



Cheetham Hill
Advice Centre

Cheetham Hill Advice Centre

Annual Report 2021-22



Introduction and Chair's Report

Welcome to Cheetham Hill Advice Centre's annual report for 2021-2022

This annual report covers the period of 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. This has been a busy year full of many challenges for both our community and our charity. The team at CHAC have risen to the many challenges faced and have achieved great things against a back drop of growing demand and increased complexity.

Key achievements

This year saw our community emerge from the pandemic before being plunged immediately into a cost-of-living crisis. CHAC have always worked with the people in our community who have some of the lowest incomes, most insecure work and least amount of savings.

This community were impacted greatly by the Covid pandemic in illness and mortality but also in terms of the economic impact of the lockdowns and the effect this had on households that were barely surviving before this.

The beginnings of the cost-of-living crisis saw food costs rocket with cheaper, staple foods being some of the most inflated prices. CHAC have spent the last year maximising people's incomes, helping people manage debt and providing advice to stabilise people's rights, entitlements and living conditions. This was necessary following the pandemic and even more needed as the cost-of-living crisis began.

CHAC have been able to bring our experience of anti-poverty work and our cost-of-living focus to our partnership work as well as allowing us to advocate for our community on a system-wide level. We continue to engage in partnership approaches in this area as the cost-of-living crisis has expanded to include more and more people.

We continue to be part of the successful partnership commissioned to deliver the citywide advice contract. This work is delivered in partnership with Citizens Advice Manchester and Shelter. This partnership allows all involved to bring their strengths and specialism to work together to improve the lives of people in Manchester. This was particularly needed during the Covid pandemic and has become even more necessary with financial stresses being experienced by so many in our community. This contract was extended by two years and will now run until 2024.



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Sarah Sedge

Chair of Cheetham Hill Advice Centre



Operational developments

CHAC have dedicated considerable time to helping local people access grants and trust funds that are available to individuals. One particular success was our charity-wide effort to help distribute Manchester City Council's Household Support Fund to over 240 individuals or families. This involved volunteers and advisors providing advice on the frontline and checking eligibility, our Advice and Volunteer Manager and Finance and Administration Officer checking all the correct details had been collected and then inputting them individually, leading then to a Trustee completing the process by authorising the payments to each and every individual beneficiary of the scheme.

We were pleased to return to face-to-face working with our community but wanted to keep all the positives that people identified from remote working and telephone advice. Providing both methods of open access proved challenging to our capacity and we needed to redesign our systems of work.

We trialled a model where we funded additional capacity at the frontline of our service so that more people could be helped quickly with this initial enquiry. This change helped us to further expand our multi-lingual offer throughout our services. This model has been successful and is something we have been able to obtain funding for to ensure we can help as many people as possible over the coming years.

Our thanks

We are grateful to all of our funders, our partners, our staff team, our volunteers and our trustees. We remain eternally grateful to the people in Cheetham Hill and across Manchester who trust us with their problems and support us.

Sarah Sedge

Chair of Cheetham Hill Advice Centre

Contents

Introduction and Chair's Report.....	2
Advice Service.....	4
Advice Issues.....	5
An Evaluation of CHAC.....	6
Welcome Back to Our Volunteers.....	6
Our Supporters and Partners.....	7

