

Leamington Town Council

Citizens Advice South Warwickshire

2021-2022



A report for Leamington Spa Councillors

1. Our advice services during 2021-2022

There is no doubt that this past 12 months - and the 12 months in front of us - present our services with some of the most challenging conditions we have experienced in decades. The concept of 'warm rooms' and of course food banks are now common parlance, and we are integral to the network of support for those most affected by the current crisis.

Citizens Advice South Warwickshire is here, doing the best we can across both our offices and notably here in Leamington, and this report aims to capture some key messages for you all.

Our services reopened face to face one day a week in Leamington back in April 2022. We have lots of people who want to volunteer with us, and we are putting them through our comprehensive training package as quickly as we can, so we have more people to answer the telephone, and to see clients in our community outreach.

The model we are working to is that people telephone or complete a webform, and our advisors either help them in the moment, or set up an appointment for them to be seen at a venue near them, or at the Leamington and Stratford office. We do not have ideal spaces for seeing clients at Hamilton Terrace however, and we are mindful of the residual risks of Covid; if someone gets ill then there is a strong chance that many of the staff and volunteers who came in that day could be affected, so we try where we can to keep the numbers in the building down, whilst using the space the best we can.

Our Impact data for 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022 shows that we supported more than 3,000 clients with a range of advice needs including welfare benefit and debt advice, as well as specific support with Universal Credit and Housing related issues.

The dashboard below gives key statistics of our activity across south Warwickshire throughout 2021-22. As you can see our work resulted in **income gained for more than 3,000 people exceeding £2m and more than £367,000 debts written off.**

Key Statistics

01/04/2021 31/03/2022



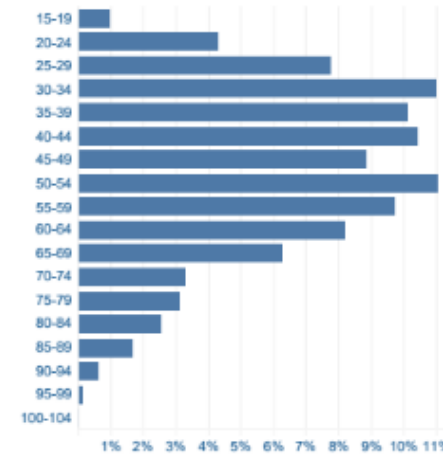
Summary

Clients	3,016
Quick client contacts	
Issues	18,972
Activities	24,267
Cases	3,419
Outcomes	
Income gain	£2,052,388
Re-imbursements, services, loans	£28,347
Debts written off	£367,018
Repayments rescheduled	£71,852
Not recorded/not applicable	£205,516

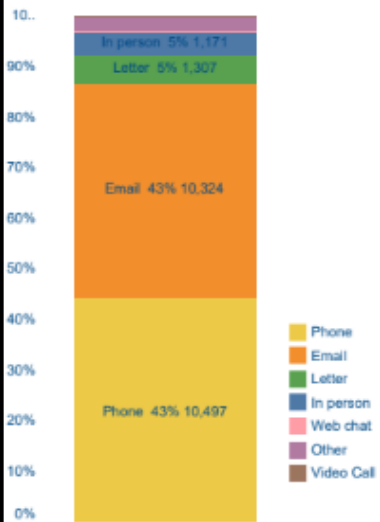
Issues

	Issues all	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	4,493	1,201
Benefits Universal Credit	2,015	681
Consumer goods & services	284	133
Debt	4,907	757
Education	90	52
Employment	627	231
Financial services & capability	958	426
GVA & Hate Crime	77	48
Health & community care	465	212
Housing	1,734	677
Immigration & asylum	182	69
Legal	570	277
Other	1,014	530
Relationships & family	685	291
Tax	115	90
Travel & transport	135	94
Utilities & communications	621	282
Grand Total	18,972	

Age



Channel



Top benefit issues



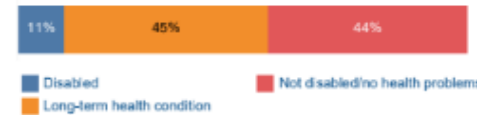
Gender



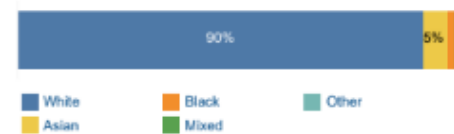
Top debt issues



Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity



We have seen slightly fewer clients than the year before - but we are seeing clients presenting with **far more complex issues**, which take more adviser time. We are still volunteer lead, although we have one paid Telephone Advisor, and we are planning to augment this with two more in early 2023.

How to contact us - on our website and door at Hamilton Terrace we indicate how people can reach us:

There are several ways to contact us to get advice

Call us to speak directly to an adviser.

