



ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

THE TWIN AIMS of the Citizens Advice Bureau service are –

- **To provide the advice people need for the problems they face**
- **To improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives**

The Citizens Advice service provides free, confidential and impartial advice to everybody regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

There are over 300 Citizens Advice offices across England, Wales and Northern Ireland delivering advice from over 2,000 outlets and dealing with around six million problems every year. Each Bureau is an independently registered charity responsible for its own governance and fundraising but in order to be recognised as a CA it has to meet the stringent quality standards set by the national association, Citizens Advice.

Citizens Advice Eastbourne helps many thousands of people per annum, dealing with a wide range of matters including debt problems, benefits issues, employment, consumer, housing, immigration, and relationship breakdown.

Citizens Advice Eastbourne could not operate without the contribution of the many people who give their time freely in order to help others. Volunteer staff account for around 85% of the Citizens Advice Service. Citizens Advice Eastbourne is fortunate to have the services of around 60 volunteer staff, without whose energy, expertise and commitment the Bureau could not operate.

Many of our clients come from the most excluded and deprived sections of the community for whom the Citizens Advice service is the final safety net in getting the help that they need.

Key Facts

- **CLIENTS:** 3,264
- **TOTAL DEBT MANAGED:** £1,7 million
- **TOTAL CLIENT FINANCIAL GAIN:** £2,677,462
- **ESTIMATED VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING:** £314,864
- **RESEARCH AND CAMPAIGNING** on key social policy issues

Public value	£4,174,504
Benefits to individuals	£4,296,499

For every £1 of funding, we delivered over £30 in benefit to the local community.

Chair of Trustees Introduction

by Peter Barrow

2018/19 was my first full year as Chair of Eastbourne Citizens Advice, and I'm pleased to report that the charity continues in robust health. That is not to say that we don't need continuing help from the community – we do. As a small local charity focused exclusively on the needs of Eastbourne, it is only because of the support we get locally that we are able to provide the service we do.

I should like to thank a number of people and organisations without whom we would not be here. The first is our small, hugely dedicated staff team led by Alan Bruzon; the second is our wonderful volunteers, who deliver the bulk of our service. I should also like to thank my fellow trustees who also give their time for free. We have recently refreshed the trustee board and I look forward to welcoming a number of new trustees to the charity at this year's AGM.

We are lucky to have the continuing support of Eastbourne Borough Council, who fund the bulk of our general advice service. But the council's funding does not cover all our costs, and we are very grateful to Henry Smith Charity who have provided new project funding, and to Sovereign Harbour Rotary who raised over £5,000 for us this year, as well as to our continuing funders.

Ultimately, however, the charity is not about us, it is about the people we help, people for whom we are often the last resort. With your continued support, I hope we will continue to be here for the people of Eastbourne for many years to come.



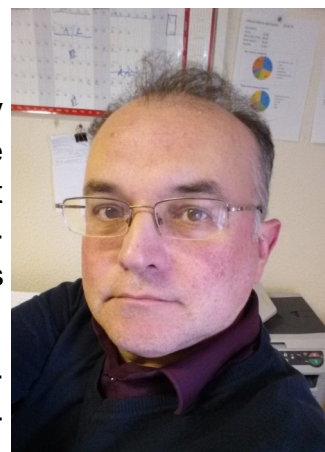
CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT by Alan Bruzon

2018/19 was an interesting year which included the continuation of many themes started previously—Universal Credit developed further with some improvements to the system, like a reduction in the waiting times for first payment and the main helpline becoming a Freephone number. I think Citizens Advice nationally deserve some credit for these changes and this is based on the substantial evidence supplied by the local offices.

Sickness and Disability benefits remained the largest subject area we advised on with a repetition of clients being rejected when they had previously received DLA and had a health problem which is unlikely to improve. This is a national scandal and a subject we regularly return to in our research and campaigns activities.

We have been helping many EU nationals with issues that may affect them including the uncertainty about their rights and applications to the EU Settlement scheme. No doubt, whatever happens, we will continue to advise and support people on these issues.

Our volunteer team remains as strong as ever, with a collection of wonderful, hardworking people from all walks of life. Our small team of 7 paid staff do a wonderful job which goes well beyond their numbers. I'm pleased we have been able to recruit new Trustees also and, even though we went through the usual uncertainty about funding during the past year, I'm writing this at a time when things feel more certain and stable and will hopefully be so for the year to come. Thanks to everyone who helps us to provide this essential service for Eastbourne.



