

Norfolk Citizens Advice

Millennium Library The Forum Millennium Plain Norwich NR2 1TF

citizens
advice

Serving the community from Norwich, Attleborough, Dereham, Fakenham, Great Yarmouth, Holt, King's Lynn, North Walsham, Watton, Wymondham, Aylsham, Cromer, Marham and Reepham

Mr R Bishop
Clerk to Swaffham Town Council
Town Hall, 4 London Street
Swaffham
Norfolk
PE37 7DQ

Sent via email to: townclerk@swaffhamtowncouncil.gov.uk

October 23, 2019

Dear Mr Bishop

I'm writing to ask if you would consider supporting Norfolk Citizens Advice this year with a donation? With the help of our local community we have been able to provide free and expert advice to over 20,000 Norfolk residents from all across our county over the last year. You may have noticed from our letterhead, that **we have now merged with Mid Norfolk Citizens Advice**, extending our reach further into the County.

I've set out some key information about us, and about the impact we have. If you would like any additional information about how we are working with people in your ward please do let me know and I will be happy to tell you about how our work is directly helping your local residents. You will find my email address at the bottom of this letter.

About us: As you may well be aware, we are a local charity working right across the County. We provide advice at ten main centres in: Attleborough, Fakenham, Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn, North Walsham, Norwich, Dereham, Holt, Watton and Wymondham and have outreach centres in a further ten locations across the region. We provide free, impartial advice and information to anyone who comes to us for help, delivered by our team of 220 highly-trained, local volunteers. We also have paid specialist advisers and are linked closely to other local organisations, such as the Norfolk Community Law Service and Shelter.

Who we help: We will help anyone who comes to us. Norfolk is an area of the UK that faces serious issues around poverty and deprivation. Poverty is often compounded by additional issues with 36% of our clients describing themselves as disabled or having a long-term health condition, and nearly a quarter having mental health issues.



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The most common problems we are asked to assist with concern debt. However, we also support people with welfare benefits (especially with the roll out of Universal Credit), employment, relationships, housing, legal advice, consumer rights, immigration, health, discrimination and education.

The issues we are facing: The number of people contacting us for face to face meetings, and by phone and email are all increasing. We are also finding that our clients have increasingly complex issues and a growing number are disabled. **We need to be open more days each week in multiple locations alongside providing increased telephone and email support to handle this growing demand.**

“Very good, useful, necessary and must remain. Could do with being available more days.”

Our increase in client numbers is also partly driven by the fact that other local organisations that were providing excellent services to Norfolk citizens have had their funding cut and are curtailing or closing down services. Their clients are now turning to us too. There are also increasing demands on us associated with changes to benefits, Brexit and the drastic reductions in legal aid which makes it very hard for our clients to seek access to justice.

What we plan to do: We plan to extend both our face to face, online and telephone services over the next three years, specifically to:

- Expand our opening hours in the areas where there is the greatest demand for face to face services: Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn, Dereham, Watton, Fakenham and Swaffham.
- Recruit and train an additional 60 volunteers across the county
- Improve our telephone and digital services, with 60 additional specific volunteers across the County concentrating on giving phone and email advice to our clients seeking telephone and digital help.

“I feel very confident now that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I could not have gone forward without help as my problems had become overwhelming. Thank you.”

Budget: It currently costs around £34 to support each client. In reality, some clients need far more support than others, and we also know that phone and digital support is cheaper to provide than face to face services. (This remote support can also be more effective for hard to reach clients who would struggle to attend a meeting in one of our offices.) As a guide to why we must seek donations, we know that to extend the opening hours of seven of our offices will cost £85,000 per year which equates to around £200 per additional day we want to be open.

We would like to ask you to consider supporting us, any amount you could donate would be hugely helpful and make a real difference to the local people we are supporting. Finally, if you have any questions about our work, please feel free to contact me using the details below. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely



Jon Cheyette

Chief Executive

Norfolk Citizens Advice

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