



## CHAIR'S REPORT EAST AND CENTRAL SUTHERLAND CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU DATE: 24TH APRIL 2025

---

### **Introduction**

The past year has brought significant challenges to the East and Central Sutherland Citizens Advice Bureau (ECSCAB). Amid a climate of uncertainty, our staff, trustees, and volunteers have faced considerable anxiety and stress. Yet, despite these pressures, our bureau has demonstrated remarkable resilience and capacity for growth, providing grounds for genuine optimism about our future.

### **Service Quality and Client Impact**

Throughout the year, ECSCAB has upheld an exceptional standard of service delivery. Numerous clients have taken the time to express their appreciation for the professionalism and effectiveness of our staff. This feedback reflects the depth of commitment and compassion that characterise the work of the CAB. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed to maintaining such high standards.

### **Acknowledgement of Key Staff**

Special thanks are due to James Sutherland and Peter Wardaugh, who have taken on the roles of acting managers during this transitional period. Their willingness to assume expanded responsibilities, previously unprecedented within our bureau, has been exemplary. Further commendation should go to Kerry Hawthorne and Frieda Scholz. Their leadership in expanding our outreach services has earned widespread recognition and significantly increased ECSCAB's accessibility and community impact.

I must also acknowledge the contribution of Rhionna Mackay, former bureau manager. Her strategic efforts to secure new funding streams and address governance anomalies have placed ECSCAB on a firmer footing. Her work has made a lasting impact on our organisational capacity and future direction.

### **Board and Trustee Contributions**

I also wish to thank my fellow directors and trustees. Their resilience, dedication, and strategic guidance have been essential in navigating the bureau through uncertain times. Their efforts have ensured ECSCAB remains not only operational but also strong and forward-looking.



## CHAIR'S REPORT EAST AND CENTRAL SUTHERLAND CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU DATE: 24TH APRIL 2025

---

### Operational Achievements

As detailed in the Manager's Report by James Sutherland, the ECSCAB supported:

- **724 clients**
- **3630 contacts**
  - 1062 Individual Cases**
  - £740,628.35 Client Financial Gain**

These efforts resulted in a total client financial gain of **£565,675.27** — a figure that is all the more impressive considering the worsening socioeconomic conditions facing our communities. With cost-of-living pressures, including rising fuel prices, these numbers are unfortunately projected to grow.

### The Role of Volunteers

Our volunteers are the backbone of ECSCAB. Their commitment mirrors that of our paid staff, as they undergo equivalent training and devote countless hours of their time. Without them, ECSCAB could not provide the same level of service or reach. Their ongoing loyalty and professionalism are deeply appreciated.

### Looking Ahead

Plans are being developed to secure ECSCAB's financial independence and sustainability while enhancing our service delivery model. These plans are central to our long-term vision, and I am confident that by our next AGM, I will be able to provide a positive report on the progress made.

### Conclusion

It is with gratitude and confidence that I present this report. I look forward to another year of collaborating to support our communities and strengthening ECSCAB's role as a vital resource for those in greatest need.

### Ruwan Uduwera-Perera

Chair, East & Central Sutherland Citizens Advice Bureau