The General Advice Service

The General Advice Service is overseen by a team of 4 paid staff Jodi Truss, John Mayes, Anne Richardson and Jenny Wood. The team provide the management; supervision and training for the volunteers to ensure the core service continues to operate.

Our dedicated team of volunteer Advisers, Gateway Assessors, Receptionists and Administrators ensure we are able to provide our core general advice service. Alongside this, our hardworking team of Research & Campaigns (R&C) volunteers work hard to highlight the unfair practices and policies affecting our clients. We are delighted to have welcomed a number of new volunteers, who have successfully completed their training. Over the year we had 23 Advisers (including trainees); 17 Gateway Assessors (including trainees); 7 Receptionists, 3 R&C Workers; 3 Administrators and 1 Form Filler.

All Gateway Assessors and Advisers commit to a minimum of two advice sessions a week, although some do more. Our Administrators and Receptionists all give a minimum of half a day a week.

Initial contact for clients continues to be primarily through the East Sussex telephone Adviceline service. Clients can talk to trained Assessors who are able to give a lot of information and assistance over the phone, and in many cases answer the clients query immediately. For more complex matters we are able to refer the client on to their local office or to an Adviser for a call back or face to face appointment. This system, has worked especially well for clients who need help when their local office is closed or short of volunteers on a particular day.

Demand for our service remains high. Whilst much of our resources are focussed on our telephone service, we still see clients for face to face assessments as well as giving lots of information and assistance in our Reception area when clients drop in. This is particularly needed for clients who would struggle to telephone or have urgent matters

Email access (via our website) is also another very useful and flexible means of contact for clients. Clients can make contact any time of the day and we will respond within 2 to 3 working days with the information they require or with the offer of an Adviser callback/appointment as appropriate.

We were pleased to see that our annual client satisfaction survey for 2018 showed a 1% increase in overall satisfaction from the previous year, with 96% of clients happy with our service.

Each year, we survey 200 clients, 100 by telephone and 100 during face to face appointments. The results for 2018, breakdown as follows:

- 96% of clients were satisfied overall.
- 92% were happy with accessing our service.
- 95% were happy with the advice they received.
- 98% were happy with our service.
- 98% would use our service again.
- 99% would recommend Citizens Advice Eastbourne to others.



Welfare benefits remained our highest enquiry area, accounting for 37% of our enquiries, compared to 33% in the previous year. 12% of this is enquiries about Universal Credit and this figure is slowly increasing. The largest category of benefits enquiries is about sickness and disability benefits (Personal Independence Payment and Employment and Support Allowance). Many of the benefit enquiries we are dealing with are complicated and have an impact on other areas of the client's life, such as creating debt, housing problems (rent arrears and threatened eviction), strain on relationships etc. Ensuring clients get the benefits they are entitled to can make a huge difference to their lives.

Debt remained our second highest enquiry area, representing 15% of all enquires dealt with. All Advisers are trained in giving debt advice and in enabling clients to negotiate direct with creditors. It is essential that people get good, free debt advice as early as possible and many of these cases are referred to our in-house specialist adviser.

We have also seen an increase in enquiries from EU nationals as uncertainty continues and people face difficulties with employment and benefits.

Training

Another year has gone by and our volunteers have again attended Training sessions to improve their skills and to be kept informed of changes to legislation that affects their advice work, which have either presented by in house trainers or from outside organisations.

We have focused on the issues that affect our clients on a day to day basis and have kept in touch with the DWP on changes that to make applications for Universal Credit. We have been fortunate to have had speakers from Brighton Housing Trust regarding Managing Difficult and Aggressive Situations with useful information that can be used if those situations occur.

We also had a visit from one of the Local Solicitors who specialise in Family Law giving an insight into how they work and the Court process involved. In House speakers have covered the subjects of How to Assist Clients when they are facing a Benefit Appeal and How to Apply for Settled Status which is a requirement for people to remain in the country after Brexit.

All volunteers completed the three part training provided by Citizens Advice to cover How to Apply for Settled Status. All volunteers again achieved certification in GDPR, using Citizens Advice Learn account using E-learning (and a quiz) on this very important way in which we plan and conduct our work with clients. Thank you to Alan Bruzon, the Bureau Manager who has presented many of the in house Training sessions and spent valuable time in conveying complex information. Thank you once again to all of our volunteers, without you and the time that you give, we would not be able to function at the level we do.

Quality

Measuring the quality of advice is important to an organisation, as it reflects the hard work conducted by our volunteers and the commitment they have shown throughout the year. We have continued to maintain the standards achieved last year and we are always striving to improve on what we do and learnt from comments raised from the Audit team.

