

# The impact of unrestricted funding



Foundation  
Scotland



**over 190K**

clients supported by the  
CAB network each year



On average, each person's support journey  
will include help with more than

**three advice issues**

– as the problems facing us are not simple,  
and do not happen in isolation



Top five advice areas



**Benefits**



**Debt**



**Energy, utilities  
and communications**



**Finance and  
charitable support**



**Housing**



Over

**1,700**  
volunteers

Almost

**300**  
advice  
locations



**£6million**

of funding distributed  
equally across the Citizens  
Advice network in Scotland



Unrestricted funding means that charities like ours have the autonomy to make informed decisions about where resources would have the greatest impact. This flexibility supports stronger forward planning and service stability, particularly by providing confidence to invest in staffing and core capacity, while also allowing quick responses to changing pressures without needing to adapt or reapply for funding.

No two CABs are the same, with bureaux supporting their communities in their own unique way, based on years of experience and local knowledge. Flexible, multi-year funding has not only provided the network with some much-needed breathing space in a challenging economic climate but has also helped bureaux design resilient services so they can continue serving their communities now and into the future.

Meanwhile, CAS has used this funding to fill critical gaps as we increased our visibility and influence for the people coming through the doors of the CABs – often the people experiencing the worst harms of failing systems.



**“The unrestricted funding has been absolutely essential. It has allowed us to use the funding to deploy services where we know they are most needed and to have the flexibility to alter those services, as required, to meet the changing needs of the community, or to respond to an acute need.”**

# National influencing

## Developing our data and insight

The Citizens Advice network supports an extraordinary number of people – around 190,000 each year. That is advice that changes lives every day – and when we do that, we build up a real vastness of insight and understanding. Our network holds the largest volume of data and insight on issues affecting people outside of the public sector. The challenge we set ourselves, and are determined to meet, is to ensure that insight drives change.

Over the past year, we increased our output of concise, data-driven briefings, cutting to the heart of the poverty and trauma seen every day in CABs across Scotland and setting out clear and tangible solutions for decision makers. During an election year, it was even more important to make our voices heard and our insight count. The Response Fund allowed us to allocate flexible resource to build our audience and visibility. In April, we hosted a hustings event that brought together representatives from Scotland's major parties and challenged candidates to address the reality of poverty. Held in partnership with Trussell, we highlighted the harms seen across our respective networks and gave space for frontline advisers and volunteers to press candidates on the issues facing their communities.

## Empowering local action

Thanks to Foundation Scotland, we had capacity to proactively bring together our local network to discuss opportunities for influencing in their local communities, supported by national analysis of the new Scottish Parliament.

Additionally, the CAS Impact directorate is supporting innovative new approaches in making change locally, including the [Glasgow CAB Housing Campaign](#) and [Our Voices, Our Stories](#).

All of this supports our broader ambitious shift from being a citizens advice network to a citizens advice movement, where we use on-the-ground experiences and connections to mobilise a campaign base that demands real solutions for the problems of our communities, and challenge the hateful and divisive rhetoric that increasingly dominates public discourse.

## Continuing to position the network as an essential frontline service

First and foremost, CAS advocates for the people coming through the doors of their local CABs. To ensure the future of the service for people who need it most, we also have a responsibility to advocate for the network itself.

Our narrative and positioning around the precarity and insecurity of funding ahead of the election helped to ensure that multi-year funding and a flourishing third sector featured across the main party manifestos. And this year – and for the first time – the Scottish Government committed to multi-year funding for one of our biggest national projects, Money Talk Team, which supported **64,963** people across Scotland in the last year to access essential money and debt advice.

## Local CAB action

### Match funding for key projects

East Renfrewshire CAB used the Foundation Scotland funding to match fund two key community projects.

The **Older People's Project** (OPP) has allowed the bureau to continue providing dedicated advice and support to older people in their area who are experiencing financial hardship, social isolation, and difficulties accessing services.

 "When [the adviser] came to speak to our knitting group, none of us realised we could apply for Attendance Allowance. She explained everything in a way we could understand and helped us complete our applications. The extra income has made such a difference to our lives, helping with everyday costs and giving us much greater peace of mind."

