

**Caerffili
Blaenau Gwent
Caerphilly
Blaenau Gwent**



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Dear Councillor

I wanted to write to you to present a copy of our Annual Report for 2018/19 and to bring you up to date with changes and challenges that the Citizens Advice service in Caerphilly is facing.

This is a notable year for the Citizens Advice service as it marks 80 years since the first CAB offices opened across Wales. I hope you find the history of Citizens Advice in Caerphilly on page 12 interesting.

You may have heard that Citizens Advice were successful in bidding for funding from Welsh Government to provide generalist and specialist advice services. This is, of course, good news, but actually represents a significant cut in funding locally.

The new Single Advice Fund replaces a number of other Welsh Government funding streams which will end in December 2019. The new funding will be 20% lower than the sum we currently receive. This will inevitably lead to a reduction in local services.

On top of the financial issue, the new funding is very clearly focussed on specific client groups which are not regularly accessing advice services. This means that we will need to reconfigure services by closing some of our general drop-in outreach services.

In addition to the above cuts, Caerphilly CBC is proposing to cut our funding from April 2020 by 40%. This follows an effective cut of 15% in 2015 when CCBC ceased to cover the cost of the lease on our Bargoed premises and a 17% cut last year. If the cut goes ahead we will have lost nearly 60% of our core grant funding over five years. For many years our funding from CCBC has been around the mid range of per capita funding for Citizens Advice services in Wales, the proposed cut would place Caerphilly as one of the lowest three per capita funding authorities.

Our core grant from Caerphilly CBC is the funding which allows us to keep our doors open at Bargoed and Risca, to recruit and train volunteers and to provide a volunteer led, quality assured service to local people. It is also the funding we use to assist volunteers to gain the skills they need to move into paid employment. In 2018 alone 12 volunteers moved into employment in fields directly related to the training they had undertaken with us.

Rhif elusen gofrestrdedig 1084045.

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Our local authority funding supports our research and campaigning work, ensuring that the experience of local people in dealing with policy and legislation is captured and used to influence decision makers.


During the last five years we have been very successful in attracting funding from outside the local authority, but it simply does not work in the same way as our core funding. We have grown our contact centre service in Caerphilly from six staff to over 80, mostly local people providing telephone, email and web chat advice to clients across England and Wales. Other services have a very tight client focus, our PensionWise service is aimed at people over 50 seeking pension guidance; Help to Claim is aimed at new Universal Credit claimants, but cannot help with other issues or with clients already in receipt of Universal Credit. We have contracts with Supporting People and Families First, but these services are again restricted to specific clients groups. Only the local authority funding supports universal access to advice.

When we had the 17% cut last year we considered the effect on the service and were able to limit the impact to dropping one day's opening. If the proposed cut goes ahead we will have little option other than to concentrate on the service in our Bargoed premises and close the Risca office, losing access at that end of the county and, inevitably, losing the services of local volunteers who have given many hours of their own time to help their community.

The proposed 40% cut will severely limit the general public's access to face to face advice in Caerphilly at exactly the same time as the Welsh Government service is becoming more restrictive in terms of who it targets. The combined impact could be very difficult for local people.

I would urge you to oppose the proposed cut.

Yours sincerely



Simon Ellington
Chief Executive