citizens advice South Hams

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Spring Newsletter

Citizens Advice South Hams

Stepping into Spring



The blossoms are out and spring is finally in the air. It's been an incredibly busy winter at Citizens Advice South Hams, with our expert staff and dedicated volunteers helping hundreds of people every month with cost-of-living issues.

Unfortunately, economic uncertainty looks set to continue as the conflict in the Middle East drives up fuel prices here at home. Citizens Advice will be here to offer guidance and keep you informed of any government support that emerges — including the new Crisis Resilience Fund, which begins rolling out in April to help vulnerable households.

We're especially fortunate at Citizens Advice South Hams to have a team of specialist energy advisers, led by Aaron Hughes, who features on page 2 of this newsletter. The team is well placed to support you with all aspects of domestic energy use — whatever your situation.

With the change of seasons, we've been having a clear-out — collecting old IT equipment from staff and volunteers to ensure it's re-used or recycled responsibly. Read more on page 3.

We know that many people across our communities are still finding life incredibly tough, and we'd encourage everyone to seek help as early as possible. As an independent charity, all the advice we provide is completely impartial and confidential. If you know a neighbour, friend or colleague who is struggling, please do point them our way — all our contact details and locations can be found on our website, and you can follow us on Facebook or Instagram for service updates and general advice:

There are also important changes to Universal Credit coming into force from April — please turn to page 4 for everything you need to know.

Wishing you a warm and healthy spring!

Best wishes,
Janie

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Chief Officer
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Meet Aaron - our Energy Advice Team Leader



Aaron Hughes has led our Energy Advice team since 2023. We asked Aaron a few questions about his life and working for Citizens Advice.

Aaron, can you tell us a bit about your journey and how you came to be at Citizens Advice?

Helping people has always been my passion — from studying Psychology at University, to working across various industries, to handling training and coaching at an insurance broker. But I struggled with the heavy focus on profits over genuinely improving people's lives.

Covid forced me to reevaluate my priorities, and that's when I found Citizens Advice South Hams. From my very first day, meeting the incredible volunteers and staff, I never looked back. It is simply amazing to work for an organisation whose sole goal is to better the lives of those around them.

Can you describe an average day at work?

What I love about Citizens Advice is the variety. My role splits across two main areas — supervising the core service, where I support volunteers and staff with queries to ensure they feel confident and happy giving the best possible advice, and managing our energy projects, which involves attending meetings, consulting funders and helping the team with complex queries.

What is something you wish people knew about Citizens Advice?

That we can help with any issue, no matter how big or small — and all completely free, impartial and unbiased. People are often surprised by the breadth of what we offer. I've supported people through everything from neighbourly disputes to historic benefit underpayments, relationship breakdowns to energy debts. If we can't help ourselves, we usually know someone who can.

What is the most rewarding part of the work you do?

Seeing how amazed and thankful clients are is incredibly rewarding, but the most rewarding part is being surrounded by people who give up their free time to make a difference in a stranger's life. The world can be a bit crazy at times, but Citizens Advice is one of those rare places genuinely dedicated to making it a little better.

What do you like doing when not at work?

I enjoy spending time with my family, playing board games, baking and reading. I also try to keep active with jiu jitsu — although I am woefully terrible at it.

The Energy team can be contacted by calling 01803-659733 and leaving a message.

IT recycling initiative



At Citizens Advice South Hams, we're committed to being more environmentally conscious — and recently we put that commitment into action with an IT recycling drive, inviting staff and volunteers to bring in any unused computers, laptops, smartphones or other electronic devices gathering dust at home.

Electronic waste is now the fastest-growing waste product on the planet, and old tech is packed with persistent organic pollutants (POPs) that cause real environmental damage if not disposed of responsibly.

We're delighted to say the response from our team was brilliant. All items have been handed over to Converge Technology Solutions, who will strip, clean and analyse every piece of equipment — reusing whatever can be saved and recycling the rest, with nothing going to landfill.
A huge thank you to everyone who took part.

Fond farewells

Recently, we have said a fond farewell to several of our wonderful, longstanding volunteers — Pauline MacDonald (12 years), Mark Pullinger (3 years), Marianne Hendrix (5 years) and Maggie King (15 years) — as well as two incredible and dedicated advisers, Richard Lines and Owen Box, who have sadly passed away.

Between them, these remarkable individuals will have helped hundreds of people across our communities, and we are deeply grateful for everything they gave to Citizens Advice South Hams.

Welcome to Esther



We welcome Esther Cameron to our Trustee Board. Esther brings 30 years of experience as an independent change agent and coach, having worked across multiple sectors and three continents with a deep focus on culture, performance and strategy.

As co-author of a leading book on managing change, now in its 6th edition, she combines academic insight with hands-on expertise in guiding people through complex transitions.

We are very excited to have her on the board to help guide our charity over the next few years.

Changes to Universal Credit from April 2026

The government has announced changes to Universal Credit that will affect all claimants from April 2026. These changes are the result of the Universal Credit Act 2025 and the November 2025 Budget.

The amount of Universal Credit you get will change. This is because the Universal Credit 'standard allowance' is increasing. A monthly Universal Credit payment is made up of a standard allowance plus any additional amounts you might get based on your circumstances.

The government is also planning to remove the two child limit for Universal Credit from April 2026. This means you might get more Universal Credit if you're responsible for three or more children.

You might also be affected by the April 2026 changes if you get an additional amount because you have a long-term health condition or a disability. This payment is called the 'limited capability for work-related activity' (LCWRA) element. The amount is decreasing for most people who apply for the LCWRA element on or after 6 April 2026.

If you get any other benefits, they will not be affected - the changes only apply to Universal Credit. For example, if you get Personal Independence Payment (PIP), it will not be affected by these changes.

More information can be found on the Citizens Advice website. If you are concerned about any changes to your payments, please contact us.

Struggling with debt?

In March we marked Debt Awareness Week, shining a light on debt-related issues and encouraging anyone who is struggling to seek the support they deserve. Our specialist debt advisers are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and can help with all aspects of debt — from Debt Relief Orders and Debt Management Plans to negotiating with creditors and dealing with bailiffs.

If you or someone you know is struggling with debt, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

HOW TO GET ADVICE



0808 278 7948 (freephone)
Monday to Friday
10am to 4pm



Check out information on a wide range of subjects on our **website:**
southhamscab.org.uk



Come and see us
Follaton House, Totnes
Monday to Friday
10am - 1pm, 2pm - 4pm

Weekly outreaches in Totnes Ivybridge, Dartmouth and Kingsbridge.
See our website for details of times and locations.