Throughout the year we have consistently maintained both the KPI's for Quality & Administration at a high level and have achieved results that we all can be proud of. We look forward to achieving similar results going forward, learning where we can improve and helping each other where we can. Thank you all for helping Eastbourne Citizens Advice achieve such wonderful results

FUNDING

Citizens Advice Eastbourne receives its funding from a variety of sources, although the demand for our services is such that we are constantly struggling to secure the resources we need to help the people who need us. We are especially grateful for the support of Eastbourne Borough Council and without the core funding that the Council provides we would not exist.

Our total funding for 2018-19 was made up roughly as follows (please refer to our audited accounts for the detailed figures)

Eastbourne Borough Council	115,000
Office sublet to BHT	10,000
Sussex Community Foundation	5,000
Universal Credit Personal Budgeting Support	12,609
Universal Credit Assisted Digital Support	12,609
Citizens Advice East Sussex	9,154
Welfare Reform Project (ESCC + CCG)	71,707

We are grateful for the help that we receive from individuals by way of donations. Many of our clients give money to the Bureau following a visit to us. Unfortunately, some of the people who are most generous are those least able to afford it and we avoid making our clients feel obliged to contribute. We could not operate without the support and generosity of those who are in a position to contribute however, and all such donations are warmly and gratefully accepted.

Annual Statistics 2018-19

Clients	3,264	
Enquiries		
Benefits & tax credits	2,775	25%
Benefits Universal Credit	1,318	12%
Consumer goods & services	373	3%
Debt	1,678	15%
Discrimination	76	1%
Education	43	0%
Employment	979	9%
Financial services & capability	108	1%
Health & community care	153	1%
Housing	1,165	10%
Immigration & asylum	243	2%
Legal	472	4%
Other	817	7%
Relationships & family	675	6%
Tax	85	1%
Travel & transport	134	1%
Utilities & communications	127	1%
Grand Total	11,221	

Thanks & Outcomes from Clients

"I just wanted to say a huge Thank You for all your help, understanding and being so totally amazing. Thanks for going that extra mile to understand and make sense of it all. You're a star."

"Thank you so much for all your help with my application form. I received all the money." (Client helped with Carers Allowance – awarded £62.70p/w).

"Thank you for all your help and assistance. Please accept my gratitude."

"I was successful at the Tribunal and wanted to say thank you so much for all your help. The PIP payment will mean that I am able to afford to pay for a reasonable amount of hours [for Personal Assistant]. Thank you again, so much!"

"Many thanks indeed for all your advice. It ended up in a happy solution!" (Consumer problem resulted in £1,700 refund).

"Thank you so much for all your help regarding my severe disability premium... good news my previously withheld money has now been released.... An excellent result!" (£1,000 back payment to client).

"I just wanted to say a huge Thank you with all your help with my PIP form... I'm very lucky to now have enhanced living and still have enhanced mobility. It was a huge stress for me but your help invaluable." (Client awarded £658.80 backdated; and £1,427 p/a).

"I would like to thank everyone who helped me sort out for me a very complicated problem with PIP, ESA, also East Sussex County Council. With many many thanks."

"I can't thank you both enough for all the time you both spent helping me sort out my problem with (name of shop). They have paid £310 back....Thank you both again. I've never used the CAB before but can't praise you both enough"

"Thank you for your thoughtfulness, your generosity and support, during this difficult time. It is greatly appreciated".

"I'd like to say a massive 'Thank you' to everyone at the CAB who is helping me. I couldn't do it without you and I'm so very grateful"

"Just to let you know and thank you I got my PIP on the third attempt. You have all been lovely to me and I want to give a big thank you to you all"

"Thank you very much indeed for all your kind help and interjection with the DWP whilst I was in your office. Thank you Citizens Advice and you in particular for all your time regarding my long, long outstanding case".

"Thank you for all your help and support regarding the problems that I have had"....(£20 donation received).

"Last month I got my Universal Credit increased by £380 per month as they have agreed I am not fit to work. I'd like to thank everyone at CAB for the help I've received".

"Thank you & CA for your very great help in that minefield of forms".

"Thank you for all you have done. I could not have got through this without you. Once again, many thanks".

"Just to say a big Thank you, you all matter"

MONEY ADVICE

During 2018-19 this service has been part of the Benefits and Debt Advice project funded by Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford CCG. The service has provided support for people with long term mental and/or physical health conditions. Since April 2019 the project has been funded by Henry Smith.

During the year Trish advised 207 clients with a total of £1,799,501 worth of debts. She was able to request debts be written off to the amount of £604,152 of which £318,705 was through Debt Relief Orders. She also helped 9 clients with benefit related issues which led to income gains of £15,569.