From 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday call 0800 144 8848;

On Mondays 5.00pm-7.00pm call 0800 995 6047 (Warwickshire Out of Hours Service).

Complete our online form that is available on our website on our Contact Us page

Visit one of our triage sessions where you will have a brief meeting to outline your question, after which we will arrange for you to be phoned or offered a face-to-face appointment as appropriate.

Our Stratford office is open Mondays 10 am to 12 noon.

Our Leamington office is open on Tuesday 10 am to 12 noon.

We also offer advice in various community venues throughout South Warwickshire. Please visit our 'Community Advice' page on our website for more details

In addition we offer advice delivered at community settings including children's centres around Leamington:

2. Current Community Advice locations:

Alcester
Kenilworth
Kingsway Children and Family Centre
Lighthorne Heath Children and Family Centre
Lillington Children and Family Centre
Lillington Community Pantry
Shire Hall – Warwick
Studley
Sydni Centre– Sydenham
Wellesbourne

3. Spotlight on:



Community Supermarket at Lillington

This has been a really exciting development. Warwickshire County Council commissioned *Feed the Hungry* to undertake a proof-of concept project around community pantries in March 2022, which meet the needs of rural and urban communities. The pantries help people move beyond immediate food crises in an empowering and community-led way. The pantries provide access to food based on a membership fee (£5 per visit). This provides a dignified shopping experience of quality food for people who live in crisis, backed up by a ‘wrap-around’ family support offer by Citizens Advice and Family Information Service.

Lillington was chosen as a static site as the Pound Lane Learning Centre was available, part of the area is in the 10% most deprived areas in England and local residents are struggling with the cost of living.

Since opening, the membership has been steadily increasing with many members returning each week. Referrals out to Citizens Advice Bureau South Warwickshire (CASW) are steadily increasing as relationships are built with the members.

Services Provided

Access to advice and support in the following areas

Welfare and Benefits

Income Maximisation

Debt

Supported Training (e.g Budgeting)

The Community Pantry Team



CASW caseworkers have been available at the Community Pantry since its first day of opening mid-March 2022. We are there every Thursday and Friday from before the doors open till after they close.

Paul Carter was the initial adviser every Thursday and Friday and Spencer Colquitt joined our Pantry service in May, working there every other Friday.

Paul and Spencer work closely with the staff at the Pantry.

“They are very good at identifying clients who they think we might be able to help with, and they will bring them straight over to see us if we are free. The advice sessions were initially run as a ‘drop-in’ service, but as the Pantry evolved its customer base it became increasingly busy. To try to ensure we see everyone who needs our help we introduced a shared on-line booking system in July, which has been a great success. The Pantry staff can make appointments for the following

week(s) with clients while they are there or on the phone. CASW caseworkers Paul and Spencer also have access to the appointments diary so are able book clients appointments for follow-up actions. We also see drop-ins between appointments when we are free, and Pantry staff regularly pick our brains about where to signpost clients for help with various matters.

Until June, we used one of the classrooms in the adjoining Adult Learning Centre to meet our clients. In June, WCC installed advice 'pods' - these are small, self-contained units with power and ventilation. They seat 4 people and the doors can be closed for conversation and privacy. They are perfect for giving advice on sensitive subjects within a busy environment,

We get a real cross section of queries, with a mix of benefits, housing, relationship and immigration queries, together with grant applications, foodbank vouchers and fuel bank vouchers."

Client profiles

Client profiles Apr-Sep				Ethnicity						Did Not Attend
Female	51	Disabled	15	White British	31	BAME	6	Other	14	4
Male	22	Disabled	5	White British	15	BAME	4	Other	3	2
Totals	73	Disabled	20	White British	46	BAME	10	Other	17	6
Female %	70%	Disabled	21%	White British	42%	BAME	8%	Other	19%	5%
Male %	30%	Disabled	7%	White British	21%	BAME	5%	Other	4%	3%

Top 4 Issues

Benefits	52	43%
Charity	14	11%
Health	12	10%
Housing	10	8%
Total Issues	122	

Financial Outcomes at the Community Pantry over 2 Quarters

Debt?	Debt write-off	Finance Gains	Total Gain
£23,529	£11,812	£101,534	£113,346

4. Our work in Leamington Spa

The grant of £20,000 from Leamington Town Council has enabled us to maintain the lease on our office in Leamington Spa - Hamilton Terrace, close to the Town Council offices for a further year, and this remains a key focus for people who come to us for advice. A lot of work was carried out at the start of the year to clear the offices out and make it cleaner and safer for staff volunteers and of course our clients. It has its limitations in terms of suitable interview rooms, but with the availability of external community venues, the Hamilton Terrace office is a hub for staff delivering debt advice and for training our volunteers, and we value the monies from Leamington Town Council which make this possible.

The dashboard below helps to demonstrate our value to the town over 2021-22.

