



Influencing & Engagement  
**Impact Report 2022-23**

## IMPROVING PEOPLE'S LIVES

**AdviceUK exists to fight for justice, to improve people's lives, and to achieve beneficial change for our members.**

Founded in 1979, we are the biggest advice network in the UK with over 600 members in England, Scotland, and Wales. We are completely independent of any government funding which means that we can really challenge those who wield power over people's lives. We have an incredibly diverse membership who work mainly with people in poverty and those experiencing disadvantage and discrimination. We are here to give a voice to people, to represent them and bring about positive change.

### OUR INFLUENCING AND ENGAGEMENT WORK

We are really pleased to publish our second annual impact report, describing the work of our Influencing and Engagement team over the last 12 months. We work with over 200 stakeholders as well as with our 600+ members. This report brings to life the work that we have been doing and the impact that this has made.

#### A year of rampant inflation and the cost of living crisis

AdviceUK's influencing and engagement work has focussed on the cost of living crisis - how best to support the people affected by it and how to support AdviceUK members, who themselves have experienced incredible cost pressures.

The year has been characterised by two main areas of work:

1. Doing more to bring members together to deal with the cost of living crisis and the impact that this has had, not only on people and communities but also the wellbeing of those giving advice.
2. A big investment in building relationships with a wide range of funders to inform them of the work done by AdviceUK and our members, with the aim of influencing their funding priorities over the coming years. Funding continues to be the issue that our members put at the top of their priorities.

Influencing relationships take a long time to develop and their impact may not show for several years, but this has been and will continue to be one of our key priorities. Towards the end of the year significant investment was made in London regarding potential funding from London Funders.

In Scotland significant investment was made to try and secure Scottish Government funding. This time and resource will, it is anticipated, generate income in 2023-24 and beyond. Time has also been spent, and will continue to be spent, working with funders in England outside of London and in Wales. Similarly, a lot of time was spent by AdviceUK last year writing parts of a bid led by the Access to Justice Foundation to the National Lottery Community Fund for £30 million over five years. We will know if we have been successful in the summer of 2023. If so, this could boost the income of AdviceUK specialist providers enabling them to help tens of thousands of people.

AdviceUK's broader influencing work has continued with a significant increase in the number of stakeholders that we engage with. Every engagement increases the likelihood of AdviceUK members being better supported to improve the lives of the people they advise.

Looking forward to the coming year, we will continue to struggle and fight for and with the people most impacted by the cost of living crisis and for and with those organisations that provide brilliant advice to them.

**Please contact either me or the other members of the team if you would like to know more about what we do and/or would like to join us in the fight to improve people's lives.**



**Chilli Reid, Executive Director**  
chilli.reid@adviceuk.org.uk





## OUR INFLUENCING AND ENGAGEMENT WORK

AdviceUK exists to improve the lives of people seeking advice. As a membership organisation, it is our members that provide services directly to the public.

**The purpose of our influencing and engagement work is twofold:**

- Improve the lives of the people they support, and
- To influence the external environment to improve the lives of people using advice services, strengthen the voice of our members and make AdviceUK a key influencer and agent of change.

The latter area of work is led by our Influencing and Engagement team.

Our influencing and engagement work also benefits wider society by contributing to work that strengthens whole communities, not just individuals seeking advice. Raising our profile through influencing and having an impact creates more opportunities to strengthen our members and improve people's lives.

We therefore aim to have an impact on people seeking advice and the general public, support and strengthen our members, and raise the profile of AdviceUK and our members.

**This can be expressed as a triangle, and informs all the work that we do:**



## HOW WE HAVE IMPROVED PEOPLE'S LIVES

Everything that we do is about people and trying to improve their lives in challenging times. Here are some examples illustrating how we have done this over the last year.

### Developing career pathways for the advice sector

AdviceUK members almost always put funding as their main challenge and priority. Work with funders has been a very important part of our activity in 2022-23. This has involved introducing AdviceUK and the work of our members to funders. These relationships are strategic with the ultimate aim of creating new or increased opportunities of funding for AdviceUK members.

An example of this in 2022-23 is the Propel programme developed by London Funders. We helped evidence the need for this programme to make a significant investment in advice sector workforce development, and the Robust Safety net strand of Propel will benefit a wide range of AdviceUK members in London. They include around 70 London members advising minority ethnic communities and vulnerable migrants. The learning and resources generated through this project will also benefit members in other parts of England, Scotland and Wales, supporting the development of sustainable career pathways into the advice sector. AdviceUK was also able to use AdviceUK's training and vocational assessment work as an exemplar for future delivery.



