

2025: Stories that Shaped us

Things are complex for the people we help. Problems often create spillover effects, which can lead to escalating hardship.

As 2025 draws to a close, we reflect on the stories of people across BCP. We're thinking about where those people are now, how we helped, and what more we can do in 2026.

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Nadia, 35, is a single mother of four children ranging in age from 1-9.

Universal Credit and Child Benefit are Nadia's primary source of financial support, but her Universal Credit is reduced by the 2-child limit and benefit cap. Nadia is topping up her rent from her benefits, due to the low local housing allowance. This leaves too little for essentials.

Nadia is facing increasing food pressure as her children grow. She has used four food bank vouchers in the last six months - evidence of ongoing crisis. "I just need to feed my children," she said when seeking help.

Nadia is affected by digital exclusion. She cannot afford home broadband or a mobile phone with internet. This means that she is finding it difficult to navigate the local digital process of applying for extra help like discretionary housing payments and council tax support.

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In 2025, Citizens Advice **successfully campaigned for the removal of the 2 child limit** - Nadia will benefit from this change.

We worked with partner organisations to make sure our service was **accessible at times of crisis**, and our benefits team secured an average income gain of **£4,793** per person. In 2026, we will be working with BCP council to ensure that digital services are **inclusive to all**, including the most vulnerable.



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Aisha, a survivor of modern slavery, is the sole carer for her two children, one with profound autism and 24/7 care needs.

Aisha lives with serious physical and cognitive impairments following a car accident, and struggles with low literacy and poor financial management. After Aisha's PIP claim was rejected, we helped her successfully appeal, uncovering an undiagnosed traumatic brain injury in the process.

Aisha received £8,000 in backdated benefits but was also facing financial exploitation. She is now receiving help with debt, her son's DLA, and a blue badge application. With immigration support, Aisha submitted a visa extension as the parent of British children. She is now more stable, safe, and enrolled in a literacy programme to better support her family.

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With financial hardship on the rise, the impact on **vulnerable groups** is **intensifying**. Our advice and support is covering a much wider variety of issues than ever before.

In 2026, we will be working with health providers to facilitate a **'whole' person preventative approach** to wellbeing, improving health outcomes via social welfare advice.

This **collaborative**, joined up work is important for people across BCP, so that we can **advocate at times of high need**, and prevent problems arising.

