

**We helped 746 local people with 2456 advice issues in March. The three areas with the most clients requesting help were Benefits and Tax Credits (309,) Charitable Support and Food Banks (165) and Housing (155.) Benefits queries, including Tax and Universal Credit issues, totalled the greatest number of issues raised (817,) others with high numbers of queries were Housing (381,) Charitable Support and Food Banks (296) and Debt (230.)**

## Changes to Richmond Council Tax scheme and how DHP is administered.

The R&C Team has been working with members of Richmond Council to ensure that all CAR advisers have the latest information on the new CTR scheme and CTR premiums for second home owners and vacant properties. In addition to meeting at the council offices, R&C invited a council representative to speak to CAR advisers about the CTR Scheme and Discretionary Housing Benefits. By opening new channels of communication with the council, CAR will be better able to deal smoothly and swiftly with issues raised by CAR clients. The R&C team is also exploring having a dedicated CAR adviser for Council Tax issues based one day a week at the council offices.

Council tax issues, including council tax arrears, continue to be a significant problem for CAR's clients. A recent report from the Resolution Foundation (Nye Cominetti et al., Money, money, money) highlights that the poorest fifth of households across Britain paid 4.8% of their income on council tax/domestic rates in the 2020-21 financial year, contrasting with 2.9% in the 2002-03 financial year. The report suggested that the share of income paid by the poorest fifth on council tax was three times higher at 4.8% than the 1.5% paid by the richest fifth.

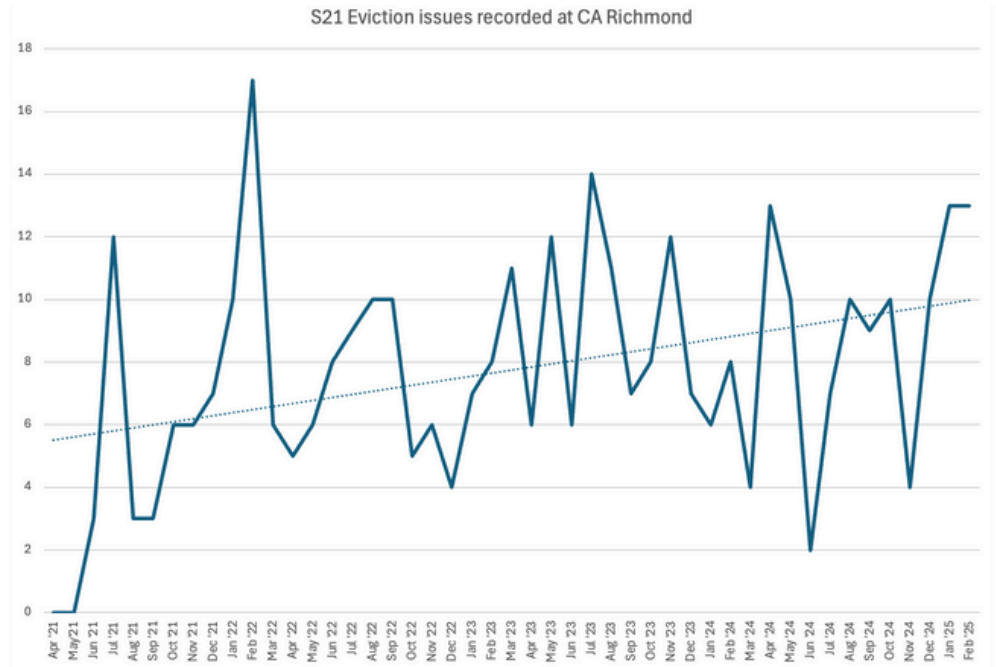
## Collaborating with other London boroughs

The R&C Team has been actively reaching out to neighbouring boroughs to identify areas where we can work together to address common problems. The R&C Team is collaborating with the R&C London Cluster Group ( local R&C offices across London boroughs) with the aim of sharing information, resources and working collaboratively. With the Renters Rights Bill currently progressing through parliament, the R&C Team met with the Hounslow Team who have recently carried out research into the private rental sector and challenges faced by private renters in Hounslow.

Hounslow's focus on private renters in their research reflects the fact that Londoners in poverty are more likely to be private renters, with 40% of Londoners in poverty in privately rented housing, 35% in social rented homes and 26% in owner occupied housing (Trust for London, 2024). However according to a recent study just 5% of private rental listings in London are affordable to low-income households using Local Housing Allowance (LHA) (Savills Research Report, 2024.)

Many testimonies in Hounslow's report reflect the experiences of CAR clients when dealing with housing and private landlords in Richmond's borough, namely;

- repeated rental increases, some with little or no notice
- a sense of helplessness in the face of 'no fault' evictions
- discrimination from landlords once they discovered they were on benefits
- unreasonable landlord behaviour and repairs not carried out



### Testimony from private renter in Richmond Upon Thames

#### Revenge eviction

A client came to CAR as her landlord had served her with an eviction notice after 10 years of having lived with her young child in the privately rented property.

The client has health issues which are exacerbated by the damp in the property and had asked the landlord to deal with the damp. As the damp was not fixed, the client then notified the council environmental officers who contacted the landlord. However, instead of resolving the damp issue, one month later her landlord issued a S21 eviction notice.

When that expired with no action by the landlord, the client received a text message from the landlord announcing a rent increase. When the client asked for a letter confirming this, she was told to seek further accommodation.

The client then received a possession notice from the landlord's solicitor which has forced her to make a homelessness application.

#### About Citizens Advice Richmond

Citizens Advice Richmond gives free, impartial and confidential advice to anyone who lives, works or studies in Richmond borough, or cares for someone who lives in the borough. As well as providing advice, we aim to spot emerging problems affecting local people and to set out new ideas to improve policy and delivery for all.

**Feedback:** We welcome feedback and suggestions – [click here](#).

**Free advice:** Please call us on Freephone 080 82 78 78 73 or fill in the [form here](#).

**Benefit calculator:** Find out what benefits you can [claim here](#).

**Partner organisation referrals:** Refer clients to us via [this form](#).