

# Up to £15 million to support the Citizens Advice service during COVID-19 pandemic

- Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland have experienced an unprecedented rise in demand during the pandemic
- up to £15 million funding will help them provide advice and information on a range of financial, legal and consumer issues
- part of a £750 million package set out by the Chancellor for frontline charities

Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland will receive a funding boost of up to £15 million to help them deal with increased demand for advice and information from the public during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Consumer Affairs Minister Paul Scully has announced (23 May 2020).

The funding will allow them to increase their capacity so they can continue to deliver advice on a range of issues, such as if a person cannot pay their bills due to coronavirus, or how they can protect themselves from or report a coronavirus-related scam.

The money is part of a £750 million pot announced by the Chancellor Rishi Sunak to help frontline charities continue their vital work during the outbreak.

In line with government advice on social distancing, Citizens Advice, which operates in England and Wales, and Citizens Advice Scotland have temporarily closed their 331 offices, suspended outreach services and shifted their advice services online and over the phone.

They have since seen a significant increase in demand for telephone advice and webchats, and this funding will help them to continue to deliver their services remotely as well as ensuring their online content reflects the most up to date advice.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has led the allocation of funding to support charities providing key services to help vulnerable people during the crisis.

Consumer Affairs Minister Paul Scully said:

Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland have continued to provide an invaluable service to the public throughout this deeply unsettling period.

Now more than ever, it is imperative people have access to free, confidential advice on money, legal and consumer problems.

This funding will ensure Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland have the right resources to provide people with the support they need, when they need it most.

UK government Minister for Scotland Douglas Ross said:

I welcome this funding for Citizens Advice Scotland who provide a vital service that is needed even more during these uncertain times.

The £15 million package of support from the UK government will ensure they continue to meet the rise in demand to help people across Scotland with their financial, legal and consumer concerns.

As we all continue to cope with the struggles COVID-19 has brought, it is crucial we work together to make sure we are equipped with the best support to see us through.

UK government Minister for Wales David TC Davies said:

Citizens Advice provides vital support to people in Wales on a range of issues, many of which will have been exacerbated by the current pandemic.

The UK government's £15 million funding boost will allow them to meet growing demand and provide essential advice on financial and legal issues to people across Wales.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

In these challenging times, it is vital the British people have access to all the information they need to stay safe and well. This funding will mean those who need advice can get it – whether it's about finances, employment or the measures we are taking to help protect the public and our NHS.

This investment is part of a wider government support package for charities on the front line so that they can continue to help those in need.

Dame Gillian Guy, Chief Executive of Citizens Advice, said:

During this pandemic we've seen a surge in people coming to us for advice. We expect this demand will carry on as people's lives continue to be affected by the economic impact of COVID-19.

This funding will allow us to increase the support we can provide over the phone and online – especially to those who need it most.

The effects of COVID-19 will continue to be felt for a long time. Support for Citizens Advice and other charities is crucial to making sure that everyone has access to the help they need at this incredibly challenging time.

Citizens Advice Scotland Chief Executive Derek Mitchell said:

This additional support for the Citizens Advice network is hugely welcome. All across Scotland individual bureaux staff and volunteers have done incredible work transitioning to remote working to ensure people are still getting the advice and support they need.

The Citizens Advice network was born in the shadow of the Second World War, we've always adapted to the changing challenges of the time. This funding will help ensure our network can adapt to meet the challenges presented by COVID-19, and continue to deliver the advice people need.