



New year review

As we moved into the new year the Research & Campaign (R&C) team took some time to reflect on the 2025 achievements, reviewing the systemic issues people face in Somerset to identify our new campaign goals. We also refreshed those we're carrying forward into 2026 - such as the campaigning to improve the Somerset Council Tax Reduction so it's inclusive for all claimants.

This newsletter serves to share our work to date and hopefully inspire you to make your voice heard and make a difference in 2026.

Shut out of work

A recent report from national Citizens Advice, [Shut out of work: how workplaces are excluding disabled people](#) explores the experiences of disabled clients who are excluded from the labour market due to inaccessible and unsupportive workplaces. A [blog piece](#) has also been published.

Citizens Advice Somerset fed into this report and national Citizens Advice said:

“Your contribution has been essential in helping us understand the challenges our clients face, particularly the systems that reinforce these barriers”

Energy Savers Week 2026

Throughout Energy Savers Week (19-25 January) we were out and about making people aware of the energy support, advice and options available. We teamed up with all the foodbanks across Somerset to ensure that Energy Saving leaflets were handed out with every food parcel distributed during the week.

But we didn't stop there! We've been at Stay Warm, Stay Well events across the county to reinforce the energy saver message and offer advice.



More room to breath

5 years of Breathing Space

Breathing Space was introduced in 2021 to help tackle a rising tide of debt. A statutory scheme, it gives people a short period of legal protection from creditor action while they engage with debt advice.

But the scheme isn't fulfilling its full potential

Take-up remains well below forecast levels. While low awareness plays a part, the evidence suggests deeper design problems, which make it a poor fit for many current debt situations. In a new report [More room to breathe: Building on 5 years of Breathing Space](#) Citizens Advice sets out how reforms could help ensure that Breathing Space achieves its intended outcomes and remains a credible, effective tool.

Our recommendations

- 1 Ensure people can access more than 60 days if needed
- 2 Allow repeat access within 12 months where a person's circumstances change significantly
- 3 Close key protection gaps in relation to UC advances and debt deductions



Our concerns

In 2024-25 Citizens Advice Somerset supported over 2,200 people with 11,558 debt advice issues. We know that:

- The 60-day limit is often not long enough to stabilise people's situations
- The rule that prevents someone having more than one Breathing Space within 12 months creates barriers to effective support
- UC advances and third-party deductions are excluded leaving important gaps in protection

**Citizens Advice
Somerset**

0808 278 7842

Monday to Friday 9am-4pm

For other advice options:
citizensadvice-somerset.org.uk