Advice Service

Summary

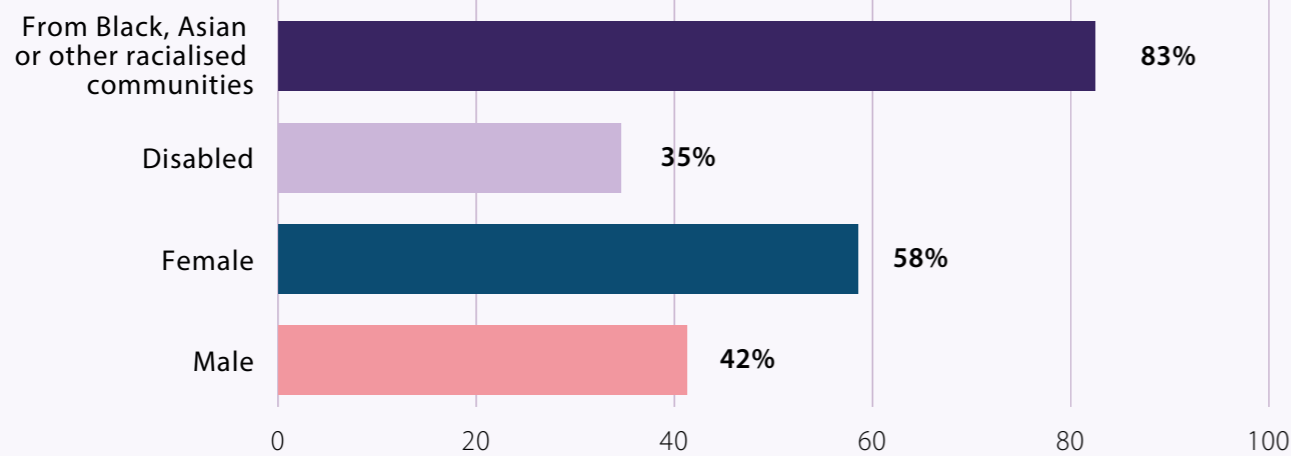
Throughout 2021-2022 we helped 1,361 people with 3,074 issues. We helped with over 1200 welfare benefit issues and helped to increase and maintain over £1.3 million worth of welfare benefits (£1,381,708 in total). We helped 357 people with over £54,000 worth of debt, dealt with 187 people with housing issues and 227 people with immigration enquires. We also helped with education, employment, consumer and health and social care issues.



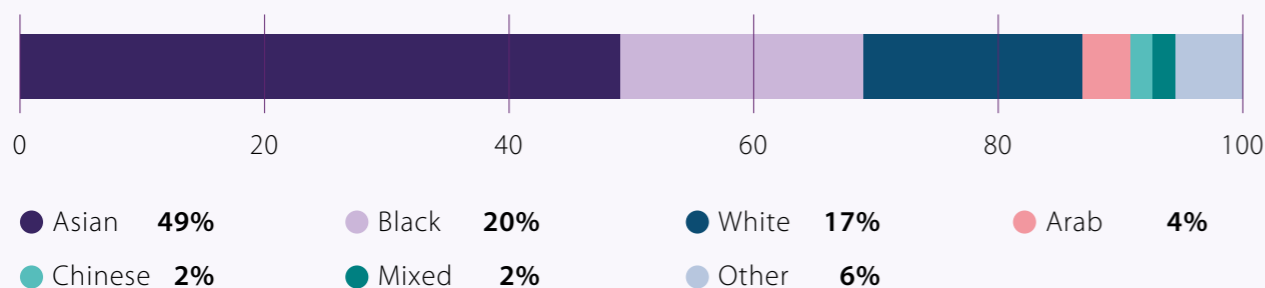
Client

[Going to CHAC], it was the best thing I ever did because they managed to clear a lot of my debt. I wasn't in a good place to sort it out, I didn't know where to start, who to get in touch with, I wasn't aware that I was entitled to trust funds, I wasn't aware that I was entitled to reductions due to my mental health issues, that they were available, until I got in touch with them and until they talked me through everything.

