 63% of delivery partners reporting new relationships and at least 210 faith and community groups engaged in the first year. These partnerships have continued and been added to in year two.
- **Testing new approaches:** The ALP allowed advice agencies to explore new relationships and methods, particularly in hidden pockets of deprivation.
- **Sustaining existing Relationships:** Some partners, like Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network, strengthened ongoing relationships, facilitating physical outreach and referral routes from various services.
- **Advice First Aid training plays a crucial role** in building capabilities and fostering stronger connections between advice agencies and community groups.
- **Colocation brings benefits:** Physical proximity of agencies enhances referrals, though delivering services at other agency/community site isn't always feasible.
- **Specialist support:** Generalist Crisis Prevention Advisers often need second-tier support. The ability to consult with specialists can prevent unnecessary referrals and enhance case handling.
- **Capacity constraints:** Agencies are sometimes unable to meet additional referral demand due to high demand from their drop-in services.
- **Translation services:** Access to translation facilities is critical, especially in diverse boroughs. All ALP advice agencies have access to LanguageLine.

Examples of collaboration and strengthened relationships:

- **Tamil Welfare Association:** Gained capacity to accept Tamil-speaking referrals from various sources.
- **Citizens Advice Merton & Lambeth:** Receiving referrals from South West London Law Centres for cases they can't handle, like UC appeals and PIP/ESA cases.
- **Citizens Advice East End:** Enhanced links with Community Links and Mary Ward Legal Centre, creating referral routes to their specialist caseworker.
- **Citizens Advice Harrow and Citizens Advice Barnet:** New partnership with referrals of two cases per week in year one.

- **Citizens Advice Bromley:** Developed close working relationships with Citizens Advice Southwark, Citizens Advice Lewisham, and Citizens Advice Greenwich, and strengthened ties with Greenwich Housing Rights for housing-related queries.
- **South West London Law Centres and Citizens Advice Croydon:** Strengthened relationship resulting in a new flow of referrals.
- **Citizens Advice Hounslow and Ealing Law Centre:** Built a referral route and improved understanding through team meetings.
- **Island Advice Centre (Tower Hamlets):** Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN) provides an infrastructure for referrals and training programs. Delivering Advice First Aid training targeting connections through social prescribers and health service providers. Learning: Quick and flexible funding processes are crucial. Integrating advice services into health settings can enhance reach. Strong community networks bolster service effectiveness.
- **Nucleus Legal Advice Centre (Kensington & Chelsea):** New collaborations with social workers and community groups, including Hodan Somali Community group. Policy Impact: Influenced local council's approach to homelessness prevention and Local Housing Allowance rates. Learning: Flexible funding preserves essential services during financial crises. Specialisation and strong referral systems enhance service delivery.
- **Citizens Advice Haringey:** Planned outreach at St. Anne's Hospital. Rebuilt links with a wide range of local community and faith organisations. Advice First Aid: Running sessions to build community group knowledge and connections. Learnings: Rebuilding community links is essential after funding cuts. Advice First Aid training strengthens community networks.
- **Community Links (Newham):** Collaborates with Mary Ward Legal Centre and others to deliver advice in community settings. Advice First Aid sessions to extend community reach. Learning: Continuous funding is vital for meeting high demand. Community outreach extends service accessibility.
- **Citizens Advice Brent:** Involvement in community advice events and new outreach at Kensal Rise Library. Learnings: Training community groups strengthens service networks. Identifying unmet needs can guide effective outreach.
- **Citizens Advice Enfield:** Reestablished community connections post-pandemic. Developed strong links with community and faith groups for targeted advice. Addressed local council tax support issues through policy discussions. Learning: Reengaging with the community post-pandemic is crucial. Effective policy advocacy requires collaborative efforts.
- **Haringey Migrant Support Centre (HMSC):** Partnered with Islington Law Centre. Addressing immigration, housing, and destitution issues for migrants. Advocating for migrant issues at the policy level. Learning: Flexible partnerships enhance service delivery. Advocacy for marginalised groups is critical.
- **Citizens Advice Redbridge:** Collaborations with local agencies for targeted outreach. Advice First Aid sessions bolster community organisation knowledge. Learning: Multi-channel service delivery meets diverse client needs. Community training enhances local support networks.
- **Citizens Advice Southwark:** Advisers deliver in-person and telephone advice, plus outreach at asylum seeker centre and community events. Multi-agency events increase service visibility in hard-to-reach areas. Advice First Aid sessions facilitate community collaboration.

The ALP demonstrates the power of flexible, community-integrated funding to preserve and enhance advice services across London. Key learnings include the importance of quick and non-bureaucratic funding processes, the value of strong community networks, and the need for continuous policy advocacy to address systemic issues. By leveraging partnerships and community training, advice organisations have extended their reach and effectiveness in addressing the cost-of-living crisis, housing, and welfare rights issues. Advice systems have been improved by collaboration and partnership. Continued and expanded funding is essential to sustain these vital services, meet growing demand and build on the social capital created by the partnerships and collaboration. More could be done to harness the intelligence, insights and data held by ALP participants to influence and change social, welfare and economic policy and systems affecting Londoners.

Conclusions

1. **Demonstrated value and reach**

The Advising Londoners Partnership (ALP) has proved highly effective in its second year, assisting over 50,600 Londoners, improving their financial situations by over £24million, reducing worry and delivering a 5:1 return on investment. The results indicate a well-embedded, collaborative approach that is increasingly addressing the financial and social wellbeing needs of Londoners, particularly those from marginalised communities. The Partnership and its approach is reaching Londoners that may otherwise not have accessed advice and may have struggled alone with the challenges they face.

2. **Strengthened partnerships**

Partnerships between advice agencies, faith, and community organisations have expanded significantly, leading to more robust referral pathways and increased accessibility of advice services. This collaborative model is fostering resilience and trust at the community level.

3. **Growing demand and evolving challenges**

The continued economic pressures mean demand for advice services remains high. Issues such as housing instability, complex benefit needs, and financial insecurity are prevalent, with advice agencies often operating at or beyond capacity.

4. **Effectiveness of Advice First Aid**

The Advice First Aid programme has successfully increased community organisations' ability to triage and refer individuals. This has empowered local groups and strengthened their ability to serve their communities effectively.

5. **Sustainability of services**

Short-term funding and workforce challenges present risks to maintaining the level of impact achieved so far. Continuity and growth of funding are essential to sustaining progress and meeting rising demand.