"While the need for advice is increasing every day, advice agencies face unprecedented challenges in recruiting advisers, particularly specialist legal advisers. Addressing skills gaps in the sector requires the collaboration of all sections of the advice, including funders, umbrella and delivery organisations working together to start looking for some solutions. AdviceUK has been part of these discussions for over a year and a half.

AdviceUK's experience, knowledge and expertise in training and development, working with smaller community-based organisations, and strategic work done in the advice sector have been significant in developing the workforce programme that now sits under the Robust Safety of Propel initiative in London. We know addressing the skills gap requires us to focus wider than training provision.

We also need to address barriers to recruitment, challenges in retention and leadership for holistic workforce development. AdviceUK's years of experience representing the advice sector, particularly the work with smaller community-based organisations, will continue to be a vital part of this process."



**Nezahat Cihan,**  
Chief Executive Officer, London Legal Support Trust



## Increasing Access to Advice

At the beginning of 2023 we created an Influencing Reference Group (IRG) of AdviceUK members. The members of the group work together with AdviceUK on influencing issues. This work will focus on campaigns designed to raise profile, improve the circumstances in which our members operate and ultimately, improve people's lives as a result. It will also help to deepen the engagement between AdviceUK and our members.

The first IRG campaign, **ADVICE SAVES**, will run into the autumn of 2024. It aims to raise profile and increase the funding and capacity of the advice sector in the run-up to the next General Election. With increased funding and capacity, the advice sector will be able to make a real difference to the lives of more people.

## Influencing funders to change grants to meet people's needs

Sometimes grant agreements get in the way of helping people in the ways best suited to their needs. We have been arguing for a long time that funding should be provided in ways that allow advisers to respond to what matters to people. We have expressed particular concerns about the way in which arbitrary targets make it difficult for advisers to deal with people's problems in a holistic way. These concerns have been exacerbated by the cost of living crisis, which has increased the complexity of cases and seen many more people in vulnerable circumstances seeking help to resolve their problems.

We were therefore really pleased when – in response to concerns that we and other advice organisations had expressed – the Money and Pensions Service announced that it was making changes to the grants it awards to debt advice organisations, resulting in a 29% reduction in the targets an individual adviser is expected to meet. These changes will not only make it easier for advisers to provide the full range of support that people in debt need, but will also help improve the well-being of advisers, who have been struggling to manage large and increasingly complex caseloads.

## Improving People's Finances

Members of the Influencing & Engagement team represent AdviceUK on a large number of different fora and committees. One of these is the Insolvency Service's IVA Standing Committee, which oversees the protocol for Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs).

Last year AdviceUK input into changes that were made to the protocol to take into account the impact of the cost of living crisis. As The Guardian newspaper commented, "Thousands of Britons could have their debts written off or monthly repayments slashed" as a result of the changes.

## Supporting Other Campaigns

As well as running our own campaigns, we also work to support campaigns run by other organisations. In the last year these included Martin Lewis's successful campaign to postpone the rise in the Energy Price Guarantee and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Trussell Trust Guarantee our Essentials campaign.



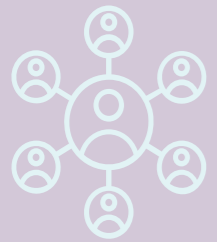
“Chilli Reid has been really influential in the access to justice space in the past year. His public speaking and provision of data are always delivered with great energy and verve have really made a difference in a variety of fora and settings. He is a great advocate for AdviceUK members and the people they serve. Chilli has made the case very strongly for more funding, understanding and support for people hit very badly by the cost of living crisis and those unable to access civil justice”