Key statistics



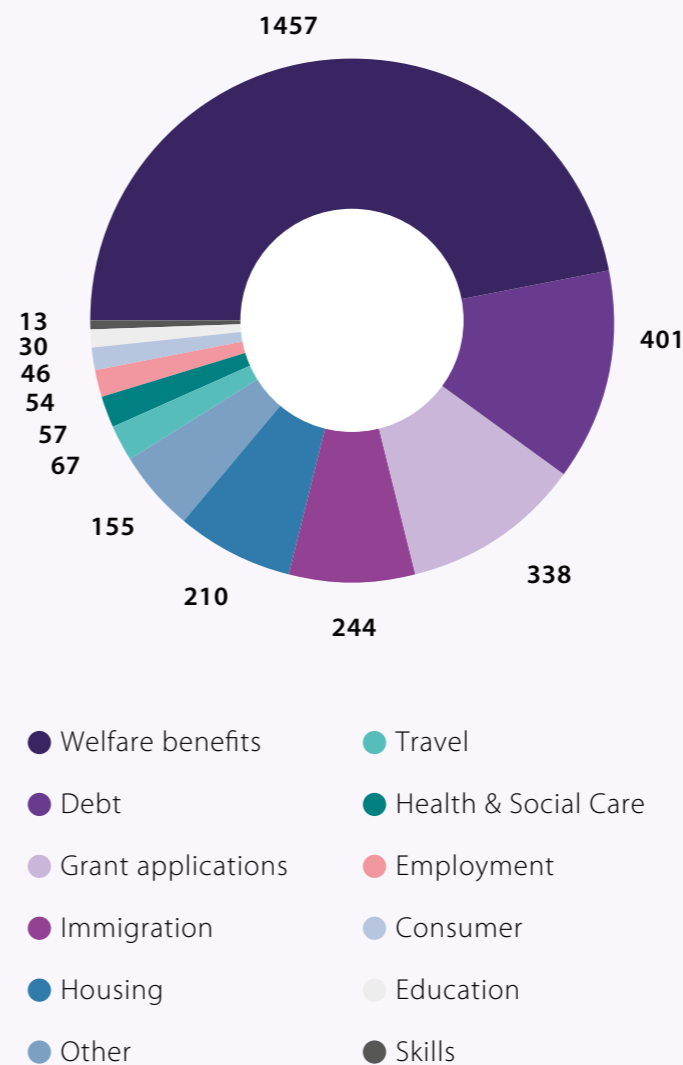
Ethnic origin detail



Advice issues

People come to CHAC for help with a range of issues. People are often very stressed when they arrive and commonly speak of the amount they have been worrying. The vast majority of people who come to us for help do not have enough money to live on. This leads to practical, emotional and health problems for people. Through our services, CHAC increases people's income so they can pay the rent, buy food, take care of their health and afford to have the heat and lights on in their homes. There is often mix of problems that CHAC's advisors and volunteers separate out for people and then provide outcomes that improve people's lives.

Type of advice queries



Household Support Fund

Between January and March we were proud to be chosen to support Manchester City Council's Household Support Fund. This was to help Manchester individuals and families with a one-off grant for £70 for individuals and £100 for households. CHAC were able to facilitate these grants for 242 individuals/ families totalling £21,130. This money was a lifeline and enabled clients to top up their energy meters, buy food and other essential items.

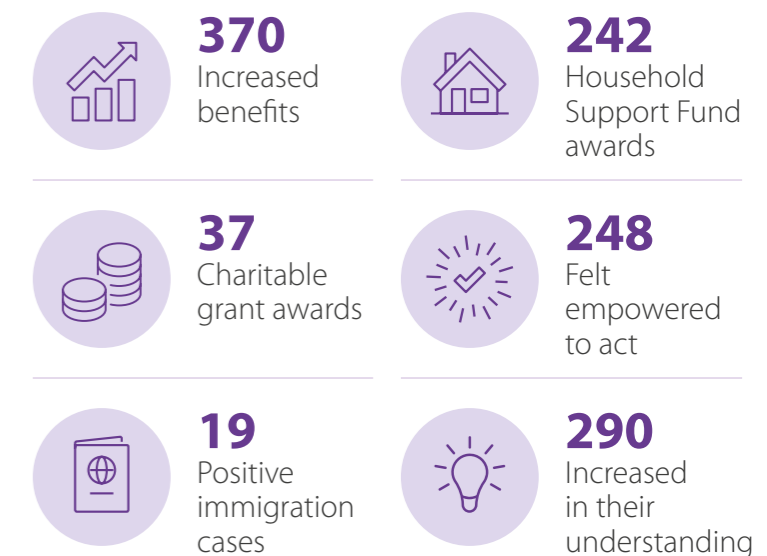
Welfare Benefits

We helped 370 clients claim additional benefits of £765,292, 88 clients backdate benefits worth £414,625.47 and we helped 69 clients maintain benefits worth £283,677 per year. Ensuring individuals and families are in receipt of all the benefits they are entitled to helps ensure they can meet their essential payments and also lessens worry and stress.