Recommendations

- 1. Secure long-term funding**

Advocate for extended and increased funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA) and other stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of the ALP, allowing for the retention of experienced staff and the ability to meet growing demand.
- 2. Expand Advice First Aid**

Broaden the Advice First Aid programme to include more advanced training topics and tailor sessions to address specific local issues, such as housing law or benefits appeals. Consider offering flexible formats to increase accessibility for participants.
- 3. Data and policy advocacy**

Strengthen the collection and analysis of data across delivery partners to generate actionable insights. Use this data to inform policy advocacy, particularly around systemic issues like housing affordability, benefit administration, and digital exclusion.
- 4. Enhance capacity and resilience**

Explore innovative ways to increase workforce capacity, such as funding trainee roles or apprenticeships, and provide targeted support to address staff wellbeing and retention challenges.
- 5. Focus on systemic impact**

Build on the success of community partnerships to deepen ALP's policy influence. Create forums for community and faith organisations to contribute insights on systemic challenges and advocate for policy changes that address underlying causes of poverty and exclusion.
- 6. Support underserved areas and groups**

Prioritise expanding advice provision in identified 'advice deserts' and improving services for underserved communities, such as the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller population and those with no recourse to public funds.
- 7. Strengthen feedback mechanisms**

Develop more robust systems for gathering and acting on feedback from service users, community partners and AFA attendees to continuously refine the ALP's approach.

Appendix One: Client Case Studies

1. Single mother of a child with additional needs, self-employed cleaner

Challenges:

- Limited working hours due to child's health needs.
- Financial struggles, including council tax arrears.
- Refusal of Universal Credit (UC) due to failing the Habitual Residence Test.
- Dependence on family and friends for rent and daily living costs.

Actions Taken:

- Provided three face-to-face appointments.
- Arranged an interpreter due to client's limited English proficiency.
- Advised on UC claim and assisted with the appeal.
- Referred to Mary Ward Legal Centre (MWLC) for tribunal representation.
- Identified lack of Council Tax Support (CTS) and helped with the application.
- Informed Enfield Council to pause enforcement actions pending CTS application.
- Advised on potential applications for Council Tax Support Hardship to further reduce bills.
- Suggested applying for DLA for her son and offered future assistance for any necessary appeals.
- Provided ongoing debt and benefits advice to reduce client's stress.

Impact:

- Legal Representation: Enhanced chances of a successful UC appeal with MWLC's help, as English is not client's first language and she is struggling to understand the appeal process.
- Financial Relief:
 - Potential CTS of £16.80 per week, easing monthly expenses.
 - Possible DLA payments for her son, boosting household income.
- Stress Reduction: Continuous support and advice on debts and benefits, leading to improved financial stability and reduced stress for the client.

2. Domestic abuse survivor disabled single parent with two children

Challenges:

- Living in a one-bedroom flat with severe health conditions, including depression, severe back and hip pain, cramps, and asthma.
- Denied Personal Independence Payment (PIP) due to a lack of points awarded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Actions Taken:

- Collected comprehensive medical evidence.
- Drafted detailed submissions for the appeal.
- Represented the client in a video tribunal hearing.

Impact:

- Tribunal awarded the standard rate of the daily living component and the enhanced rate of the mobility component of PIP.
- Financial relief of £7,744.06 in arrears and £6,588.77 over the next 12 months.
- Improved financial stability and reduced stress.

3. Single parent to a 16-year-old son, survivor of severe domestic violence

Challenges:

- Physical and mental health issues, including migraines, fibromyalgia, and debilitating anxiety.
- Denied Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and left without payments for months, causing Housing Benefit to be suspended.

Actions Taken:

- Assisted in restarting Housing Benefit by providing necessary information.
- Applied for permission to appeal to the Upper Tribunal for the ESA case.
- Prepared a detailed submission based on interviews with the client.
- Represented the client in a tribunal hearing.

Impact:

- ESA payments were reinstated at the basic rate, with the client placed in the highest support group.
- Backdated payments for the period without support were awarded.
- Enhanced financial security and well-being.

4. Migrant mother with a two-year-old child, previously homeless and undocumented

Challenges:

- Unsafe temporary accommodation with damp and mould issues.
- Financial and legal struggles, including unresolved NHS debts.

Actions Taken:

- Arranged a housing advice session and referred the client to a solicitor.
- Advocated with the council for better living conditions, resulting in relocation to suitable accommodation.
- Supported her child's citizenship application via referral to KIND.

Impact:

- Resolved unsafe housing conditions and secured alternative accommodation.
- Initiated a pathway for her child's citizenship application.
- Continued long-term support since 2021 for housing, legal, and financial stability.

5. 78-year-old woman with Alzheimer's and osteoarthritis, homeless after gifting her home to her estranged daughter

Challenges:

- Denied Pension Credit and deemed intentionally homeless by the local authority.
- Living in a bus garage with her adult son.

Actions Taken:

- Initiated an appeal to overturn the decision to remove her benefits.
- Referred her to the internal housing team for legal housing advocacy.

Impact:

- Successfully restored Pension Credit through the appeal process.
- Ongoing housing legal support to secure stable accommodation.

6. Full-time carer for a disabled child, with her own health issues, living in private rented accommodation

Challenges:

- Served a Section 21 notice and faced a £23k Housing Benefit overpayment caused by administrative errors.
- Non-digitally active, which impacted her ability to resolve issues promptly.
- Extremely stressed by the risk of homelessness and overwhelming debt.

Actions Taken:

- Helped the client file a homelessness application online, leading to contact with the council's housing options team.
- Supported the client in challenging the Housing Benefit overpayment, successfully reducing the debt by £17k.

Impact:

- Reduced Housing Benefit overpayment significantly, easing financial stress.
- The client expressed relief and happiness with the outcome.

7. Lone parent of two dependent children, part-time worker, living in private rented accommodation

Challenges:

- Struggled with rent and Council Tax arrears after a separation that affected her tenancy.
- Difficulty understanding Universal Credit (UC) decisions and statements.
- Low income compounded financial strain.

Actions Taken:

- Explained UC statements and helped challenge the housing costs element.
- Reported changes in circumstances to the local authority, securing single-person Council Tax discounts and support applications.

Impact:

- Client's income increased by £1,461 per month (£17,532 annually) due to corrected UC housing costs.
- Reduced Council Tax bills, improving financial stability.
- The client expressed satisfaction and noted improved budget management.

