

**Free confidential advice
for everyone for 80 years**



Annual Report 2018/19

Chair and Chief Executive Report

Despite sustaining significant funding cuts over the last few years, and the constant challenge of securing ongoing core funding, we remain positive that our current level of operation is sustainable in the future. With the help of Greenham Trust we have been able to negotiate a tripartite agreement with West Berkshire Council, Greenham Trust and ourselves for the next three years. This funding arrangement is explained in more detail in the main Annual Report and accounts.

Working in partnership with the Good Exchange has meant that anyone can now support us with a donation which is then match funded. We are exploring many different avenues of support and are working to raise awareness in the press and social media and through networking in the wider community.

Unfortunately there is a perception that we are either funded by Government or Citizen Advice when in fact we are a local charity which has to raise its own funds to survive.

We are grateful for the continued support of West Berkshire Council, Greenham Trust, Newbury Town Council, Gerald Palmer Trust, Englefield Trust, Greenham Parish Council, Trading Standards Service through the Public Protection Partnership Community Fund and everyone who has donated to us during this financial year.

Thanks to the continued support of the respective Town Councils, we can offer outreach services in Hungerford and Thatcham.

At Citizens Advice West Berkshire we believe it is important that clients are able to move forward following our advice. It has been a busy year for staff, advisers and the Trustee Board. We have had to change the way that we work in order to ensure clients are able to access us in a timely and appropriate fashion, particularly as we have fewer interview rooms available.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff and volunteers for their continued support and the way they have embraced change. This year they have not only supported clients with increasingly complex issues, but have had to undertake a lot of additional training on new rules surrounding GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and Adviceline.

The extremely positive results of our on-site three year audit are testament to the quality of the work that has been sustained over this period by everyone at Citizens Advice West Berkshire.

Seona Myerscough Chair of the Trustee Board and Sue Mackie Chief Executive, Citizens Advice West Berkshire

Citizens Advice Service Aims and Principles

To provide the advice people need for the problems they face

To improve policies and practices that affect people's lives

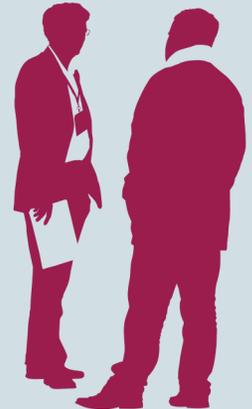
The Citizens Advice Service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination. Established in 1939 as an emergency war service, the Citizens Advice service has developed into the UK's largest independent advice provider.



Our service

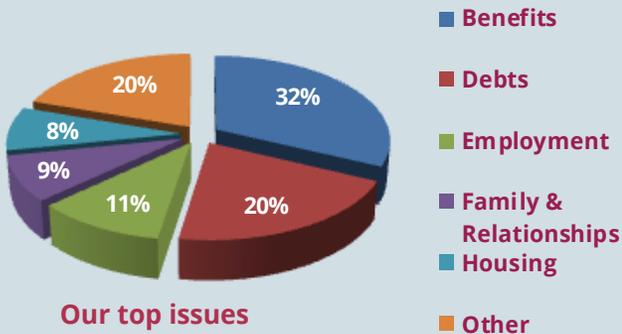
Citizens Advice West Berkshire provides the following services to the people of West Berkshire:

- We provide generalist advice by telephone, face to face and email in Newbury. We also provide face to face advice at 2 GP surgeries in Thatcham and the library in Hungerford
- Specialist advice to people with disabilities, long term health conditions and carers, focused on needs related to their conditions/caring responsibilities
- Money advice including specialist support for complex debt problems
- Help to develop budgeting and money management skills
- Consumer education
- Financial assessments of some beneficiaries of the Community Furniture Project's Essential Household Goods scheme
- Specialist support to members of Newbury and District MS Society, primarily with claims for sickness/disability benefits
- Help with Universal Credit Applications from April 1 2019



Our clients

- Client A was referred by us to the Public Protection Partnership (Trading Standards) due to unsafe building work. The company was successfully prosecuted and the client was compensated.
- We managed to stop client B's eviction and helped the client to negotiate repayment terms for their debts.
- Several of our clients came to us for help providing financial evidence to the Department of Work and Pensions, subsequently they were awarded large back payments of Employment and Support Allowance for which they had been underpaid.
- Client C was struggling to live on her Universal Credit as there were so many deductions. Our adviser managed to reduce these payments giving the client an extra £100 to live on each month.