**Martha De La Roche, Partnerships Director, The Access to Justice Foundation**

## REACHING STAKEHOLDERS AND MEMBERS

We worked directly with

**338** people from



**76**

different stakeholder organisations

We worked directly with

**1,049**

people working for

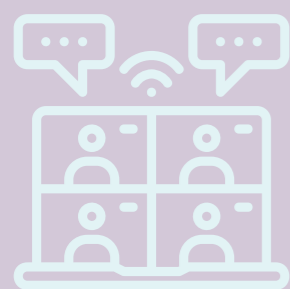


**372**

AdviceUK members

**186**

members attended



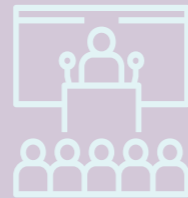
**6**

fora we held for our Scottish members

We were invited to speak at

**11** events

and attended meetings of



**113**

different fora organised by stakeholder organisations

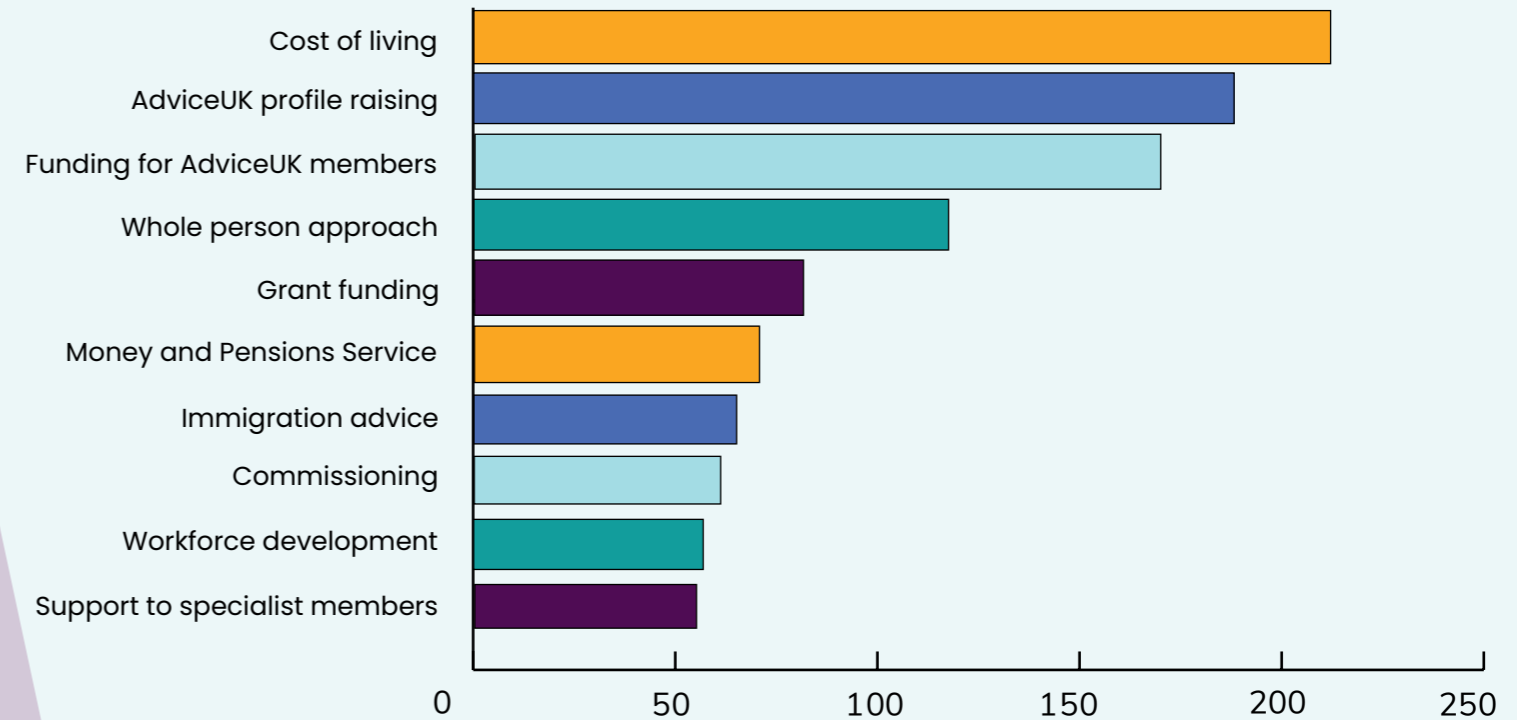
We organised 3 fora in England and Wales



**231**

people attended

In 2022-23, we engaged with our members on over 1000 different issues. The top 10 issues we helped with were:



## HOW WE HAVE ENGAGED WITH OUR MEMBERS

Our members have an important role in supporting local people and local communities. A major part of our work is to help our members do this. Here are some examples of what we have done to support our members over the last year.