7. Single disabled male, separated from his partner and children, relocated to unfamiliar Lewisham after a homelessness application

Challenges:

- Living in a private studio rental and relying on Universal Credit (UC), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and Personal Independence Payment (PIP), but struggling with debts and reduced income.
- Financial hardship led to reliance on food banks.

Actions Taken:

- Identified unsustainable debt repayment levels and arranged a debt advice appointment.
- Applied to the Biscuit Fund, successfully securing £40.
- Submitted additional grant applications to cover the cost of new glasses (£90) and a replacement television.

- Facilitated immediate payment to the optician, allowing the client to collect glasses on the same day, and arranged for the television delivery.

Impact:

- Improved quality of life with restored vision and a replacement television to alleviate isolation.
- Reduced financial strain through grants and debt advice.
- The client expressed deep gratitude for the comprehensive support provided.

Appendix Two: Delivery Partner Case Studies

The following case studies illustrate how agencies delivered the ALP in year two.

GLA funding under the ALP enabled [Island Advice Centre](#) in Tower Hamlets to continue to provide welfare rights casework. The ending of a previous funding stream had placed this part of its service under threat at a time of growing need. The simple award of grant without a long-winded application process made it easy for Island Advice to retain their Caseworker and seamlessly continue to deliver advice on complex benefit matters and disability benefit appeals.

Island Advice also benefits from the already strong and well established [Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network](#) (THCAN). This network has created a referral system and a training programme for local advice providers. Despite some recent reductions in local authority funding, new investment from health funders and London Funders (under [Propel](#)), the Network is continuing to provide an effective infrastructure for local advice provision.

The exciting news in 2024 is that Island Advice is now delivering Advice First Aid training under the ALP, running courses in different community localities and targeting connections made by social prescribers and health service providers in each locality. Centre Manager Sarah Sauvat said *"Not everyone goes to community and faith organisations for support, but most people go to their GP. So, Advice First Aid provides an important part of the jigsaw - helping to raise awareness of advice support that is available in Tower Hamlets."*

From April 2024, health service funding means that advice is be available in every GP surgery in the borough. This funding has been promoted by a report by another Tower Hamlets advice provider, the Bromley By Bow Centre. Its report, [Reducing health inequities in London by improving access to social welfare advice through greater collaboration between the healthcare, local authority and advice sectors](#), funded by the Mayor for London, made the case for the inclusion of social welfare advice in Integrated Care Systems.

Island Advice Centre expects Advice First Aid training and new provision of advice in health settings to unearth new demand. Local advice providers are tracking levels of demand, including that they can't meet, very closely. They expect to face continuing challenges in meeting high demand - particularly at a time when they also face [workforce challenges](#). The Centre feels it is vital that funding for the work it is doing under the ALP is extended, long-term.

In addition to extended funding, Island Advice Centre is keen to see more work done at a pan-London level to bring caseworkers and advisers together to discuss policy issues. The biggest challenge for Island Advice at present is housing - poor conditions, overcrowding, challenging homelessness decisions, temporary accommodation, few remedies, and scarcity of specialist legal advice. Work across London to tackle this issue would be welcome.

[Nucleus](#) legal advice centre in Kensington & Chelsea employs a housing caseworker under the ALP. When the cost-of-living crisis began to bite, Nucleus saw a big rise in housing issues, with more local people being served with eviction notices. Unfortunately, this coincided with funding for its housing caseworker coming to an end. Trustees took the decision to retain the caseworker and housing advice capacity anyway, such was local need. When GLA funding under the ALP came along it was a lifesaver. Nucleus bridged the gap in funding for six months but importantly, managed to retain an experienced, qualified solicitor. This has provided a building block for increased housing advice provision. Nucleus has recently been awarded new funding by City Bridge Foundation and has taken on a new housing adviser, supervised by the ALP housing caseworker.

When Nucleus started to deliver services under the ALP, it took the opportunity to ensure that only cases requiring specialist housing advice went to its housing adviser. Referrals come largely via a web form, which was set up during the pandemic. Nucleus has established new links with some social workers and community groups under the ALP, including the [Hodan](#) Somali Community group. Nucleus receives referrals from a wide range of community groups, food banks and Ealing Advice Service. The housing caseworker is also taking referrals from RB K&C's housing team. Nucleus Director, Baljit Badesha feels that reach has definitely been increased under the ALP.

Nucleus continues to see high demand for housing advice. It has had concerns about the Local Housing Allowance for some time and is pleased to see that rates were increased from April 2024. It has also taken policy action to improve K&C Council's approach to homelessness prevention - encouraging it to make better use of Discretionary Housing Payments and Homelessness Prevention Grants.

GLA funding should continue and be provided long-term, in Baljit's view. He would also like to see the funding increased as it only covers around 75% of the full cost of the housing caseworker. However, Nucleus has been grateful for the support provided by GLA under the ALP and the coordinating role played by LLST. The funding was provided without bureaucracy and with flexibility for agencies to use it to continue otherwise threatened services.

[Hammersmith & Fulham Law Centre](#) was awarded funding for two 'Crisis Navigators', who are paid to deliver one day per week each, plus the costs of CEO Sara Taylor supervising and managing the service. Although ALP funding makes a relatively small contribution, it's a vital one. Without it, the Law Centre would be unable to offer much welfare benefits advice. The Law Centre's welfare benefits solicitor is on maternity leave, so benefits advice is undertaken by the ALP staff with support from Sara.

The Crisis Navigators were already at the Law Centre when the ALP was announced. One is an intern, on placement from Brunel University, and the other is studying to be a barrister and was

volunteering. Both were able to offer an additional day per week as paid members of staff. In practice, they do more than one day per week each.

Because the ALP funding has only really filled some gaps in capacity, the Law Centre has been unable to set up new referral pathways or outreach services. Demand for benefits and other advice and increasing complexity of problems far exceeds the Law Centre's capacity. The GLA funding means the Law Centre can offer some clients help with welfare benefits casework, form filling and tribunals. One of the Navigators has represented a client at tribunal. With most benefits work outside the scope of legal aid, the Law Centre is reliant upon funding like the GLA's to continue this service. The Centre very much hopes that funding will be extended.

Policy-wise, the digital by default nature of most council and DWP provisions presents real problems for many Law Centre clients, who lack the equipment and skill to make applications and manage claims. The Law Centre regularly raises this issue with local authority and DWP representatives.

