

Cash-first in action: The Senior Centre

<https://www.theseniorcentre.co.uk/>



THE
SENIOR
CENTRE



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The Senior Centre is a SCIO situated in Castlemilk, South East Glasgow. They aim to reduce loneliness and tackle social isolation among older adults in Castlemilk and surrounding areas.

They also aim to ensure that more older adults within the community can continue to live at home, and improve their social connections and relationships with their peers.

Their vision is to provide:



“ an accessible facility in which we will promote the social inclusion of elderly people in the Castlemilk area, by reducing isolation, poverty, poor mental and physical health and poor diet, and by providing and promoting opportunities for older people to live an active, fulfilling and useful life within their community.



The Senior Centre runs a variety of activities, support and opportunities for their members including dance and exercise classes, arts and crafts, events, day trips, weekends away, information and support sessions as well as a bustling community cafe.

Their main **community food initiatives** are:

- Their **community cafe** which members a variety of nutritious meals at a reduced price
- **'Free Friday Feeds'** funded by GCVS whereby members can pop in for a hot drink and a free, three-course meal
- **Take-away options** as an energy reducing initiative so members do not have to cook from scratch
- In development a **small community growing space** including 2 accessible raised beds
- **Administering Castlemilk Together: Community Food Action**, a consortium of local organisations, community groups and community members working collaboratively on food insecurity and food poverty
- being a **regular partner in community food initiatives** across the area such as through provisions of high quality, low cost catering and supporting community groups with their own initiatives

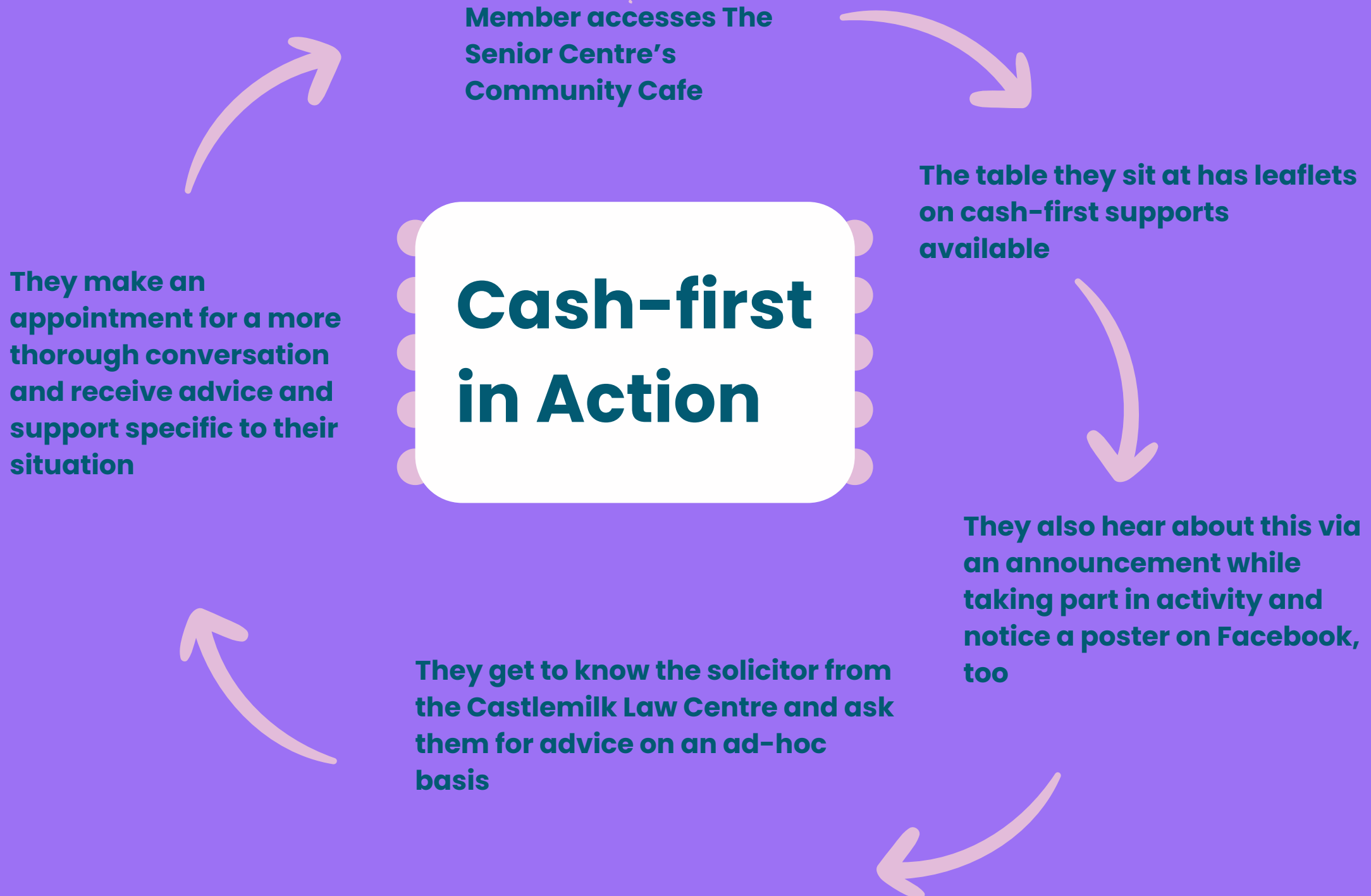


Overview of current cash-first approaches

The cash-first approaches currently being offered by The Senior Centre with engagement being centred around their busy community café:

