

Annual Review 2019-20

Remembering 80 years of
helping the people of Aldershot &
Farnborough find their way from
1940 to 2020

For
everyone,
for 80
years

**citizens
advice**

Rushmoor



23rd March 1922 Charter signed by George V made Aldershot a Municipal Borough.



September 1939 war was declared.

The day after World War II begins, Citizens Advice open in 200 locations to help people with the impact.



September 1940 Aldershot - "Home of the British Army" became the first bureau to open in Hampshire.

Advisers dealt with rationing, displacement and overcrowding issues, and helped people to locate missing relatives.





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What a year it's been – in particular the last seven months. One week after being elected Chair the country went into lockdown and the period since has been totally unprecedented.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant changes to ways of working with a move to remote working, supported by digital and video technology. The speed and effectiveness of the change has ensured continuity of service, and demonstrated significant capabilities in the team – not least engaging with and supporting the wellbeing of remote workers.

Sustainability of our service, maintaining our funding levels and continuing to support our clients, particularly those who may be vulnerable or facing digital exclusion has never been more important in these challenging times.

We are all living in a rapidly changing world and the support we provide will be critical to our current and potential clients – we are here for everyone.

Andrew Levey
Chair

The wholesale shift of our service delivery away from face to face, has led to a complete reassessment affecting current and future priorities. The learning we have gained from both our own and our clients' ability to adapt, has fundamentally changed our assumptions about how and where we meet clients' needs.

We are working to find new ways of reaching more vulnerable clients, whilst ensuring we are able to respond to the many people with new and emerging needs resulting from the pandemic.

Work with partners is proving vital to being able to continue to deliver on some of our projects, especially in relation to mental health.

The rapid transition to our Nepali Language Adviceline was a tribute to the team, recognising the need for own language support.

The fantastic response from our wider volunteer team - with outstanding technical support - enabled continuous service delivery, where we have been able to answer more calls for help than ever before.

These changes have enabled continued delivery of key services, with a careful resumption of limited face to face work enabling more vulnerable clients to get the help they need. We are proud to be part of the wider voluntary sector response, reflecting our key role in the community.



1941 - Citizens Advice influence the rationing policy to secure extra clothing coupons for pregnant women