The types of debt have remained similar to previous years with more clients being affected by the move from ESA to Universal Credit. After having received housing benefit as a separate amount, some people find it confusing to deal with this all combined into one payment. Vulnerable people are often at risk of rent arrears which could lead to eviction unless advice is received at the earliest opportunity. We continue to work closely with other agencies such as the Foodbank, Social Services, the MPs office, BHT and others.



ESCC WELFARE BENEFITS

This project is part of the Benefits Advice project funded by Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford CCG. During 2018-19 Honey van Reeuwijk was the main caseworker prior to starting new maternity leave from April 2019.



Honey helped 293 clients by providing advice on more complex benefits problems including appealing against decisions on Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Confirmed outcomes during the year amounted to £380,639 for 62 clients, mostly appeals for PIP and ESA. Advice covers make applications, challenging decisions and helping them prepare for an appeal hearing by gathering evidence, usually from medical professionals and writing a submission for the client to take to the appeal hearing.

Honey started maternity leave at the beginning of April 2019 and the project has been staffed by Julie El Roubi and Tracy Nuttall. We received an increase to the funding from the CCG which enabled us to offer more specialist advice to more people.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT—HELP TO CLAIM

During 2018-19 we received some funding from the DWP via Eastbourne Borough Council to help people to make Universal Credit applications and to deal with related issues such as low levels of computer skills or budgeting advice. At the beginning of the year we employed Lorraine Blackwell in this role and she worked at the local Jobcentre Plus office which is just a few hundred yards down the road from our main office. Lorraine was able to help many clients complete the online application process for Universal credit which can prove difficult for some people. Lorraine started a new job with BHT.



From January 2019 the project has been delivered by Rachel Sesu, who had previously been a gateway assessor at Lewes CAB. Rachel came to the job with experience and enthusiasm and was able to continue the advice sessions we deliver at the Jobcentre and also at the Bureau during the afternoons. From April 2019 the project has switched to become Universal Credit Help to Claim which is a national project provided through Citizens Advice and funded by the DWP.

Research and Campaigns

The Research and Campaigns team consisted of Geoff Ferguson, Sarah Rose and Karen Costello-Mcfeet lead by Alan Bruzon and Trustee, Ros Bedford. 194 evidence forms were completed during the year. This is lower than in previous years and is in line with Citizens Advice policy which changed around the introduction of Casebook, to focus on quality of evidence forms more than on quantity.

All advisers, gateway assessors and caseworkers identify examples of cases where there has been unfair practice or the rules around a situation seem unfair and limit people's rights. Such situations are likely to have an adverse affect on anyone else in a similar situation unless things change. That is why we campaign to improve the policies which affect people's lives.

Sickness and Disability Benefits

This has remained the largest enquiry subject for 4 years now and we teamed up with the 4 other CAs in East Sussex to produce a report on what we had gathered. The report entitled "It's just not fair" is available to download from our website and has been shared with local media and MPs.

We have also looked into the availability of recording devices for PIP and ESA assessments which we think would lead to an improvement in the quality of assessments and lead to a more successful outcome for the claimant. After a Freedom of Information Request we conclude that access to recording equipment remains patchy at best.

It's Just Not Fair

A report by the Citizens Advice services of East Sussex on the experiences of their clients claiming Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA)



Standards of Temporary Accommodation—Award

We received an award at Citizens Advice Annual conference for Best Campaign. This was for our work in developing a Charter for the Standard of Temporary Accommodation which was agreed with Eastbourne Borough Council. This was the first such agreement in the country which sets out a minimum standard for temporary accommodation and this followed numerous reports from people who had endures unpleasant conditions including, bugs and infestation, noise, damp, intimidation and drug and alcohol use on the premises. The standard of temporary housing has improved considerably and we continue to build on this work through the Temporary Accommodation Action Group with Fulfilling Lives (part of BHT).



