

Advice Shop wins accreditation for its work

Advice Shop has been accredited by the government's Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers.

The service provides advice on welfare benefits and money. To achieve the recognition there was a rigorous review of the Advice Shop's advice and procedures, as well as examination of the staff to ensure they are well trained. It is hoped that going through this process alone will improve standards and ensure that people who need advice know where to get it.

An update on the service is being presented to the Policy & Sustainability Committee on Tuesday and records a fall in the number of people seeking advice reported last September. In 2022/23 the number of people who consulted the service (3,075) fell short of the target of 5,400 and was lower than the two preceding years, although it is felt that may be underreported due to a new system being introduced.

More staff posts have been made permanent during the year which will help staff retention, and this may make it possible to increase the opening hours of the Advice Line.

One of the main ways that the Advice Shop can help is by maximising income, and in some cases that involves helping people to claim the benefits to which they are entitled. As a consequence one of the benefits of running the Advice Shop is that the council might receive more in the way of rent or council tax payments, simply by helping council tenants to

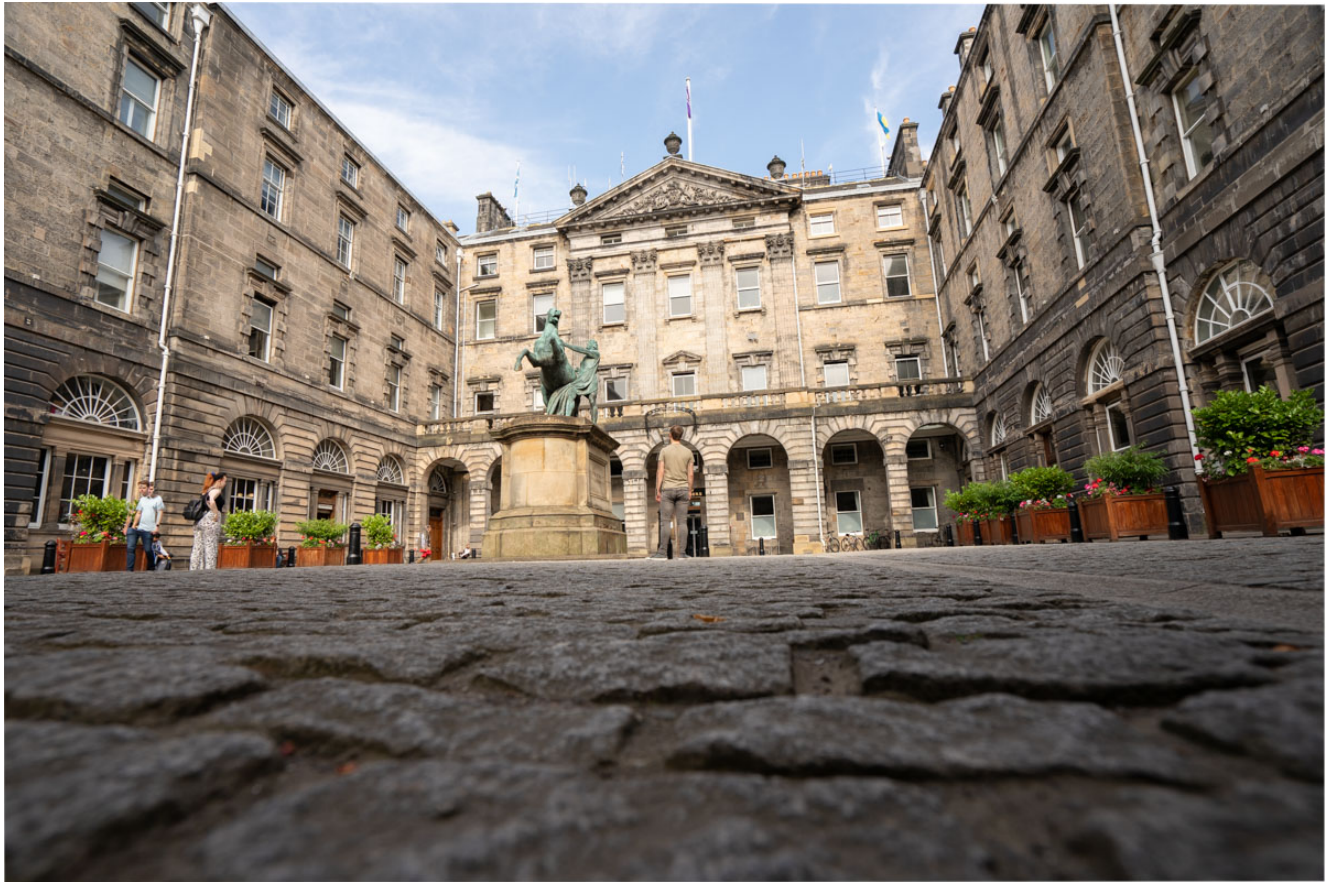
sort out their finances.

Mark Upward, Advice Services Manager at the Advice Shop, said:
“High quality advice means the service is well run, is accessible to the public and provides information and advice that makes a real difference to people’s lives.

“For example, having staff who are well trained which is one of the accreditation requirements, means that we can engage well with clients and identify all options that are appropriate to their situation. Being open and non-judgemental in a supportive environment is essential to gaining people’s trust which allows us to explore all options with them. Good training also means that we can assess situations deeply and identify more than just the presenting issue. For example, if someone approaches us with a query about Council Tax Reduction we may identify that the person has entitlement to Pension Credit and a Disability Premium.

“With an estimated £80m in unclaimed benefits in Edinburgh each year, access to advice is crucial to enable this money to get into the pockets of those on low incomes, many of whom may be vulnerable due to disability, ill-health, homelessness or experiencing significant social issues.”

The council-run Advice Shop aims to help prevent and alleviate poverty and is accessible to the public via phone, email and walk in – see [Benefits and debt advice – The City of Edinburgh Council](#)



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