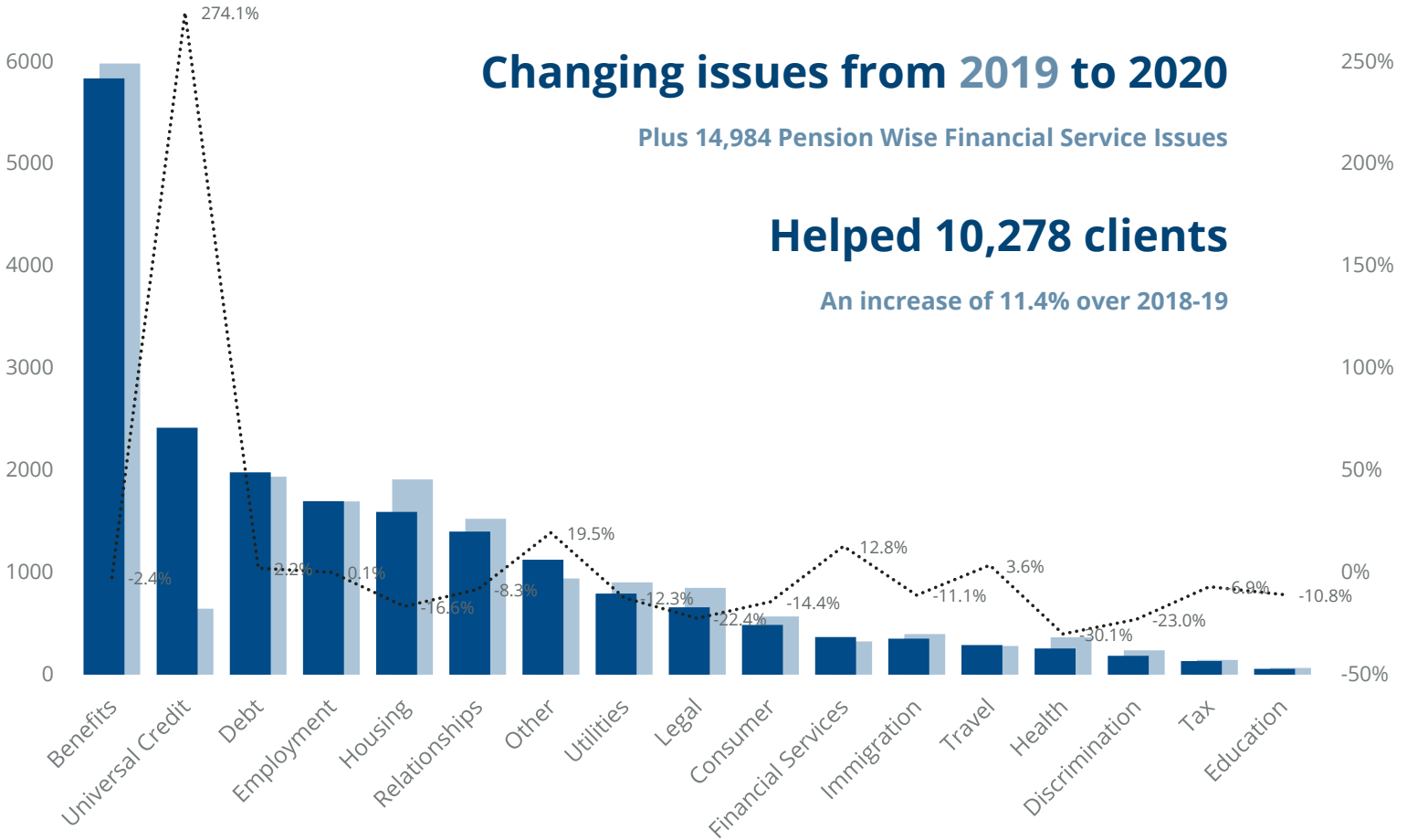
1942 - The Beveridge Report is published laying the foundations for the NHS and Welfare state

Changing issues from 2019 to 2020

Plus 14,984 Pension Wise Financial Service Issues

Helped 10,278 clients

An increase of 11.4% over 2018-19



Since March 2020 there has been a clear match between new announcements and the issues people are seeking help with from Citizens Advice. Words such as “furlough” represent a completely new set of rules, vocabulary and guidance for everyone to learn. For many, claiming welfare benefits is a totally unfamiliar experience, requiring a rapid introduction to the system’s peculiarities and pitfalls.

For many we have been, and continue to be, a lifeline in a sea of unknown terminology and regulations. Alongside this, we have seen a major disruption to our “traditional” clients and enquiry areas: for the first time, Employment issues are almost double our debt issues, reflecting the insecurity and anxiety for people.

Anticipation of changes, combined with last minute decisions at national level, have created significant dilemmas for people. Our advisers are uniquely placed to guide and clarify, to help achieve the best outcome for individual circumstances. We anticipate future “suppressed demand” once the true impact of the pandemic is felt, and are doing all we can to ensure our team is resilient and able to respond effectively.

Our concern remains for our former client base and the suspension of face-to-face services. The absence of any routine or stability is undoubtedly creating challenges for more vulnerable people, and we shall continue to review all of our data to identify and address needs.



1948 - The Aldershot Lido hosted the modern pentathlon for the Olympic Games & the first Farnborough Air Show took place



1958 - The total number of enquiries reaches over 1 million for the first time

Eli lost his income due to Covid-19; because of the type of self-employment he was in, he was unable to take advantage of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Eli's mum Shirley has Dementia, and when she was discharged from hospital, she couldn't care for herself. Eli then moved in with Shirley to care for her, and found out that she had run up a lot of debt, including rent, council tax and energy bills. Shirley's only income was her State Retirement Pension; she had no savings and was at risk of losing her home.