[Islington Law Centre](#) (ILC) uses GLA ALP funding to support a 0.4 advice post – split between two members of staff. The post had previously been self-funded by the Law Centre but would not have been sustainable in the longer term without this funding. The initial focus of both of the advisers was on welfare rights but one has since moved into housing advice and is now employed on a trainee solicitor contract.

The funding has enabled the Law Centre to provide casework assistance to people affected by the rise in the cost-of-living who may previously have only had one-off advice. While some clients self-refer to the Law Centre, many are referred by other local agencies including [Help On Your Doorstep](#). Islington's voluntary sector is quite well networked, which means the Law Centre has good links with local community agencies, including those represented by [Islington BAMER Advice Alliance](#). These arrangements allow ILC to target its advice at those most in need.

ALP funding arrangements have given Islington Law Centre the flexibility to deliver what is needed, without having to create a wholly new and shiny service. Deputy Director Matt Brown hopes that the funding will continue as demand remains very high.

Two policy issues that the Law Centre has noted are around welfare benefits. They have noticed that relatively few people who are subjected to benefit sanctions challenge the decision. They have tried to encourage people to seek advice but have had little take-up - an experience that is replicated throughout Islington's advice network. They have also seen problems caused by suspensions of Universal Credit. Under legacy benefit arrangements, if one income stream was put on hold, the claimant would at least have other income. Now, if UC is stopped, the client can be destitute. Luckily there are two Islington charities that can be called on for emergency relief. If the Law Centres sees a client from neighbouring Hackney, it's a different story.

[Citizens Advice Haringey](#) (CAH) employs two Community Advice Workers under the ALP. They provide generalist advice by telephone and in-person. The advisers deliver an outreach session once a week, by appointment, at [St. Anne's Hospital](#) for mental health patients, from April 2024. Such a service was provided in the past by CAH Advice Quality Manager Marion Esson and has been revived under the ALP.

CAH has undergone substantial change over the past year because of cuts in funding and a consequent need to restructure. As a result, it has had to rebuild its links and services since autumn 2023. The ALP has provided a platform for this. In the first year of the project, the focus was on links with local foodbanks. Head of Advice & Quality, Sayeed Rahman, came into post in November 2023, and since then CAH has built links and referral pathways with a wide range of community and faith organisations. These include the London Islamic Cultural Society and Mosque, Haringey Migrants Centre, the Orthodox Jewish Community, Multi Faith Forum, Disability Action Haringey, Haringey Community Palliative Care, Haringey Welcome (a migrants' and refugees' charity), Hornsey Pensioners' Action Group, ARKS prison resettlement services, and St, Vianney's Catholic Church. CAH held a joint advice event with the Migrants Centre as part of the ALP in April 2024.

Sayeed notes several things that have helped with building these links: his own Islamic background, meeting the agencies in-person to build relationships and trust, providing a feedback loop for referrals (underpinned by a data sharing agreement) and having advisers who are willing to build links and deliver advice in the community. The ALP and the links built have definitely helped to improve the reach of CAH's advice services.

Running Advice First Aid sessions for community and faith agencies has also helped. CAH's first AFA session in November 2023 was attended by Foodbank staff and volunteers. The second drew in a wider range of groups. Both sessions were held in [Chestnuts Community Centre](#). Follow-up half day sessions are being planned for summer 2024. Sayeed and Marion both remarked on the value of AFA in bringing community groups together for the training.

Like all advice services, CAH is dealing with high levels of demand and is seeing unaffordable housing and negative budgets as a major problem. It would like to see the current funding for the ALP extended and for it to support the provision of advice in community settings.

[Community Links](#) in Newham is funded under the ALP via [Mary Ward Legal Centre](#) (MWLC). The agency had good links with MWLC before the ALP and was able to build on this established partnership. Community Links also partners with MWLC, [RAMFEL](#) and [Citizens Advice East End](#) under another GLA funded programme – [Advice in Community Settings](#).

The ALP funding enables Community Links to employ a Gateway Adviser, who triages people dropping-in to its service. The agency provides the only Monday-Friday, 9-5 in person drop-in service in the borough. Last year the service triaged 1700 people.

Memuna Iyasere, Programme Manager, Advice and Community, said that in the first year of the ALP they dealt with lots of fuel debts, hardship and enquiries about small grants and hardship funds. From October 2023 Community Links started to notice that more pensioners were attending its foodbank and more people coming for help and advice about rent arrears. The DWP's resumed recovery of overpayments was a main driver for people falling into rent arrears. Early 2024 has seen more people coming for help with form filling and for help applying to hardship funds which are coming to an end. Social housing rent increases are expected to provoke a rise in enquiries in spring, with more calls being made on Discretionary Housing Payments.

Memuna says Community Links is struggling to cope with demand. The agency has lost a generalist adviser post after City Bridge Foundation funding ended and now relies on two specialist advisers (debt and welfare benefits), plus referrals to Debt Free Advice (DFA) and MWLC advisers. A DFA

adviser is based at Community Links and MWLC delivers housing advice and pro bono advice sessions there. MWLC can also take referrals for benefits advice. However, there are still people that Community Links must signpost to other agencies, and it is concerned that those other agencies don't have capacity either. Community Links hopes that funding will be extended and uplifted in future to enable it to deal with more demand and to extend its reach by running more advice sessions out in the community.

In April 2024, Community Links hosted an Advice First Aid session, to be delivered by Citizens Advice Wandsworth. This was attended by volunteers from Community Links and its Advice in Community Settings partners.

[Citizens Advice Brent](#) (CAB) has two part-time Advisers providing cost-of-living related advice for local people. The ALP has enabled it to improve access to its advice service and also boost the capability of other local organisations. One of CAB's Advisers deals with callers to the organisation's Adviceline service: callers with cost-of-living related issues are quickly identified by telephone assessors and they are offered a call-back from the ALP Adviser. The other Adviser provides face-to-face advice for people who drop-in to the agency's offices at High Road, NW10 and people with booked appointments. She also provides face-to-face outreach advice. This has been delivered at [Sufra](#) until recently, but CAB is considering switching its outreach to [Kensal Rise Library](#), having identified an unmet need in that locality. The community library approached CAB to provide advice. Sufra now has its own adviser.