Our Achievements 2018-19

- During the year we helped the people of West Berkshire to be £402,000 better off
- We helped 2,299 clients with 11,359 issues which meant that we had just over 9,500 contacts with and on behalf of clients
- Launched Adviceline in October which enhances our telephone advice service and is available 5 days a week
- We set up our Universal Credit Help to Claim Service ready for launch on 1 April 2019
- Following a successful 3 year audit of our advice services we retained the Advice Quality Standard for general advice and the higher level Advice Quality Standard for debt advice with casework
- We held a 'speed dating' style networking day with 10 local organisations, to keep our advisers and staff up to date on what other help is out there for our clients
- Our team of volunteers gave more than 10,000 hours which are conservatively valued at over £250,000
- Our Research and Campaigns team contributed to the national Citizens Advice evidence-based lobbying campaign which secured major changes to Universal Credit
- We attended a recruitment fair run by the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire and managed to recruit a volunteer trustee and volunteer trainee adviser



Research & Campaigns

Citizens Advice is best known as an advice charity. However, its twin aim is to conduct research and campaigns to tackle the root cause of the issues that bring clients to us in the first place. The strength of CAWB's Research and Campaigns work was recognised by our external auditors who awarded it full marks with a score of five out of a possible five.

Letting Agents Fees

CAWB participated in a successful campaign to end the unreasonable and unfair fees charged by letting agents to tenants of privately rented properties. From 1st June 2019, The Tenants Fees Act will ensure that new tenants will benefit from a cap on rental deposits of five weeks rent and a ban on fees for viewing a property, reference fees, check-out fees and third party fees.

Universal Credit

Our office contributed to the national Citizens Advice evidence-based lobbying campaign which secured major changes to Universal Credit including:

- Removal of the initial 7 waiting days
- Additional non-repayable 2-week housing payment
- A £1.5bn support package for Universal Credit

At local level, we have seen improved partnership working with West Berkshire Council and the local and regional Job Centre Plus over the operation of Full Service Universal Credit.

Scams Awareness

West Berkshire Council Trading Standards Service Public Protection Partnership (PPP) funded our 2018 scams awareness campaign work through its Community Fund. This enabled us to organise a wide range of public events and campaign actions with a focus on reaching rural communities. We held a successful event in Hungerford library and toured remote villages with the Mobile Library. At the Thatcham Family Fun Day we ran a stall with the PPP where the campaign theme of "Don't Miss a Trick" was reinforced by the professional magician Mr Muddle, who performed for free to promote scams awareness.



We're here to give you the knowledge and confidence you need to find your way forward. Whoever you are, and whatever the problem.

For current opening hours and information: www.citizensadvicewestberkshire.org.uk

or contact our telephone helpline: 0300 222 5941

Carers Advice Service: 01635 516609

Outreach Appointment Line: 01635 516605

Help to Claim, Universal Credit helpline: 0800 144 8 444

follow us on Twitter @WestBerksCAB

citizensadvice.org.uk

We are a local independent charity and rely on donations from individuals and organisations to continue helping the residents of West Berkshire. If you want to support our work please see: www.citizensadvicewestberkshire.org.uk or send a cheque to the address below:

Citizens Advice West Berkshire is an operating name of West Berkshire Citizens Advice Bureau, which is a Charity and Limited Company registered in England and Wales. Registered Office: 2nd Floor, Broadway House, 4-8 The Broadway, Northbrook Street, Newbury RG14 1BA. Registered Charity No 1115036, Registered Company No 05821486 www.citizensadvicewestberkshire.org.uk Authorised and regulated by the FCA, FRN: 617791

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