



Caia Park Community Council Case Study



At a glance

Caia Park Community Council operates a free, confidential advice service for residents, covering a population of approximately 13,000 across five electoral wards in Wrexham. With over 20 years of continuous service, it remains the only known Town or Community Council in Wales to provide such a facility.

Community Impact

- The service achieved significant financial gains, securing £1,578,777.74 for clients, including £1,424,039.15 in ongoing financial benefits and £154,738.59 in backdated lump sums.
- Clients gained greater financial stability and improved well-being, reducing stress and hardship in one of Wales' most deprived communities.
- Collaboration with key agencies ensured residents received a comprehensive, personalised service tailored to their specific needs.
- By assisting with appeals and tribunals, the service helped prevent homelessness, debt spirals, and financial exclusion.

“The service is a lifeline for many residents of Caia Park which is a community dealing with complex poverty and deprivation issues”.

Andrea Evans, Clerk/RFO
Caia Park Community Council

Challenges

The Council recognised the challenges and pressures faced by families in Wrexham and particularly in Queensway and Wynnstay Wards, which rank 1st and 2nd for multiple deprivation as defined by Welsh Government, and are among the 10% most income-deprived for children in Wales. Many residents struggle with low incomes, debt, and limited digital access, leading to an increased demand for support.

Solutions

- The Community Council's small team of dedicated Advice Workers provides impartial and confidential support to Caia Park residents. They assist with a range of issues, including welfare benefits, debt, housing, consumer rights, and Universal Credit. The service is also authorised to issue immediate food bank vouchers to eligible residents in times of crisis and can also provide representation at tribunals and appeals when required.
- Support is available via pre-booked telephone consultations, or pre-booked face to face appointments at the Council office. Residents can schedule an appointment by phone, email, or by visiting the Council offices.



Benefits and
debt advice



Food bank
vouchers



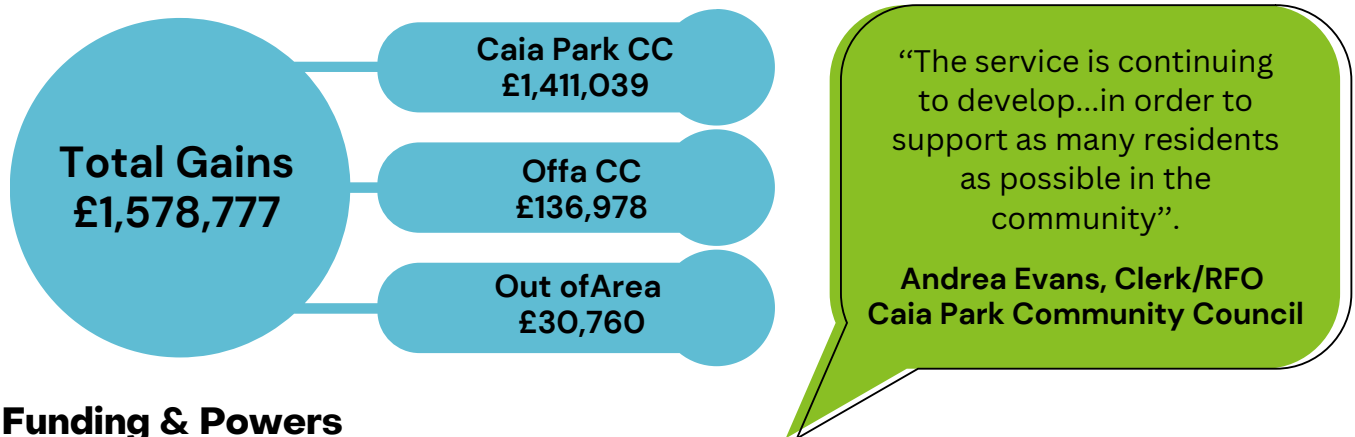
Housing and
consumer advice



Tribunals and
appeals

- The service played a vital role in 2023/24, supporting 341 clients and handling 586 cases. The high number of cases highlights the essential nature of the service, as many clients required assistance with multiple issues, reinforcing the ongoing need for accessible and comprehensive support.
- The Advice Service works closely with multiple agencies, including Citizens Advice, Shelter Cymru, Wrexham Foodbank, local housing offices, and community support services, to provide coordinated assistance while ensuring clients retain control over their support options.
- This collaborative approach enhances the support available to residents, addressing a wide range of needs effectively.

Total Amount of Benefit Claimed for Residents



Funding & Powers



The service is fully funded by Caia Park Community Council and operated in 2023/24 with a £96.3K budget, accounting for 38% of the Council's precept income. It also provides a weekly session for Offa Community Council on a cost-recovery basis.



The funding supports essential aspects of the service, including staff salaries, administrative expenses, IT infrastructure, and case management software. By investing in this service, the Council ensures that residents have access to vital support, helping to navigate welfare challenges, alleviate financial hardship, and improve overall well-being. This commitment enables the Council to play a proactive role in addressing community needs and strengthening local welfare initiatives.



All community and town councils in Wales need specific legal powers that enable them to provide various services and support for their local communities. These powers, granted by legislation, allow councils to undertake a wide range of activities and initiatives to improve the well-being and quality of life for residents. Eligibility for the general power of competence (GPOC) provides greater freedom for councils to act. Powers and justifications can therefore differ if eligibility for GPOC has not been confirmed and councils should consider their specific circumstances and always seek advice about the legality of proposals to avoid acting beyond their powers.

For advice and guidance, councils may wish to contact their One Voice Wales



Development Officer admin@onevoicewales.wales



The Future

With rising living costs and economic challenges, demand for the service is expected to grow. The Community Council aims to sustain and expand support by seeking external funding, improving digital access, increasing outreach to vulnerable residents, and strengthening partnerships for a more holistic support system.

Want to Find Out More?

For more information on the One Voice Wales Cost-of-Living Crisis project contact the team at:



CoLC@onevoicewales.wales



<https://bit.ly/3KYHftK>