CAB takes referrals under the ALP from the local Trussell Trust foodbank. It has also set up referral links with the [Asian Women's Resource Centre](#) in Harlesden. Other community agency partnerships it has hoped to develop under the ALP have proven more difficult to set up and sustain – mainly due to lack of adviser and manager resources. However, CAB started to deliver Advice First Aid courses in late 2023 and has found these to be an invaluable to build community links. Three AFA courses plus one follow-up session on Universal Credit have been delivered, involving a range of agencies including agencies supporting carers, older people, Somali, Romanian, and Latin American communities and young people. Head of Service, Adio Garbadeen noted how the courses have provided a space for local organisations to come together and explain how their respective services work, as well as gain useful information about social welfare issues and local hardship funds.

The AFA training also led to CAB gaining a new trainee adviser. A frontline volunteer from Lewinson Centre Foodbank who had attended the AFA training was subsequently successful in his application for a trainee role at CAB which has been funded under the [Advice Workforce Development Programme](#).

In the early days of the ALP, CAB's cost-of-living advisers staffed Debt Free Advice buses that toured the borough. It also ran a workshop on cost-of-living issues for people attending the Sufra foodbank. CAB thinks there is scope for developing more 'one-to-many' information events as part of the ALP, but its resources are now tied up in providing advice to individuals.

CAB hasn't been able to make much use of referral routes to the ALP's specialist adviser at Citizens Advice Barnet or AFA Adviser based at Citizens Advice Merton and Lambeth (CAML). This is not due to lack of need, but because it has found the Barnet service to be oversubscribed and doesn't really understand how the CAML service works.

For [Citizens Advice Enfield](#) (CAE), the ALP has “*put us back in the community again and starting to talk, following the pandemic*”, according to Service and Quality Manager Mary Monaghan.

The agency employs two part-time advisers under the ALP. It delivers advice by appointment at St Monica’s Church and food hub N13, Edmonton Library Hub, All People All Places (single homeless people, rough sleepers, people with drug and alcohol support needs and no recourse to public funds), and at CAE’s main office. Another foodbank was also a venue for the ALP initially, but this service is now separately funded by Trussell Trust. Enfield Council had asked CAE to deliver services as part of another short-term ALP at St Monica’s, but CAE simply didn’t have capacity. However, they knew it would be a perfect venue for the ALP.

CAE’s links with community and faith agencies have enabled it to reach clients who would not have accessed its services before. Supervisor at CAE, Hilary Meeks said, “*we are now in all corners of need in Enfield*”. People get appointments who might not get through to CAE by telephone. CAE is seeing clients who previously didn’t make contact; homeowners who have spent their savings and are now struggling financially. It is supporting clients with fuel vouchers and charity applications. All first contact appointment bookings facilitate instant access to an interpreter, if needed. CAE has found it difficult to develop services to the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) community but it has found that they will attend sessions at Enfield Library. CAE is part of a project board working to improve access to services for GRT.

Advice First Aid has helped CAE to build relationships with community and faith groups, but CAE acknowledges that building and maintaining these links takes lots of time. Finding time to set up and run AFA can also be a challenge. However, CAE hopes to run a course in the north of the Borough as a means of starting engagement with community and faith groups. CAE’s feedback is that the original two-day length of the AFA course was initially an obstacle. It is better now that it is one day, but it makes for a long and demanding day. Shorter sessions may enable volunteers with other commitments to attend the training.

The ALP has provided new networking and policy opportunities. Attending the North London partner meetings has allowed CAE to find out more about issues in other local Citizens Advice and to discuss policy matters. At an early meeting CAE suggested that a “housing tag” needed to be created for the ALP, to identify the growing number of housing cases that were being dealt with. More recently CAE have raised issues regarding Enfield’s Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme. The council has capped CTS at a maximum of 50% of Council Tax band C and most family members of a household must now contribute a non-dependant deduction. This could limit some households with everyone on benefit to 10-30% support. The issue was raised by CAE with Citizens Advice London, which has in turn discussed the issue with GLA colleagues to see if GLA can provide any additional support. CAE says this has expedited issues in Enfield that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

CAE has developed stronger links and a referral route with Mary Ward Legal Centre (MWLC) under ALP. MWLC has been very helpful, said Mary and Hilary, and CAE refers vulnerable clients who need specialist help with tribunals.

Overall, CAE is very positive about the ALP. It has opened doors and monitoring and reporting is well organised and undemanding.

[Haringey Migrant Support Centre](#) (HMSC) offers free advice and casework support on immigration, housing, homelessness, and destitution for migrants from across Greater London including refugees, asylum seekers, and those who are undocumented or at risk of losing their leave to remain. It receives funding for work under the ALP via Islington Law Centre.

HMSC reached out to LLST in year one of the ALP, having heard about it through a personal staff connection to a Law Centre. Haringey was a cold spot for ALP coverage, so LLST was already in conversation with the Law Centres Network (LCN) and Haringey Law Centre (HLC) about the provision of advice in the borough. LLST agreed to provide funding for HLC to provide outreach advice for HMSC clients. However, this arrangement didn't work as well as had been hoped: HLC was not able to offer the in-person advice service that HMSC clients needed. As Robin Walden, HMSC's Senior Housing Caseworker explained, most of its clients are destitute and homeless, without digital access and with language barriers. They may present with immigration issues, but many will have housing, homelessness, debt, benefit, no recourse to public funds and health issues.

So, in year two of the ALP, HMSC switched its partnership to Islington Law Centre (ILC). HMSC and ILC already had a long-standing relationship, with ILC providing immigration advice services at HMSC. Haringey Law Centre remain a funded organisation in year two but does not have a community partner relationship - which works better for their them.

ALP funding partly pays for the costs of a Senior Housing Caseworker and Destitution Coordinator at HMSC. Its housing, destitution and benefits advice team provides support for HMSC clients following the provision of immigration advice by ILC and HMSC immigration advisers. It helps people to resolve problems and challenge decisions and, where appropriate, make referrals to solicitors. In the first quarter of 2024, HMSC supported 56 people from Haringey under the ALP.

HMSC sees the sharp end of immigration and asylum policy and would like to see the ALP create opportunities for its voice, on behalf of migrants, to be heard by GLA and other policymakers.