### Providing one-to-one support for members

We have provided support on a wide range of issues including:

- Identifying funding opportunities;
- Commenting on funding applications;
- Competitive tenders and commissioning;
- Confidentiality and data protection;
- Digitisation and digital inclusion;
- Setting up supervision and file review arrangements;
- File and case recording;
- Workforce development; and
- Reviewing service policies.

### Supporting the development of new groups and organisations

We are involved in new member applications from the outset, offering input and advice on their services and policies. Across 2022-23 we have welcomed 34 new members to AdviceUK, with 15 joining since the beginning of 2023.

### Funding updates and member events

Increased capacity in the team has enabled us to invest in more regular funding updates for members in England and Wales.

We ran two England and Wales-wide member events in 2022-2023, and plan to run at least five free events for members in England and Wales over the coming year, building on the success of the bi-monthly online fora for Scottish members. These events allow our members to hear from external speakers and engage with a range of issues and subjects.



### Addressing cost of living pressures on communities

We've been in touch with over 90 AdviceUK members to understand what is happening in advice services. This has informed both our cost of living briefing for members and our work to influence funders and other decision makers.

### Tackling adviser well-being

In June and July 2022, AdviceUK surveyed its members on adviser workloads and wellbeing. We received 114 responses from individual advisers and advice service managers that were used to inform our briefing on adviser wellbeing and capacity. Over the course of the year we have produced similar briefings on a range of issues, including adviser pay and conditions, conflicts of interest, and safeguarding.

### Resourcing and developing advice services in minority ethnic and marginalised communities

We have successfully secured funding to invest in the development and skills of advisers and those running advice services, alongside targeted funding to help organisations get the Advice Quality Standard.





## STRENGTHENING MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

### Helpline Service

We helped the team sustain and develop the organisation’s helpline, supporting them with a funding application, conflict of interest guidance and choosing a suitable telephony system. This has resulted in increased access to its information and advice services, which are now better placed to meet the needs of people telephoning for advice.



### Student Union Advice Service

We helped establish the scope and purpose of the union’s advice-giving work, looking particularly at the challenges involved in withdrawing a service. We worked with the advice service manager to develop principles and policies that can be used by the team to make good decisions in complex situations.

### Securing funding for our members in Scotland:

As a result of the work we carried out for them in 2020, we are now in a position to manage a fund that was assigned to AdviceUK to administer on behalf of the Scottish Government. This will not only benefit many more people seeking advice, but also demonstrates the important position that AdviceUK and our members occupy in the Scottish advice landscape.

## WHAT OUR MEMBERS THINK...



“Thank you so much for the help you have given our organisation – you’ve helped us get back on our feet. We can again share our skills and knowledge to help people at critical times in their lives”

“We’re just about to enter a new commissioning round for our advice services – your insight into the wider context for the sector was really helpful.”

“Thanks for all your help, support, encouragement and insight over this past year. Your hard work has hugely benefited us and our local community and I feel incredibly grateful we have you as an ally.”

“The AdviceUK member forums are such a great learning and sharing opportunity”

“Thank you for the wellbeing briefing – it is incredibly useful and there are ideas there that I’ll definitely be putting into practice”

“... I wanted to thank you so much for all your help and support that you’ve given me over the last year whilst I’ve been going through the re-accreditation process!”





## HOW OUR MEMBERS HELPED PEOPLE IN 2022-23

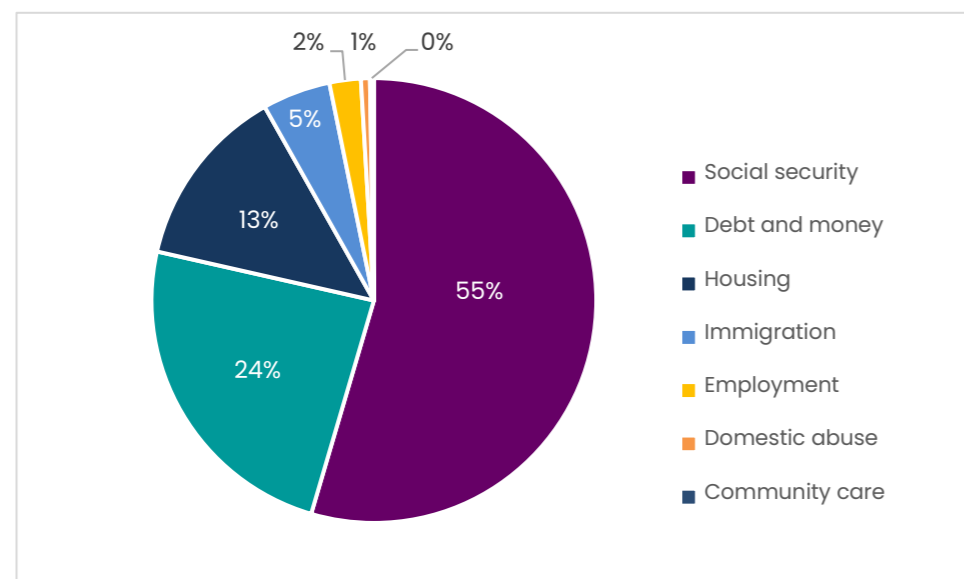
Those of our members using the AdvicePro case management system recorded that they dealt with over 450,000 new cases in 2022-23, a 21% increase on the number of new cases dealt with the previous year.