We helped Eli to apply to manage Shirley's finances; he also became her formal carer, and we helped work out and advise on the right benefits for both of them to claim. This included income they had never heard of before, such as Discretionary Housing Payments. After this, they had enough income to manage the debts and overall household budget – most importantly saving the home. The security and stability has not only ensured practical help, but also helped Shirley's overall health and wellbeing.



1964 - Farnborough Citizens Advice Bureau opened on 19th October 1964. An official presentation was held on Monday May 3rd in the Jubilee Hall.



Working with Citizens Advice Volunteers In “ordinary times” it is a privilege and honour, to work with a group of people who give up their time to deliver a professional advice service for the benefit of their community. Citizens Advice Volunteers are dedicated to helping their clients with a huge range of problems; they give information, advice and support in a range of ways to meet individual client needs. They challenge discrimination and disadvantage.

From outset of the initial Covid 19 Lockdown, they asked one question – how can we continue to help our clients in these unprecedented times? Within days, they worked with the team to find a way to introduce remote working – previously unheard of in the 80-year history of Citizens Advice. In the first two weeks, telephone lines were re-routed, secure IT platforms put in place and volunteers were responding to questions regarding Lockdown, Coronavirus and the new topic of “furlough”. They learned about “Zoom” and came together regularly to support each other. They continued to work with clients facing loss of income, housing and employment issues.

For a Charity born out of the fear and hardship of World War II, Citizens Advice volunteers face the challenge of Covid 19 as “business as usual”.



1972 - The Citizens Advice Service becomes independent



1975 - The total number of enquiries reaches 2.7 million

Our community

For 80 years we have adapted and delivered our services to meet local community needs: this year that has been more important than ever.

Our successful Nepali Adviceline has been a well-used alternative to the drop-in, and we have seen a growing demand for our specialist phone service at The Brain Tumour Charity. We have resumed limited in person appointments for those unable to engage in other ways; and remain committed to re-focusing on outreach services such as PEBL and the Wellbeing Centre in the future.

Our new Secure and Involved Communities project focuses on awareness and reporting of scams, hate and cyber-crime – all increasing concerns during lockdown – presenting to local schools and community groups.

Working closely with a range of local partners, our Innovation Project is working to reach excluded communities; supported by our very active Research and Campaigns team. Identifying the extent of digital exclusion, and trialling ways of overcoming barriers, this work strengthens the whole organisation's overarching commitment to equality diversity and inclusion.

Our "Cost of Living in Rushmoor" report was shared and used widely to help identify and target help where it is most needed. As we work together with others to address the impact of the pandemic on our local community, this work will be invaluable moving forward as we strive to *learn from today and build for tomorrow*.



1985 - The miners' strike leads to a spike of enquiries on benefits, fuel, housing and consumer debts



1988 - Citizens Advice Rushmoor handled over sixteen thousand requests for help, information and advice.

The Trustee Board has seen considerable churn this year, with a new Chair, new Treasurer and five other new trustees joining the Board following the previous Chair, Treasurer and two other longstanding Trustees standing down. We were particularly sad to lose Frank Rust to coronavirus in April.

Notwithstanding that level of churn, the strong results of our Leadership Self-Assessment review, the response to the Covid pandemic and the way that our Trustees have reacted, adapted and delivered in challenging circumstances have demonstrated that the Board has had a very effective year.

This is in no small part thanks to the positive contribution of those former Trustees and to the successful system of Trustees having 'lead role' responsibility for key areas of the service's activities, providing direction and oversight and working effectively with staff members.



1990 - The start of Heathlands Citizens Advice Bureau, set up initially as an outreach service, in response to Community Care needs for patients resettled from acute psychiatric unit and closure of Brookwood Hospital

Trustees

Mark Chatterton (Chair) (to March 2020)

Andrew Levey (from June 2019)
(Chair from March 2020)

Jason Halliday (from January 2020)
(Vice Chair from Sep 2020)

Gerald Baker

Joseph Bennett (from March 2020)

Donna Bone (to April 2020)

Brian Cottrell (Treasurer)
(to December 2019)

Rev Malcolm Cummins

Anne Fillis (to November 2019)

Kay Goodchild (Treasurer) (from January 2020)

Danielle Lopes (from March 2020 to September 2020)

Nadia Martin (from July 2020)

Marybeth Quaintmere

Frank Rust (to April 2020)

Calum Stewart (from November 2019)

Our ASK RE and Nepali Domestic and Sexual Abuse projects enable holistic support to be delivered – starting from early intervention from routine enquiries to practical guidance on benefits, court options, financial abuse and warm handovers to specialist domestic abuse services.