[Citizens Advice Redbridge \(CAR\)](#) employs two part-time advisers under the ALP to deliver advice in Redbridge and neighbouring Havering borough. They take referrals of clients who are struggling from the agency's main public advice service, which is staffed by volunteers. Delivery of advice to referred clients is mainly by telephone. The advisers also deliver drop-in outreach advice sessions at [Hainault Forest Community Association's](#) community advice hub once a week This is important because Hainault is an area of disadvantage and was also an 'advice desert' before the ALP came along – and is still under-served. In addition, advisers attend monthly sessions at the council's [Ilford Engagement Hub](#) and have attended cost-of-living market-place events organised by the council's anti-poverty team.

According to Raj Johal, Services Manager, the ALP has certainly extended CAR's reach and increased its capacity. It has also built links with other advice providers: University House Legal Advice Centre delivers advice by appointment as part of the ALP at CAR's library premises every week and CAR's advisers make referrals to Citizens Advice East End's caseworker. CAR's involvement in the delivery of two rounds of Advice First Aid training has also encouraged and sustained links with community and faith organisations. A previous project, funded by Trust for London, had already established the link with organisations including a local mosque and [Serving Humanity Foundation](#). CAR is planning a third round of AFA training, this time targeting groups in Havering.

Advisers, Dagmar and Kristina, see lots of clients with food and fuel poverty and insecurity, with poor quality and insecure housing, debt and negative budgets. Invariably, the clients they see have multiple and complex issues, with stress and mental health impacts. CAR has seen a rise in eviction notices during the ALP, increases in people in poor quality temporary accommodation and, recently, an increasing number of asylum seekers housed in hotels with poor conditions and food. Advisers remarked that lots of clients have multiple debts that they simply don't want to deal with. Many lost track of their lives during the pandemic and can't get back control. Luckily CAR has a [Debt Free Advice kiosk](#) at its premises for clients to use and Mary Ward Legal Centre can take a few debt referrals each month due to the generosity of a donor. But it's not enough to meet demand from increasingly desperate local people. It's vital that the ALP continues – but maybe with a new name: the Hope Project?

[St Monica's Foodbank](#) is one of Citizens Advice Enfield's community partners. Gerry Bell (Foodbank Manager) hails the very fruitful relationship that has developed under the ALP. CA Enfield approached the foodbank in 2023, wanting to experiment with a regular advice session in order to increase access to its services. Gerry says the foodbank aims to make itself redundant by eliminating food poverty and helping people to become more resilient. The advice service provided by CA Enfield is definitely improving resilience. It has helped over 90 households from the 300 member families that are registered with St Monica's Church Foodbank.

Gerry recounted the story of a client who had visited the foodbank earlier in the week of the interview. She was in great distress, with a court hearing involving the council just the next day and no source of advice and support. She had been trying for three weeks to speak to Citizens Advice. Although the CA Enfield adviser was fully booked that day, she agreed to see the client and managed to make a referral to a solicitor. Gerry didn't know the outcome but was grateful that help was at hand.

St Monica's has hosted an Advice First Aid training session in its hall. Gerry attended and gained new knowledge, but he says the connections he made with other local organisations was possibly the most valuable outcome of the training. He knows more about other local services now and has built links with Southgate Mosque.

[Citizens Advice Southwark](#) (CAS) employs an adviser under the ALP who takes referrals of clients from its core advice service and via a [third party referral form](#) on its website. Advice is delivered in-person or by telephone, depending on the needs of the client. CAS has also recently started an outreach service at [Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers](#) and runs regular cost-of-living roadshow events around the borough. CAS organises these events, with Southwark Council support. They are multi-agency events targeted at hard-to-reach areas and usually attract around 100 attendees. One of these events was run at the [Redeemed Assemblies Church](#) on the Old Kent Road, which is near an area of financial deprivation. CAS was already working with the church on another project which is overwhelmed with demand. The trust between the Church and CAS that has been built up has led to CAS now considering delivery of the ALP there.

CAS ran an Advice First Aid course in March 2023, attended by 16 staff and volunteers from a range of local agencies. They found this a very useful way to share basic information on debt, housing and benefits issues and local support systems and services and equip other local agencies to give pre-advice support for clients. AFA provided an opportunity to share its ['worrying about money?'](#)

resource. This locally tailored information is produced by the Independent Food Aid Network. More AFA courses are being planned.

Policy-wise, CAS saw a surge in refugee homelessness in the first quarter of 2024 as the Home Office ended its pause on evictions from asylum accommodation. Southwark is home to a high number of people in such accommodation.

CAS hopes that the ALP continues as it has provided much needed capacity to provide advice and has extended its reach and accessibility. Having capacity to deliver AFA training is also important for CAS. The 'pods' of local Citizens Advice services that have been formed under the ALP have helped agencies work together and also build links with specialist agencies that are part of the LLST Centres of Excellence network.

Appendix Three: Advice First Aid Case Studies

A sample of participants were interviewed to gather more information about their experience of AFA and the impact it has had.

Ilaria is a Family Support Practitioner at [Oldhill Community School and Children's Centre](#) in Hackney. She first encountered Advice First Aid while working to support families at [St.Vincent's Family Project](#) in Westminster: it was there that she attended a two-day course. After that she attended follow-up, online AFA training sessions on employment rights, social housing, and cost-of-living support.

When Ilaria moved to the Hackney Centre in September 2023, she took the knowledge gained via AFA with her and also asked to be kept on the AFA mailing list. Since her move to Hackney, Ilaria has also attended a three-part course on council housing allocations. She has enquired about places on the introductory AFA training for her colleagues in Hackney and hopes they will shortly be able to attend.

Ilaria says the AFA training has given her more confidence and knowledge to support the families she works with. She knows more about the systems and rules the families are likely to encounter and if she has any doubt, she knows where to look. In Hackney she also has the benefit of a Citizens Advice adviser running weekly sessions at the Centre and another site, with whom she can book appointments for her clients.

Jan Galko is a volunteer at [Hanwell Community Library](#). He found out about Advice First Aid as a course was being run at the library. Jan deals with enquiries from people at the Community Library and many have welfare advice needs, so he thought it would be useful to attend the course and find out more about how he could help people. Jan is also interested in opportunities to work in the advice sector.

Jan attended a one-day Advice First Aid course alongside some Library colleagues and other Ealing organisations. He then attended an on-line follow-up course on homelessness. Jan said the course was well run and it was good to find out about the services that are available to help people. He is now more confident in helping people with welfare and financial issues - he knows what services are available and how to refer. He now helps people to access services on-line at the library.