The top seven case categories were:

Area of social welfare law	No. of cases
Social Security	247907
Debt and money	109016
Housing	60397
Immigration	22510
Employment	10357
Domestic abuse	2961
Community care	1297
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>454445</b>

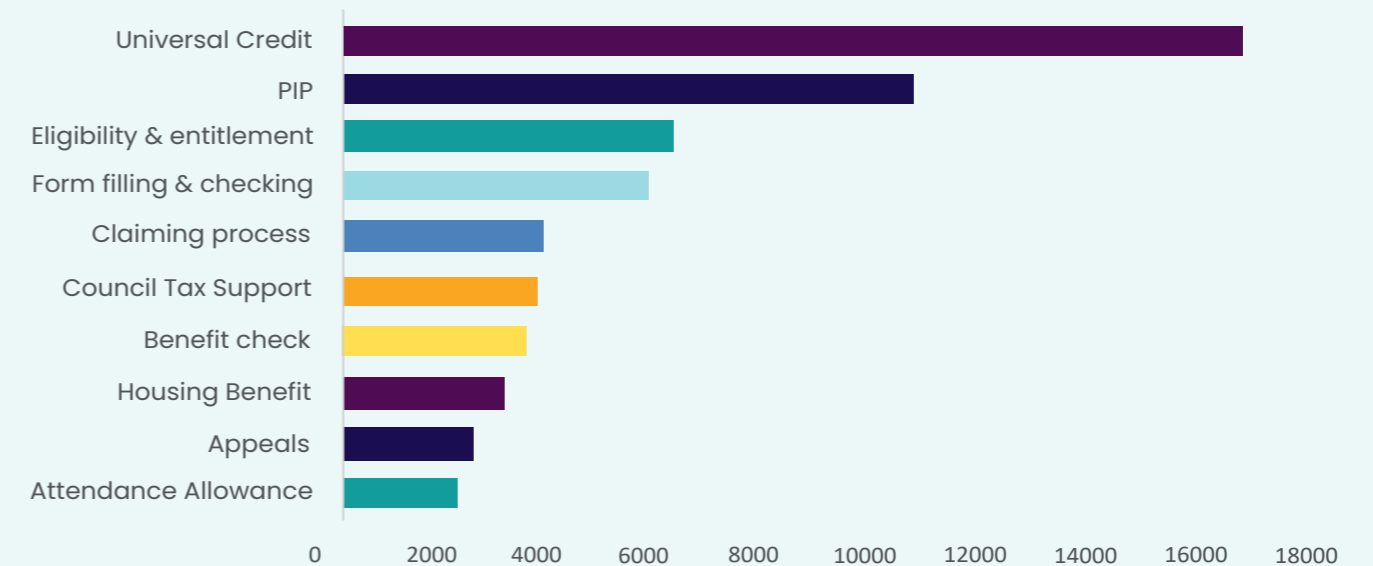
Over half of the total number of cases seen dealt with welfare benefits issues. Debt advice issues accounted for a quarter of all cases.

