

# Westminster Advice Forum, Advice Shop and Refernet

*“By working together to support clients facing spiralling debt, skyrocketing energy costs, and a lack of decent and affordable housing, we can change lives and directly contribute to better health and wellbeing.”*

## BACKGROUND

Citizens Advice Westminster (CAW) is committed to working in partnership with other agencies to deliver high quality advice to residents of Westminster. CAW with funding from the local authority, administer a range of partnership services, including the Westminster Advice Service Partnership (WASP); the Westminster Advice Forum (WAF); and the Westminster Refernet System.

## HOW IT WORKS

- Through the Advice Shop, CAW collaborate with a number of local agencies to bring advice services together under one roof, making it easier for residents to access the support they need.
- The Advice Shop offers regular in-person sessions at local centres across Westminster, either by appointment or on a drop-in basis.
- The Refernet platform enables GDPR compliant referrals between advice agencies. It is not a case management tool, but enables easy referrals which can then be tracked and followed up with actions.

## KEY FACTORS TO SUCCESS

- Good trusted working relationships with other advice agencies and positive engagement with the local authority Westminster City Council
- Assessment and advice is accessible, with sessions held in known locations and a mix of drop in and pre-booked appointments.
- Residents are triaged and directed to the most appropriate agency.
- CAW gathers evidence and identifies trends about problems and social issues clients experience across all their services, using this to support agencies to make improvements to services

## AT A GLANCE

- The **Westminster Advice Forum (WAF)** brings together advice agencies working in Westminster. The Forum is convened by quarterly by CAW. It provides an open space for sharing information, joint training and working together to tackle issues for residents and those placed in temporary accommodation outside the borough
- Many WAF agencies are also part of the Westminster Refernet System which is run by CAW to improve clients' access to the community organisations and services that can provide the advice and help the most in need. The service is heavily used by Social Prescribers as well as other advice agencies.
- The Advice Shop is a collaboration with a number of local agencies to bring advice services together under one roof, making it easier for residents to access the support they need. There are weekly in-person sessions at local centres across Westminster, either by appointment or on a drop-in basis.

## IMPACT

### 1. Improvements to services

Successfully highlighting the negative impact services or practices have on residents in order to drive improvements. Eg temporary accommodation decisions

### 2. Improved resident outcomes

64% clients who reported an outcome said that their health and wellbeing improved as a result of the advice they received.

### 3. Improved resident access

Almost 2000 residents seen at Advice Shop over the last 12 months

## Case study contact

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## About this document

This case study has been developed by [Bromley by Bow Insights](#) and [Transformation Partners in Health and Care](#) who are working together to support the integration of social welfare advice into the health and social care system.