Isabel is an ESOL tutor at [East London Advanced Technology Training \(ELATT\)](#), in Hackney. ELATT provides access to free training for the community and takes a whole person approach to supporting students. Isabel vividly remembers some of her first one-to-one meetings with students and not knowing what to do when students told her about the difficulties they were facing outside of studies. She is now more confident in knowing what support is available for students within ELATT but she felt she needed to know more about support available externally.

Luckily a colleague told her about Advice First Aid training. Isabel attended a half-day session that was run specifically for ELATT, alongside other colleagues. The course has boosted Isabel's confidence and knowledge of the support available for students and she has used this to help students. Her colleagues say they have also used the knowledge gained and have incorporated information about things like housing into classes. Isabel gave an example of a student who informed a colleague that he was homeless. Isabel referred back to her Advice First Aid notes and slides and provided the colleague with telephone numbers and information to pass on to the student. Isabel would like to see annual refresher courses.

Carrie works and volunteers at [Woolwich Service Users Project \(WSUP\)](#), a drop in space for people in need to get food, laundry, hair cuts, shower, clothing or other support. The service helps around 85 people per session and most have some need for welfare advice. Carrie saw the Advice First Aid course advertised in an email from the local volunteer centre and signed up. She said the course boosted her knowledge and confidence and in particular helped her to recognise the complexity of people's problems and the need to delve beneath the presenting issue. She now, politely, asks a few more probing questions. If advice needs are identified, Carrie knows where to refer now. The networking opportunity that the course offered was useful, but she would like to have had more time to get to know other services that were represented.

Although Carrie was able to cascade the knowledge she gained, using case studies, to her colleagues, she hopes that in future the course will be repeated and that they get to attend themselves. However, the challenge is often one of time to attend such training. Funding for services is also a barrier: Carrie says that there is a great need for welfare advice services located at the drop-in centre. WSUP has tried to get advice agencies to co-locate at the centre but the money to pay for them has not been available. She would love to see funding and services provided under the ALP in future.

Appendix Four: Organisations Attending Advice First Aid courses

Abbey Centre	Barnet Stroke Support Services	Centre for Justice Innovation-
Abdul Mageed educational trust	(Central London Community Healthcare Trust)	Community Advice
Achieving for children	Barts Health	Chalk Farm Foodbank
Action for Community Development	BD GIVING	Charlton Park Academy
Action for Refugees in Lewisham	BDCVS	Charlton Triangle Homes
Acton (part of Ealing Foodbank)	Belina Grow CIC	Chelsea Theatre
Adult Learning Lewisham	Bellingham Linking Lives	Chipping Barnet food bank
Advice 4 Renters	Better Start Lambeth council	Christian CARE Association
Afghan Association	Blackfen Library	Christian Care Merton & Community Fridge
Afghan Association Paiwand	BLG Mind	Citygate Church
Afghanistan & Central Asian Association	Bonny Downs Community Association	Clockhouse community centre
Africa Advocacy Foundation	Bounds Green Food Bank Advice Service	Colindale Communities Trust (CCT)
African Community School	Brent	Commonside Development Trust
Age UK	Brent Carers centre	Community Association for West Hampstead
Age UK Barnet	Brent Centre for young people	Community Champions Harrow Rd
Age UK East London	Brent Food Bank- Trussel Trust	Community Connex
Age UK East London Caxton Hall	Brent foodbank	Community Hub
Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow & Brent	Brent Health Matters	Community Links
Age UK Islington	Bridgelink	Corpus Christi RC Church
Age UK Lambeth	Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid	Cre8 Coffee
Age UK Merton	Bromley Baptist Church	Credit Union
Aishah Help	Bromley Borough Foodbank	Cross road Care
Al-Emaan Centre Keston Mosque	Bromley by bow health centre	Dalgarno Trust Community Centre
Alexandra School	Bromley Homeless	DASH
All People All Places	Bromley Voluntary Sector Trust	Days and Atkindons
APASEN	Brook Lane Community Supermarket	Almshouse Charity
Ark Resettlement Services	BTSE	DeafPlus
AUKL	Camden volunteers	Dene Community Centre
B young stars	Cap Job Clubs	Derman (for the wellbeing of)
BACA	Carers' Hub Lambeth	Turkish-Kurdish Charity communities
Barking	Carers Information Centre	Diamond Club
Barnet African Caribbean Association	Caritas	Disability Action Haringey
Barnet council	Caritas Westminster	Diwis Creations CIC
Barnet Federated GP's	Castle Haven	Docklands Outreach
Barnet Social Prescribing Service	Catbytes CIC	Dollis Primary School
	Central East Peckham & Nunhead Ward	Dominion chapel (Southall)
	Central Eltham Youth Project	Dons Local Action Group
	Centre 70	DWP Job Centre
		Ealing - st Mellitus

Ealing (Hanwell)	Greater Faith Ministries	Healthwatch Kingston
Ealing food bank	Greenford Baptist Church	Healthwatch Southwark
Ealing Food Bank and Storecupboard	Greenwich Foodbank	Healthy Island Partnership
Ealing Foodbank - Perivale centre	Greenwich Housing Rights	help in Church activities
Ealing Foodbank & Ealing Social Club for the Blind	Greenwich Inclusion Project (GRIP)	Help on Your Doorstep
Ealing Foodbank and the North London Support Group of the Huntington's Disease Association	Greenwich Inclusion Project and Greenwich Sanctuary Project	Help point centre
Ealing Hanwell	Grenfell Early Years Nursery	Hestia Charity
East End Health Network	Grove Centre Church	Hilldrop Community Centre
East London NHS Foundation Trust	Guy's and St Thomas hospital	Hillingdon Council SEND Keyworker
Ebenezer Holistic Services	H and F council	Hillview Community Services
ECP	H4all	Holborn Community Centre
ECUK	Hackney Congolese Women Support Group	Home Start Greenwich
EE Hub	Hackney council	Home Start Havering & Redbridge
EKTA in Harrow	Hackney CVS	Homestart Hillingdon
ELATT	Hackney Foodbank	Homestart Southwark
Elizabeth House Community Centre	Hackney Migrant Centre	Hope at the Hub part of Hope Church Newham
Eltham Green Community Church	Hackney Patients not Passports	Hope for better future
Emmaus Greenwich	Hackney People First	Horn of Africa Disability and Elderly Association
Empowering Action and Self-Esteem Ltd	Hackney Works	Hornsey Food Bank
Enable	Hammersmith & Fulham Foodbank	Hornsey lane community association
Enfield debt centre	Hanwell Big Local	Hornsey Lane Estate Community Association
Enfield Food Pantry	Hanwell Centre - The Trussell Trust	Hug Barnet Good Neighbours
Ethelred nursery	Hanwell Community Library	Ilford High Road Baptist Church
Everyday Church, Kingston upon Thames	Hanwell food bank	Inclusion Barnet
Excel Beyond Barriers	Hanworth Methodist Church Pastor	Irish Chaplaincy
Faiths Women Community UK	Haringey Advice Partnership - Public Voice	Islamic Association of North London
Family Engage Community Group	Haringey Council	Island Advice Centre
First Love Foundation	Haringey Migrant Support Centre	Islington Chinese Association
FLAG (Families Living with Autism in Greenwich)	Haringey Welcome	Islington GP federation / Age UK
Florence Nightingale Aid in Sickness Trust	Harmony house	Islington parent championship
Free Your Mind	Harold Hill Foodbank	Kensington Foodbank
FWCUK/ ASCO	Harrow Carers	Kent Association for the Blind
GCDA	Harrow foodbank	Kentish Town Community Centre
Goodmayes Baptist Church	HASWA- Havering Asian Social Welfare Association	Kentish Town Foodbank
GP federation	Hayes End Methodist Church	Kids Can Achieve
	Headway East London	Kilburn Primary Care Coop
	health and wellbeing the Network Home Health Team	Kingston Bereavement Support