Case category percentage:



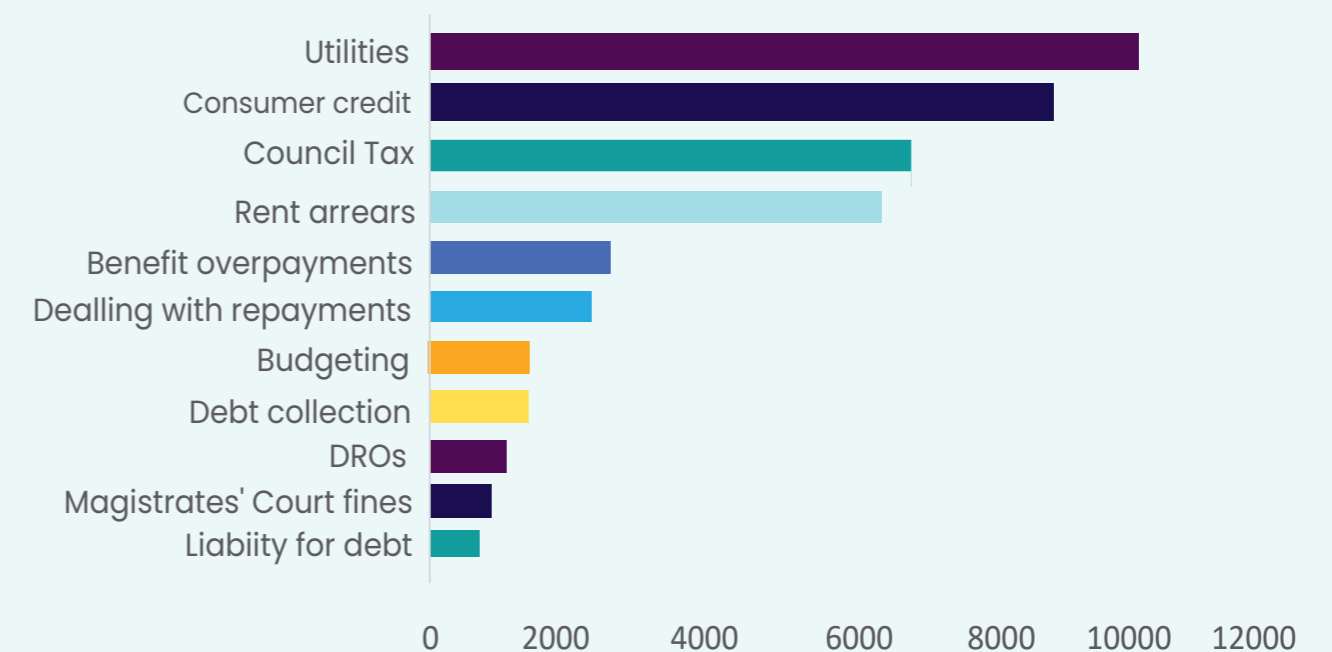
The top welfare benefits issue dealt with in 2022-23 was Universal Credit, followed by enquiries on the Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

### Top 10 welfare benefit issues



Utilities was the biggest debt issue seen in 2022-23, followed by Consumer Credit, Council Tax arrears, rent arrears and benefit overpayments.

### Top 10 debt issues



To find out more about AdvicePro please visit <https://advicepro.org.uk>

## LOOKING AHEAD

### Our 5 key priorities for 2023–24

#### Supporting more AdviceUK members to improve the lives of people they advise

We have five events planned for 2023–2024 and will be continuing to develop the support and resources available to our members and others setting up advice services for the first time, with a particular focus on income generation and adviser wellbeing.

#### Continuing the drive to increase funding opportunities for AdviceUK members

This will include seeking funding in England and Wales outside of London as well as managing funding from the Scottish Government over the next two years.

#### Raising the profile of AdviceUK and our members

Making it easy for our members to share the reality of the work that they do in ways that will influence key decision makers and funders and effect real change.

#### Expanding our network of stakeholders

Working together with other organisations so that we are able to effect change and improve people's lives.

#### Making better use of data

So that we have the evidence we need for targeted and powerful influencing work.

Our planned **ADVICE SAVES** campaign is intended to help achieve many of these key priorities.

### HOW TO CONTACT US

If you would like to find out more, or are interested in working with us, please email [influencing@adviceuk.org.uk](mailto:influencing@adviceuk.org.uk).

You can also contact the members of our Influencing and Engagement team directly:



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You can find [information about our influencing work on our website](#).

#### If you are an AdviceUK member:

- You and your colleagues can [Subscribe to our Member Updates](#)
- You can use the [Member Resources on the AdviceUK Portal](#)

#### If you are a stakeholder:

- You and your colleagues can [Subscribe to the AdviceUK Newsletter](#)





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