Immigration

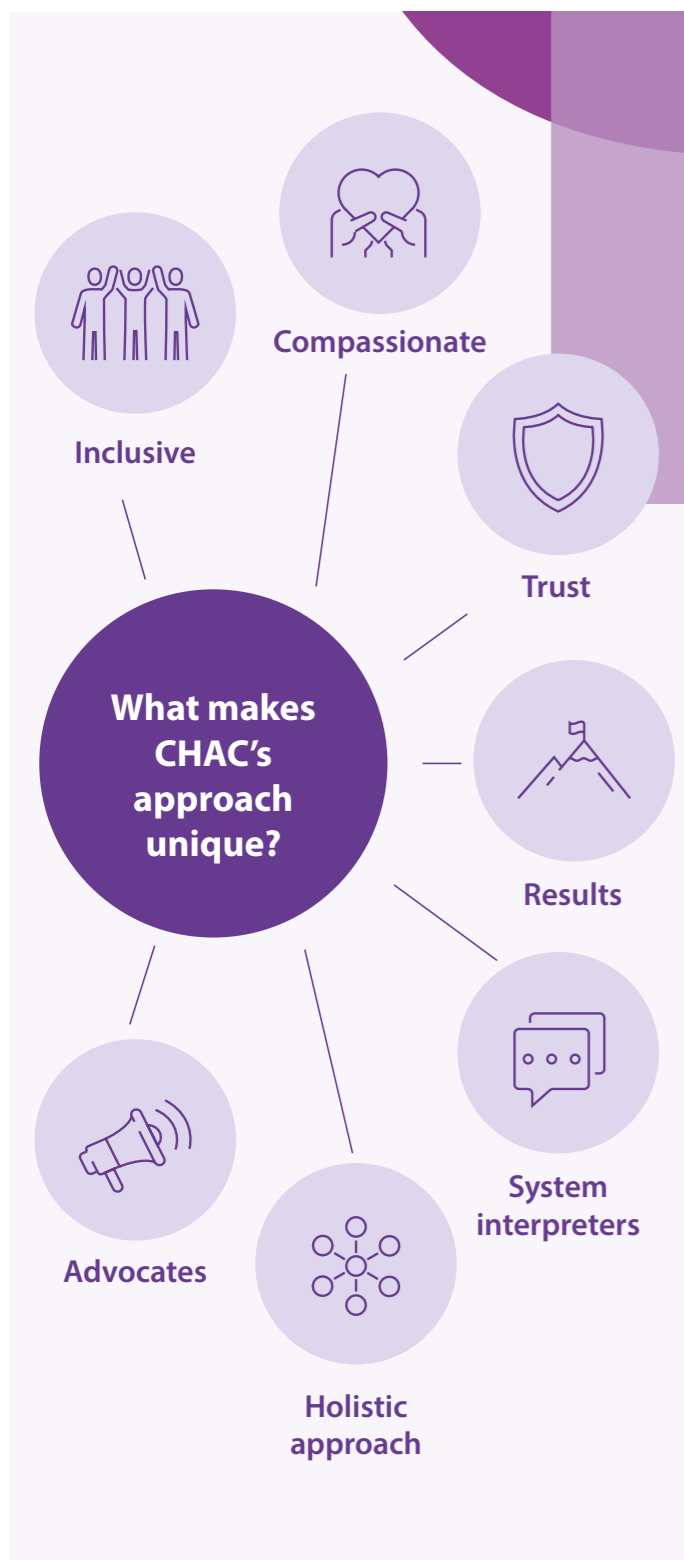
We experienced a higher volumes of clients who were under immigration controls and unable to support themselves due to losing their self-employment or employment due to the pandemic. As many people in the area were employed or self-employed in industries such as restaurants and hotels. We made 7 successful applications to have the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' released. This provided a vital lifeline to these families to be able to maintain their lives in the UK.

Outcomes



An Evaluation of CHAC's Approach

Our work during the year was part of an independent evaluation carried out on CHAC's services. The evaluation found that CHAC was a trusted, respected and impactful part of the community. The professional knowledge, lived experience and compassion of CHAC's staff and volunteers was highlighted as key qualities that are appreciated by people in the community. A diagram summarising CHAC's approach is below.



Welcome Back to Volunteers

This year was the first since 2020 where we were back to having our volunteers at CHAC and we were happy to welcome back five existing volunteers. We continued our partnership with Manchester Mind, Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN) and Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU) working together to recruit and train advice volunteers.