Kingston Centre for Independent Living (KCIL)	Neighbours in Poplar	Redbridge CVS
Kingston Foodbank (New Malden Centre)	NHS Central & North west London	Refugee Action Kingston
Kingston Voluntary Action	NHS Richmond Wellbeing Service Talking Therapies	Rethink Mental Illness
Kurdish And Middle Eastern Women's Organisation	NHS: Jonathan Mann clinic, Clifden centre, Homerton hospital, E96SR	Revelation Church
Laburnam Boat Club	NHS- Oxleas	Richmond Council and Mortlake Community Association
Lambeth Borough Council	No1 Performing Arts	Richmond fellowship
Lambeth mutual aid	North Enfield Foodbank	Rise Community Cafe
Latin American House	North Harrow Library	Riverside The boundaries
LB Redbridge	North Paddington Foodbank	Romanian Culture and Charity Together (RCCT Romanian Hub)
LBBB	NPFB	Romford Baptist Church
Learn English Together in Merton	Octavia Housing	Rose-Tree Project
Learning life UK	Old Kent Road Mosque,	Round chapel old school rooms
Lewisham Clyde family hubs	Muslim Association Of Nigeria	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Lewisham Council	Olive Branch Aid	Royal Borough of Kingston
Lewisham Foodbank	One Bromley	Ruils
Lewisham hub donation	One true voice	SAAFI
Lewisham Local	One You Westminster	Sacred Heart Foodbank
Lewisham Multilingual Advice Services	Our Lady of Lourdes and St Michael Catholic Church	Sacred Heart Church
Lewisham Park Herbal Plot	Outward	Salvation Army
Lighthouse at SAINT	Paiwand	SELCE
London Borough of Lambeth (Lambeth Council)	Parent Action	Shaftesbury High Sch (spec needs)
London Borough of Newham	PCN 8 - GP care group	Shepherdfold Ministry
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Peabody	Shinebright UK
Maa Shanti	Perivale	Shpresa programme
Maternity and community Abby centre	Phoenix Community Housing	Skills and Training Network
Maytree Children's centre	Pier road recovery centre.	Skylarks Charity
Merton Connected	Erith.	SLaM
Methodist Church	Poplar & Limehouse health Network	Social Action for Health
Metro charity	Positive East	Somali Parents network
Miday Somali development network	Positively UK	SOMERSTOWNCA
Migrants Organise	Praxis	South East London Community Energy
MIND	Quba Masjid & Education Centre	South Harrow Foodbank
Mind in Camden	Queens Crescent Community Association	Southall
Mind in Croydon	RAMFEL	Southwark Home Start
Mind in Harrow	RBK	Southwark and volunteer Faith Women Community UK
Mind In Tower Hamlets	RCCT CIC	Southwark Foodbank
Newham and Redbridge	RDLAC	Spear
Mind Tower Hamlets Newham	REAP	Sphere support
Redbridge	Redbridge Carers Support Service	Spiral Skills CIC
Mission Practice	Redbridge Healthwatch	Spring Community Hub
		St Edwards Church

St Luke's Community	Trussel Trust Richmond
St Luke's Community Centre	Foodbanks
St Lukes, Downham	Turn2Us
St Mary's Church Homes Trust	Underhill School & Children's
St Michael & All Angels Church	Centre
St Nicholas in Perivale Trussel	Unfold
trust	Union of Brunel Students
St Paul Old Ford	Unity Church Orpington
St Paul's Church	Universal Church of the
St Vincent's Family Project	Kingdom of God (UCKG)
St. Pauls Medical Centre	VAH (Vol Action Harrow)
Staywell	Venner Road Community Hall
Stepney Community Trust	Venture Centre
Stockwell Primary School	Via (formerly known as WDP)
Storehouse assistant	Vibrance
Stroke Association	Vineyard Community &
Stronger Together	Richmond Foodbank
Sufra - the foodbank	Voices of Hope
Sydenham Garden	Vol at Welcome Group St John
Thai Boxing Fighters Academy	Baptist Ch
The Albany	Voluntary Action Camden
The Association of Redbridge	Wellington Way Health Centre
African Caribbean	Westminster council
Communities	Whittington Park Community
The Corbett Library	Association
The Good Neighbour Scheme	Who is Hussain
for Mill Hill and Burnt Oak	Wimbledon College
The Gospel Centre Food Bank	Wimbledon Foodbank
The Greenwich Carers Centre	Woodberry Aid
The Hebe Foundation	Woodberry Down Children's
The Living Centre	Centre
The Parent House	Woolwich Front Room GCDA
The Pilion Trust	WSUP
The Round Chapel - Old School	You Glow CIC
Rooms	
The Store Cupboard	
The Stroke Association	
The Well-being Hub	
Thrive tribe	
Togetherness Community	
Centre	
Tolworth Infants and Junior	
school	
Tottenham Food Bank	
Tower Hamlets Early Detection	
Service	
tower hamlets gp care group	
Trinity homeless Projects	
Trinity Methodist Church	