

## **Vital debt advice at risk, as local charity asks for your help keeping the doors open**

As winter approaches the warmth and comfort of home become ever more important, but for thousands of people living in Taunton Deane the cost of putting on the heating and cooking a hot meal can cause real problems – and then there's all the extra expense over the festive period.

One in six people in the UK has a problem with debt, and most of the advice sought from local charity Citizens Advice Taunton is related to money. Each year the charity helps over 6,000 people to resolve their problems and be better prepared to face the future.

Jon Shoesmith, Chief Officer of Citizens Advice Taunton said:

“People come to us for help and support with all sorts of issues; from health, family and consumer issues through to housing, law and employment. But financial concerns are at the root of most of the problems people are facing, and more people are looking for money advice over winter than any other time of the year.

Last year we helped 956 local people to reduce their expenses or debt; enabled 2,603 people to access welfare support, and prevented over 200 people from becoming homeless.

We expect to be seeing similar numbers next year, but as the need for our services increases, funding is becoming harder to find and we may need to close the doors to our drop-in service one day a week.”

Most of the charity's clients are on a low income, many have dependent children, and half have a disability or long-term health condition. The support that Citizens Advice Taunton provides can be life changing for clients, and it reduces the pressure on the district's public services. But it needs your help now to keep the doors open five days a week in 2018.

Facing a shortfall of £56,000 in its annual income, the charity has been raising money over the last few months, and recently secured a £30,000 donation from the Henry Smith Charity for the next three years. Smaller amounts have been raised from other sources – but more is needed, and it is asking for local people to help by raising £10,000 through a crowdfunding appeal.

The comprehensive information and guidance that Citizens Advice Taunton provide to clients free of charge is not available anywhere else locally. If the charity had to reduce the number of people it helps each week, the negative impact would be felt across the Taunton Deane community.

To make a donation, please visit [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/doors](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/doors) before 25 November 2017. With your support Citizens Advice Taunton will be able to keep its doors open five days a week, ensuring that it is always available to everyone who needs it.

For further information and advice contact the Citizens Advice Somerset Adviceline on 03 444 889623, visit [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) or call in to St Mary's House, Taunton.

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Point of contact: Jon Shoesmith 01823 448958