Our Nepali Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate helps overcome the additional language and cultural barriers faced by that community, and reduces isolation – directly supporting over 50 clients in the past year, as well as indirectly helping many others. Our expertise has been accessed by individuals and practitioners locally, as well as support for the Nepali community worldwide.

Through our ASK RE project we identified 85 clients who initially approached us for help with finance or related issues, but as a result of sensitive questioning, disclosed that they had experienced domestic abuse. As a result, we were able to ensure appropriate levels of help for those people, through taking appropriate referral and safeguarding steps.

We are very grateful to the army and Armed Forces Covenant Fund for their ongoing financial support of the Nepali domestic abuse service which has enabled the project to continue and develop.



2000 - Princess Anne visits Aldershot Citizens Advice to officially open its new premises in Princes Gardens, and help volunteers to celebrate its diamond jubilee

Our value to society in 2019-20

In 2019-20, for every £1 invested in Citizens Advice Rushmoor by our local authority we generated at least:

£

£2.65

in fiscal benefits
Savings to government
Reduction in health service demand, local authority homeless services, and out of work benefits

£27.01

in public value
Wider economic and social benefits
Improvements in participation and productivity for clients and volunteers

£10.78

in benefits to individuals
Value to our clients
Income gained through benefits gained, debts written off and consumer problems resolved



2008 - Citizens Advice deluged with debt, benefit and employment issues resulting from the financial crisis



2014 - Citizens Advice telephone service 'Adviceline' takes its millionth call

Our impact in 2019-20



1045 clients gain a new award or an increase to their benefits worth a total of **£7,340,290**, an average of **£6,999** per client in addition to **234** one-off awards totalling **£612,765**



639 clients with debt issues 78% of which were resolved including **£1,672,366** written off, an average of **£12,575** per client with a further **91** clients having **£253,905** of annual payments rescheduled



£229,998 in savings to our local authority purely by preventing homelessness plus **£520,219** total savings to the NHS; savings to the Department for Work and Pensions by keeping people in work equate to **£1,278,953**

We provided consumer advice to **762** clients saving them **£418,103**



Over **100 volunteers** contributing in different roles in different ways in 2019-20 giving their time and expertise to a value of **£700,782**



2016 - The government announces a ban on letting agents' fees in England after years of Citizens Advice campaigns



2019 - Citizens Advice Farnborough collocates to the Civic Offices

We would like to thank:

Who enabled us to deliver:

Rushmoor Borough Council

Our core, volunteer led service available to all Rushmoor residents – drop in, face to face, phone and email

Pension Wise

Pension guidance sessions across Hampshire, Surrey, Berkshire and West Sussex

Surrey Heath and NE Hants and Farnham CCGs

Specialist casework services for clients with severe and enduring mental health conditions, in-patient and CMHRS

Broadhurst Trust

Outreach services and support for clients with mild to moderate mental health conditions

The Brain Tumour Charity

Benefits surgery delivered by telephone to beneficiaries of the charity

Prospect Estate Big Local

Financial inclusion service for residents in PEBL area

Citizens Advice Hampshire

Face to face advice and information as part of wider “health watchdog” service

Ministry of Defence

Providing continuing funding for our Nepali Language domestic abuse service



2020 - Citizens Advice goes into lockdown, homeworking enabled, new services launched, virtual interviews - outcome ...



RUSHMOOR
BOROUGH COUNCIL



We would also like to thank all of the local solicitors who regularly volunteer their time and expertise free of charge to help our clients.

This service is ever more important as legal aid funding has virtually disappeared.

**Free, confidential advice.
Whoever you are.**

**We help people find a way forward with 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.



citizensadvicерushmoor.org.uk

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