As you can see **income gained for over 600 people in the town exceeds £390,000 thanks to our work.**

Key Statistics

01/04/2021 31/03/2022



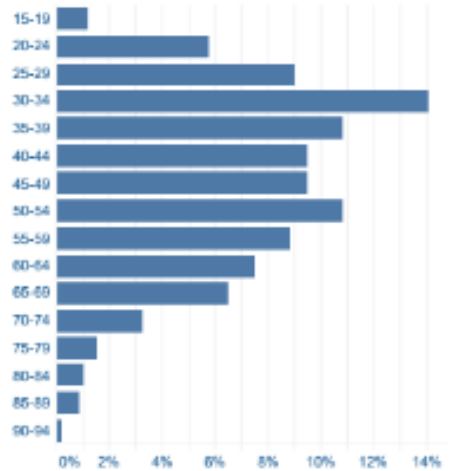
Summary

Clients	606
Quick client contacts	
Issues	4,211
Activities	4,827
Cases	700
Outcomes	
Income gain	£393,970
Re-imbursments, services, loans	£4,370
Debts written off	£42,818
Repayments rescheduled	£44,210
Not recorded/not applicable	£23,035

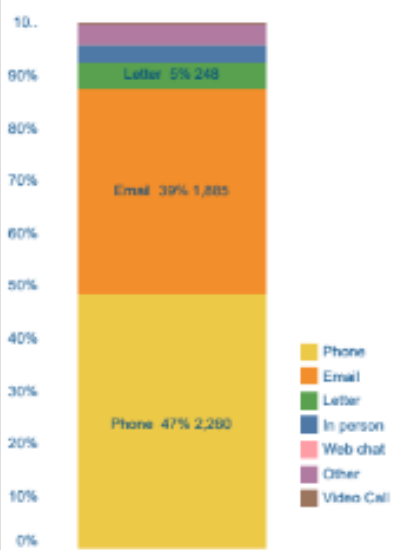
Issues

	Issues all	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	964	234
Benefits Universal Credit	444	158
Consumer goods & services	99	37
Debt	1,288	161
Education	14	11
Employment	196	53
Financial services & capability	115	67
GVA & Hate Crime	29	15
Health & community care	86	35
Housing	335	130
Immigration & asylum	68	27
Legal	138	61
Other	113	70
Relationships & family	162	59
Tax	26	20
Travel & transport	26	19
Utilities & communications	108	54
Grand Total	4,211	

Age



Channel



Top benefit issues



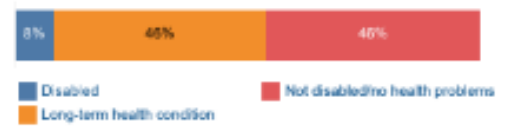
Top debt issues



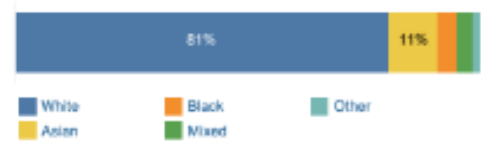
Gender



Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity



We have continued to support clients with a range of services including, where appropriate, home visits in a Covid-secure way. Overall across south Warwickshire, around 20% of clients coming to us via our funded projects receive a home visit from a skilled advisor who can help them move their issues forward.

5. Keeping you up to date

We promote our service at events, numerous partner organisations, local media and through the current focus on cost of living meetings across the County (20 events attended since May 2022). We are working very closely with partner Citizens Advice offices (BRANCAB and North Warks) and have collaborated on the recent successful Orbit Specialist Benefits Advice service, which supports Orbit tenants across the area. Where we can, we are sharing costs of key staff such as our Operations Manager, who has joined from BRANCAB on secondment until March 2023. Additionally we produced the Citizens Advice in Warwickshire e-newsletter together, which collated a great deal of information on the current cost of living and energy crisis for our stakeholders.

Like many organisations we have seen a high staff turnover this year, and we are thinking carefully about which roles we replace, and how we can do things more effectively - and for lower cost. We have seen challenges with recruitment but have recently welcomed a new Volunteer Coordinator to the management team, who will focus on delivering a cohesive and first rate volunteer experience for the wonderful volunteers we recruit and train.

Our AGM will be held at Warwick Courthouse on Thursday 17th November from 10.30am. If you wish to join us please drop me a line directly. The event will be filmed and available on our website if you are unable to join us in person. Dame Clare Moriarty CEO of National Citizens Advice will be our Guest Speaker.

Thank you for your continued support

Julie Robinson - Chief officer of Citizens Advice South Warwickshire





Free, confidential advice. Whoever you are.

We help people overcome their problems and campaign on big issues when their voices need to be heard. We value diversity, champion equality, and challenge discrimination and harassment. We're here for everyone.

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