



OUR IMPACT

FOR 2019 - 2020

"Helping one person might not change the whole world, but it could change the world for one person."



Telford & Wrekin
COUNCIL

CHAIRS' INTRODUCTION

Every year thousands of people living in Telford come to us for help. We are here for everyone that has problems across a huge range of issues. In this report you will learn about the numbers of people that we helped, the financial value to the community, and not least the contribution of our volunteers.

From these many client contacts, we are able to share with partners, data and evidence from each Ward to help them with strategic social planning. This data also helps us to understand better our clients' needs, how best to meet that need and the difference we make.

The last financial year was challenging ... as will be 2020/21 both for our clients and Citizens Advice Telford & The Wrekin.

In addition, just as the last financial year ended, the country was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst our Tan Bank, Wellington Centre had to be closed, plans were implemented to continue to provide an on-line service by telephone and email. The Board remains grateful to its staff and volunteers for adapting so quickly to these changes.

As our communities adjust to a 'new normal' sadly the need for our services is set to increase. We remain ready to step up to this challenge.



David J C Shelmerdine
Chair, Citizens Advice Telford and The Wrekin
August 2020



WE PLAY AN INTEGRAL ROLE WITHIN OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Through working with 11,907 clients last year, we have a detailed knowledge of issues that affect local people, reaching a diverse and broad community base through working out of ten community locations.

We are able to utilise this knowledge not only by working to resolve our clients' problems, but by providing our on-the-ground perspective and insight to local stakeholders, and working in partnership with other community bodies.

Key Statistics for 2019/20



11,907 clients assisted



21,262 issues dealt with



£811,110 debt written off



£4,727,460 of additional income secured for clients

Our ethos is to empower our clients to deal with the everyday issues in their lives, creating happier and healthier local communities.

CLIENT CASE STUDY

Mable's story: Due to the effect COVID-19 could have on Mable's health conditions, she was told by the Government to stay indoors for 12 weeks. The company Mable works for did not know that she could be furloughed under the Government's scheme as they remained open, and instead only offered to pay her Statutory Sick Pay.

Our adviser provided her manager with proof that she could be furloughed under the Government's scheme leading to Mable being paid 80% of her wages whilst she shielded at home.

THE VALUE OF FUNDING CITIZENS ADVICE

In 2019/20 for every £1 invested in our service, we generated at least:

£3.48 in savings to government and public services (fiscal benefits) By helping stop problems occurring or escalating, we reduce the need for public services (health, housing, out-of-work benefits) Total: £2,340,269

£22.72 in wider economic and social benefits (public value) Solving problems improves lives – and this means better wellbeing, participation and productivity for the people we help Total: £15,286,176

£19.13 in value to the people we help (financial outcomes following advice) As part of advice we can increase people's income, through debts written-off, taking up benefits and solving consumer problems Total: £12,870,294

It's impossible to put a financial value of everything we do - but as far as we can, we have.



Our savings to the public purse:

£262,654 to the local authority by preventing homelessness and housing evictions and mental health services

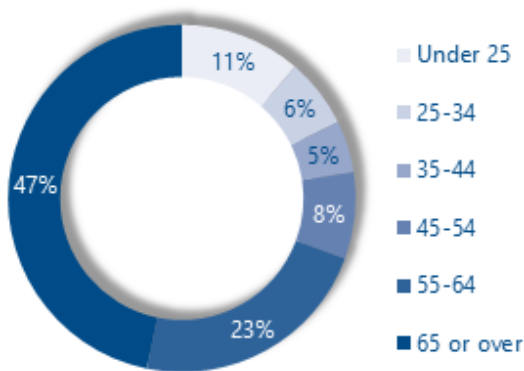
£317,402 to the NHS by reducing use of mental health and GP services, and keeping people in work

£1,117,478 to the Department for Work and Pensions by keeping people in work

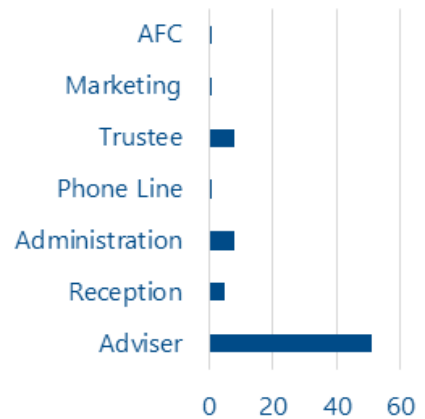
VOLUNTEERS: THE HEART OF OUR SERVICE

We supported 11,907 clients in 2019/20, and all these clients were helped by a volunteer at some stage in their journey, from initial contact to full advice. Throughout the year our team consisted of between 72 and 86 volunteers at any given time.