- Since February 2024, The Senior Centre has worked in partnership with Castlemilk Law Centre (lead organisation) to deliver an **Income Maximisation project**, funded by Independent Age. The project aims to support older adults who are most vulnerable to the Cost-of-Living Crisis, particularly those who receive a basic state pension and those with disabilities. The service is provided by a trainee solicitor from the Law Centre in our Library, just off of the Café. Part of the project involved delivering information sessions to members which included sessions including on Pension Credit and Attendance allowance.
- **Signposting** to additional support and advice via leaflets, posters and confidential conversations
- Related to cash-first approaches is their **Digital Inclusion project** which builds on the skills and access required to access many income maximisation services independently: ends March 2025.
- **On an ad-hoc basis**, they have information sessions on topics such as pensions, benefits, energy advice and where to access vouchers

Figure 1 below shows *The Senior Centre's cash-first approach in action.*



Challenges

Some challenges in actioning a cash-first approach within their Community Food Initiative are:

- **access to a variety of advice and support** at the same time. For example, specialised support on specific income maximisation has been offered via an external organisation delivering outreach appointments at The Senior Centre however when an issue outwith this specialised support emerges, the member cannot access it then and is signposted elsewhere
- **low uptake on some advice and support sessions** , despite announcements via leaflets, on social media and during activities in the Centre. This could be due to the subject matter, time of year and also as some members expressed that they didn't there are "others who needed it more". Also there appeared to be concerns around removal of benefits and privacy.
- **time and resource** to administer and manage the project without additional staff

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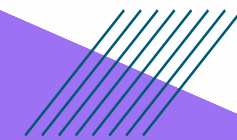
the time to administer and also support members to attend through promoting the support, booking appointments, reminding members of appointments, all on top of my regular work load



It's been brilliant having the Income Maximisation project delivered right here in The Senior Centre, a place our members regularly access food and advice already. It's not only promoted and facilitated access to money advice, but has limited potential barriers should members have had to seek this sort of resource elsewhere.



Positives



Implementing this cash-first approach within the Cafe has been found to have positives such as:

- **increased access** due to being situated close to the café and the café being a focal point for engagement- discussing the support they were receiving within the café space
- having the cash-first support via the café also appeared to increase access by those who may have been deterred by the appointment system. Members who were accessing the café began approaching the solicitor **allowing for ad-hoc support** and **building of a trusting relationship** with the solicitor prior to making an appointment

Free Utilities & Money Advice

Do you have questions about utilities? Whether it's rising gas bills, electricity tariffs, advice on how to be added to the Priority Services register or debts/arrears - we can help!

Utilities

A solicitor from Castlemilk Law Centre is in The Senior Centre every Wednesday for any member to discuss and receive support for the above.

Money

Larissa can also give general money advice on everything from pension credit, carer's allowance, PIP/ADP etc.

Benefits

Please pop into the office for more information or to make an appointment

THE SENIOR CENTRE

CASTLEMILK

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***The solicitor was very good,
she got me a lot of money.***

“

***I wouldn't have been able to access
the support if solicitor hadn't been in
The Senior Centre***



Key Learnings

In implementing a cash-first approach within the Cafe, The Senior Centre have two key learnings:

- **offering drop-in appointments** for future cash-first initiatives may increase access for those deterred by making an appointment in advance
- **emphasising in and communications that members can access the advice and support on offer regardless of their financial situation:** while the project was aimed at working with those who were mostly likely to benefit from advice, ensuring members know they can access the project, regardless of financial situation would have possibly increased uptake in early stages of the project and reduced the reluctance of taking an appointment incase “others needed it more”
- **more likely to access this support** if it’s somewhere that they attend anyway and have trusted relationships and are also confident that they can physically access if there’s mobility issues



A member recently said “I wouldn’t have been able to access the support if solicitor hadn’t been in The Senior Centre”

Aspirations

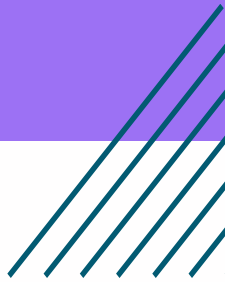
The Senior Centre aspire to:

- **continue having income maximisation advice and support** available to their members via the Café. This is set to continue beyond the planned completion date as there is still demand, albeit on a less frequent basis.
- **provide more workshops more regularly** for an everchanging/dynamic membership in an everchanging financial landscape



Our membership and the financial landscape changes so much that we need to be having this support more so that members can access up to date advice and support

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To be able to access advice on money, utilities and benefits, topics which can sometimes be a bit daunting, in a space our members feel comfortable in, and have ownership of, has been invaluable.



Thank you to The Senior Centre for their contribution to this 'cash-first in action' series.

You can see more 'cash-first in action' profiles via
Glasgow Community Food Network's website
at <https://glasgowfood.net/>

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