The funding also supported the **SPACE project** (Supporting Parents and Children in East Renfrewshire), which assists families caring for children with additional support needs and disabilities. The SPACE project adviser helped one family access £4,000 in funding for their autistic son to undertake a football coaching course. Upon successful completion, he has now secured permanent employment as a football coach. The adviser said, "It has been incredibly rewarding to see the positive long-term impact this support has had on his confidence, independence, and future employment opportunities."

Damya, also supported by the SPACE project, said:

 "[The adviser] spent so much time with us, really listening and explaining everything in a way we could understand. Knowing she had lived experience meant she truly understood the challenges our family faces. She introduced us to a whole network of support that we never knew existed. This will not only improve our child's quality of life but has given our whole family hope, confidence and the support we need for the future."

### Meeting people where they are

Dumfries and Galloway Citizens Advice Service has employed two new part-time advisers thanks to this funding, allowing it to improve access in more rural areas and help achieve its vision of "Right Time, Right Place and in the Right Way" advice. The CAB has been able to provide more outreach services, thereby reducing the number of client journeys for those who require face-to-face assistance, and removing barriers to support for those who live rurally.

Gordon was supported by one of these advisers at a new outreach drop-in. His prepayment meter had been broken for over a year, and despite many attempts to have it fixed, his energy supplier wasn't taking action.

The adviser was able to advocate for Gordon and took his issue to the Energy Ombudsman and finally had the meter fixed. They represented Gordon in negotiations with the supplier to secure goodwill credit for the poor service he'd received. The holistic support offered also found that he was entitled to claim Attendance Allowance for his care needs, and together they applied successfully.

This support being easily accessed at a CAB outreach near his home was a lifeline for Gordon as, because of his deteriorating health, he wasn't able to travel to the main CAB office. The advocacy and representation offered by his adviser meant that not only was his original issue resolved, but he has more financial security going forward.

## Supporting volunteers to grow the service

East Ayrshire CAB (EACAB) has used this funding to recruit a Volunteer Development Manager, who leads on volunteer recruitment, training, wellbeing and retention. Already the CAB has increased its volunteer team from 8 to 22, with new volunteers coming from a range of backgrounds. This includes university students who want to gain real-world experience, retirees looking for opportunities for connection and people using volunteering as part of their recovery from mental health challenges who want to rebuild confidence and learn new skills.

The increased capacity has allowed EACAB to extend their drop-in times from two to four days per week, meaning more people can be seen on the same day if there is an emergency. Having a larger team of volunteers also eases pressure on the busy staff team, contributing to a more resilient team that can adapt to the needs of their local community.

Mira is one of the volunteers who has recently joined EACAB and wanted to get involved after a long career in the NHS where she often recommended CAB as a source of support. Reflecting on her experience so far, she said:

“Being a volunteer at CAB means the world to me, as it is a truly rewarding experience. For me it helps reduce social isolation and it gives me a natural sense of accomplishment. Helping others within the community can contribute towards social change and support people to have better lives. Volunteering has boosted my wellbeing, I believe the better you feel about yourself, the more likely you are to have a positive influence on others. Making a positive difference brings me immense joy and volunteering has created an opportunity for me to experience this.”

### Volunteers at Clackmannanshire CAB



## Looking ahead

The network of Citizens Advice bureaux has been serving Scotland for almost 90 years, and we plan to be here for at least another 90.

It's thanks to the support of organisations like Foundation Scotland that we can be confident Scottish communities will continue to have access to the advice, advocacy and action offered by the CAB network for years to come – and the bureaux already have plans for the year ahead.

Peebles CAB plans to set up a financial education programme in local schools, while East & Central Sutherland CAB plan to increase the number of home visits for people who would otherwise struggle to access advice. Denny CAB intends to relocate to more accessible, higher-capacity premises. Whether reaching new communities, investing in volunteers, or future-proofing essential services, every pound of funding goes towards making a fairer, better Scotland for all of us.



“Funding from Foundation Scotland came as our staff were beginning to struggle with the same cost-of-living pressures as our clients. Being able to give the team a pay increase has eased their stress and ensured that they can stay in post to continue supporting our clients.”

“This enabled us to decide exactly what the bureau needed at this moment in time to preserve our service, without bending ourselves out of shape or designing new projects to meet funders needs. The time saving is incalculable.”

“It really enabled us to do what was needed for us to strengthen our future position rather than just continually firefighting.”



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



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