Volunteer Ages



Volunteer Roles



VOLUNTEER PROFILE

On 31st March 2020, we had a total of 75 volunteers, of whom 63% were female and 47% were male, ranging in age from under 25 years to over 60. The value of our volunteers is also reflected in the outcomes achieved for clients, which included a total of £4.7 million in income gains and sorting £6 million in debt.

Our volunteers form the heart of Citizens Advice Telford & The Wrekin, but our volunteers also gain something from being with us.

During the year, 56% of the volunteers that left us moved into paid employment or further education, assisted by the experience they gained from their volunteering. Of these, we are delighted to report that three moved into paid roles within Citizens Advice Telford and the Wrekin. 100% of the current paid staff within the Help to Claim team are former volunteers.

VOLUNTEERING: THEN & NOW

In September 2019 Citizens Advice celebrated 80 years of Citizens Advice nationally. Locally we also celebrated 20 years since the three Bureaus of Wellington, Telford and Newport amalgamated to form Citizens Advice Telford & the Wrekin.



Volunteers contributed
18,000 hours.

This time is worth an
equivalent of **£290,000**



BRIAN (89):

I started volunteering for Citizens Advice in 1978. I wanted to do something at the time to give back to the community and to help other people and this seemed like the best way to do that.

When I started volunteering there was no training as such, instead you had books with everything you needed to know, and you just spent some time shadowing another adviser. There was no computer system and records were kept in a simple logbook, with case notes being as simple as “client referred to solicitor”.

Over the 42 years I have been a volunteer with Citizens Advice I have done various roles. From volunteering on the Advice Line, to giving full advice and now to helping clients complete paperwork. In that time things have changed drastically in how the service is run and how volunteers are trained and supported.

For me, the biggest changes have been the technology and the level of training and advice given. From using a simple logbook in 1978 to online databases, client records and the AdviserNet advice and information system we use today. The advice has become far more in depth and it is very rewarding to know the level of support we are able to offer clients now. The training has advanced in this time as well, from basic observations to in depth online training as well as one-to-one and group training on everything we need to know.

COVID-19 & LOCKDOWN

In March 2020 when the Covid Pandemic hit, the advice was to move all of our staff and volunteers to working from home. By 23rd March, we had suspended all drop-in and appointment services and outreach sessions and switched to telephone and online delivery.

In just a few days, we trebled the amount of phone capacity and put in place a new email advice facility. Details of how to contact us were on our website, on various public websites and extensively reported via press and other media.

However, we have been conscious that we weren't serving those of our clients who were at the most disadvantage. The numbers of older people consulting our service fell. (We therefore opened limited face-to-face service in July 2020 for clients who could not reach us through any other channel.)

Most of our projects and services have adapted to telephone, online or remote delivery including new areas on our website and webchat services for Universal Credit claimants. However, it will be a long time before all our services are back to "normal".



THROUGH THICK & THIN: OUR SERVICES

- Drop-in service & help by telephone 9am to 5pm at the Advice Centre in Tan Bank, Wellington. Self-help and digital access facilities every weekday in the Hub.
- General advice by appointment at First Point five days per week
- Helping Hands Project Help and advice for people with vulnerabilities in acute financial crisis in partnership with Mind, STAY, Telford Crisis Support and RHCS
- Money Advice Service project Debts advice and casework
- Help to Claim, to help people to make claims for Universal Credit and Personal Budgeting
- Energy advice for individuals and groups
- Outreaches in Newport, Madeley, Stirchley, Oakengates and Dawley throughout the year, Hadley and Leegomery from October 2019 and Woodside from January 2020.
- Strengthening Families Dedicated advice for families with children with multiple needs
- Specialist advice for people affected by Brexit and Windrush claimants
- The Armed Forces Covenant Project piloting information and signposting for people who are serving in the armed forces, who have served, and their families.
- The Domestic and Emotional Abuse project (from November 2019) raising awareness
- Pensionwise and Financial Planning advice
- Free rota of local solicitors

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