Homelessness in Eastbourne

We took on a major piece of work in 2018 with the help of several extra volunteers who helped interview the numerous organisations who provide help to homeless people across the town. We were seeing an increase in the number of people at risk of homelessness coming for advice and the number of street homeless were becoming a noticeable sight in the centre of Eastbourne. Homelessness is a complex subject and it was important to shed some light on the matter to clarify the various factors which affect people and push them towards losing their home. Since the report was produced Eastbourne Borough Council have started a new initiative with Hastings to provide extra temporary accommodation for people and we continue to monitor what clients tell us



Staff List as at 1st September 2019

Bureau Manager

Alan Bruzon

Office Manager

Jodi Truss

Quality & Training Manager

John Mayes

Gateway Trainer

Anne Richardson

Casechecker

Jenny Wood

Money Advice Caseworker

Trish Elder

Welfare Benefits Adviser

Honey Fulbrook

Administrators

Judy Grant Marshall

Kathy Jenkins

Danielle Keegan

Advisers

Alan Bluemel

John Cheshire

Sue Cook

Clive Darracot

Mary Ireland

Malcolm Wing

Bridget Ward

Ingrid McKeown

Mike Carroll

Mary McWilliams

Kathy Lee

Jayne Murphy

Marilyn Newman

Lindsey Pritchard

Ash-Kara Seal

Ann Sterenberg

Peter Wilkinson

Nicoleta Uzorka Ion

Form Filler

Gladys Attwater

Gateway Assessors

Jenny Murphy

Sally Unsworth

Ian Andrews

Bridget Ward

Neil Lefebour

Jordan Surridge

Anne Etchells

Marie-Louise Connelly

Alison Landsman

Jenny Murphy

Sally Unsworth

Jordan Surridge

Paul Humphreys

Ruth Hodges

Tanya Vince

Receptionists

Trudy Hill

Jean Booth

Eileen Piggott

Jackie Claridge

Angela Humphries

Jackie Turner

Jan Munton

Brenda Jones

Mandy Birch

Research and Campaigns

Karen Costello-McFeat

Geoff Ferguson

Sarah Rose

Trustees

Michael Frayne

David Turner

Steven Holt

Ros Bedford

Peter Barrow

Information Assurance

Citizens Advice Eastbourne has adopted the recommended Citizens Advice Information Assurance policy.

We adhere to the following codes of practice:

- We abide by the law including the GDPR 2018 when handling personal information.
- We ensure that if your information is shared with another organisation, this is only done with your permission.
- We follow the Information Commissioner's Office's 'Data Sharing Code of Practice' when we share information to ensure the other organisation treats your information with the same level of care as Citizens Advice.
- Citizens Advice does not sell personal information about our clients, staff or volunteers to commercial organisations.
- We provide training to staff who handle personal information and respond appropriately if personal information is not used or protected properly.

80 years of Citizens Advice



Giving Advice during the war



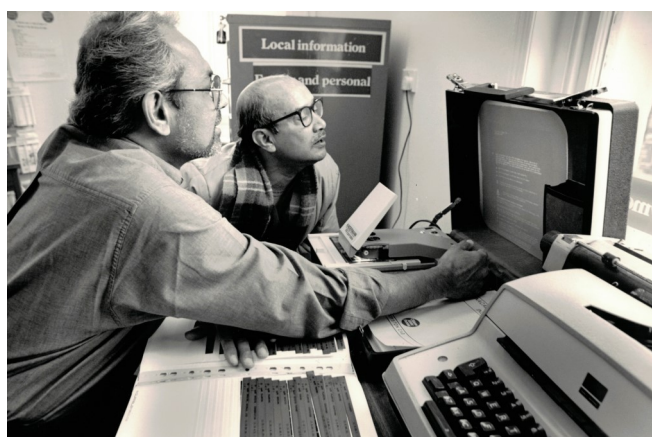
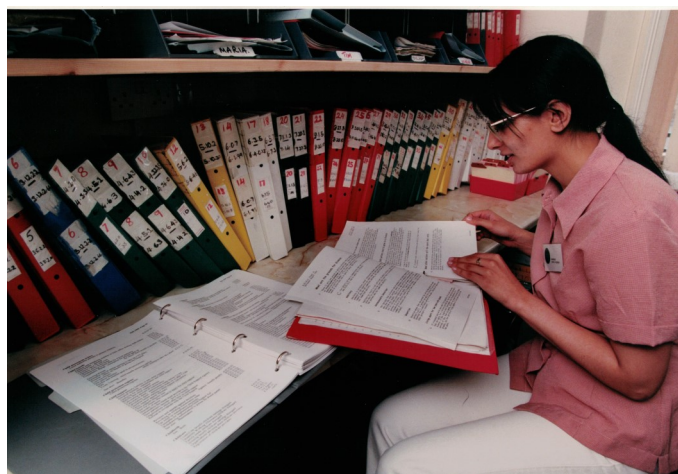
Advice Appointment in the 1950s



Advice in the 1960s



Citizens Advice Waiting room in the 1970s



Information Sources – 1970s, 80s, 90s

For
everyone,
for 80
years



Citizens Advice Eastbourne

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www.moneymakesense.co.uk

Charity registration No 1086163 Company registration No 4171801



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