In November we were delighted to recommence with the formal advice volunteer training as this brings much needed enthusiasm and additional skills into our organisation. Seven new volunteers were able to take up this training and join us at CHAC in the last year.

During the year we were immensely proud that three of our volunteers were successfully recruited into paid positions within our organisation.

I started volunteering at Cheetham Hill Advice Centre in 2021 and I can honestly say volunteering there has completely changed me as a person.

Before I started at Cheetham Hill I had been unwell for quite some time, and I had lost all my confidence. I remember the first day, I was really scared and anxious, I thought to myself I don't know if I can do it, but all the people working at Cheetham Hill just made me feel so welcome and comfortable. They helped me to believe in myself again, gave me a sense of purpose and my confidence just continued to grow.

Choosing to volunteer at Cheetham Hill Advice Centre was one of the best decisions I've made, I've met so many amazing people, learnt so many new skills and it has given me a sense of belonging.

It gives you the opportunity to be part of something bigger than just yourself and you can really make difference to people's lives within the community.

Our Supporters and Partners

CHAC is grateful for the agencies and groups we work in partnership with. We know that these partnerships are essential to help our community to survive the complexity of problems they are facing today.

Cheetham Hill Advice Centre work with Citizens Advice Manchester and Shelter to deliver Manchester's citywide advice offer. In the last year we also worked with Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST) to deliver work funded by The Spotlight Fund and with Ethnic Health Forum via the Covid-19 Community Advice Fund. We worked on the Manchester Advice Volunteer Partnership with Manchester Mind, Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU) and Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN). We worked with Hopewell, Wai Yin, Abraham Moss Warriors, New Testament Church of God, 4CT and Communities for All on capacity building in North Manchester.

CHAC works alongside cross-sector partners on North Manchester Together, Hope for Cheetham, Manchester Advice Forum and is proud to take part in the annual Cheetham Cultural Festival.



Cheetham Cultural Festival



Tesco Bags of Help

The charity have been working to build relationships with the business sector to develop donation routes and pro-bono support. CHAC made links with the Far East Consortium, Engie / Equans and Ameon via the North Manchester Business Network. The three construction companies worked together to help CHAC implement a range of building improvements that make the building more comfortable for residents who visit the charity. This led to the provision of over £6,000 worth of materials and specialist trades work. CHAC were supported by The Cranfield Trust who identified a consultant to work with the charity for free to develop our three-year Business Plan. CHAC also received £1,000 from Tesco which the charity invested in improving the computers and internet access for volunteers. Tesco also donated biscuits as a treat for CHAC's volunteers and these were presented by the Community Champion at Tesco Cheetham Hill.



Ameon, Engie / Equans and Far East Condortium helping the community by improving CHAC's building



Cheetham Hill Advice Centre

A copy of our full accounts is available from the Centre upon request

Independent Account Examiners

Community Accountancy Service
The Grange
Pilgrim Drive
Manchester
M11 3QR

Finance and Administration Officer in the financial year

Nadia Erdenesuren

IT Support

Bytesize

Banker

Co-operative Bank
1 Balloon Street
Manchester

Partners

Abraham Moss Warriors, Citizens Advice Manchester, Communities for All, Ethnic Health Forum, Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, Hopewell, New Testament Church of God, Manchester Mind, Manchester Refugee Support Network, Shelter, Wai Yin, Women Asylum Seekers Together and 4CT. We worked with Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST) to deliver work funded by The Spotlight Fund and with Ethnic Health Forum via the Covid-19 Community Advice Fund.

Supporters

Tesco Cheetham Hill, Far East Consortium, Ameen, Englie / Equans and The Cranfield Trust.

Funding

Our main funding in the year came from The National Lottery Community Fund, Manchester City Council, The Henry Smith Charity, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Peter Kershaw Trust and the John Grant Davies Trust.

Cheetham Hill Advice Centre is an independent advice charity working with people across Manchester and predominantly in Cheetham, Crumpsall and North Manchester. We work with the local community through providing an advice service, training volunteers and partnership initiatives as well as developing the opportunity for voluntary sector, public sector and businesses to improve the lives of local people.

If you'd like to find out more about Cheetham Hill Advice Centre or get involved please get in touch.

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