

Annual Report 2019



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Overview

This report concentrates, for statistical purposes, on our work during the year April 2018/March 2019. However, it also includes some information on developments since April 2019, along with our plans for the future.

Citizens Advice Fylde has been serving the Fylde community since 1968. At present we operate from our main office in Kirkham between 9am and 4pm Mon-Fri. We take a mixture of appointments, drop-ins and telephone enquiries through our Adviceline system. Our St Annes Outreach at the Town Hall is open on Tuesdays for appointments and on Wednesdays for drop-ins.

Our Aims:

To provide the best possible advice to the citizens of Fylde in order that they can deal with the problems they face.

To train, encourage and enable local people to volunteer to provide advice to fellow citizens.

To enable and assist volunteers currently out of work to acquire skills and gain confidence so that they can return to the workplace.



Staffing



Our core staff during the reporting period were: Kim Cook, Chief Executive Officer and Louise Pope, Operations Manager - along with Natalie Reeves, Session Supervisor/ Advisor (Outreach)/ Volunteer Development/ IDVA.

Kathryn Crameri took over as Chief Executive Officer on 1/8/2018, and Angela McCarthy-Grunwald joined us as Administrator at the same time. Louise Pope left us in September 2018. Angela McCarthy-Grunwald left in October and was replaced in November by Oleg Melehovs. Kathryn Crameri left in February 2019 and was replaced by Natalie Reeves in March and at the same time Robert Egford was employed as Advice Session Supervisor.

Lisa Bolton was employed as full time Advice Service Manager in June 2019, meaning we are once again fully staffed after a very turbulent year.

We have 26 Advice volunteers, including 8 trained Adviceline Assessors, 12 trained Full Advisors and 6 advice volunteers in training. We also have volunteers performing admin duties, computer maintenance and IT upgrades, as well as acting as Trustees.

We are continuing to prioritise the recruitment of volunteers to fully cover Adviceline and to allow staff development to the Full Advisor role if desired. The aim is to have sufficient Full Advisors to increase our outreach work. We have a dedicated member of staff engaged in Volunteer Development. We will also continue to arrange a number of training courses for our paid staff and volunteers using Citizens Advice Training modules and training courses provided through external sources such as Shelter and Lancashire County Council. We will also continue to develop in-house courses and work with other Citizens Advice Offices to provide training specific to our needs. Our Advisors are kept up to date on all subject areas through our Advisernet website, which is constantly maintained and updated by Citizens Advice nationally. We also receive information bulletins provided by Citizens Advice nationally, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Council for Voluntary Services and many other sources.

Citizens Advice Fylde uses the national Performance Quality Framework process to ensure quality of advice, customer satisfaction, and effective leadership. A sample of cases is audited each month. We will continue to be visited 3 yearly for Management/Finance compliance in order to maintain our AQS (Advice Quality Standard) Mark of 'General Help with Casework'. Our last Leadership Self-Assessment in January 2019 resulted in confirmation that we were exceeding the required Citizens Advice standard in all aspects of governance, management and planning.

Each Citizens Advice Office is separately registered with the Financial Conduct Authority. Our Financial Registration Number is **617610**.

Our Advice Service



Adviceline 0300 330 1166



Website <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/fylde/>



Twitter @FyldeCAB



Facebook Citizens Advice Fylde

Since September 2007 we have been open five days a week, 35 hours per week. Our core opening times are Mon- Fri 9am – 4pm.

We have up to eight appointment slots available Tuesday to Thursday. When capacity allows, our drop-in clients can be seen immediately or, if not, a suitable appointment made for them.

We continue to offer appointments as an **outreach service at St Annes Town Hall** every Tuesday, with a drop-in Wednesday mornings. This allows us to cater for clients who prefer a face-to-face consultation but would have difficulties travelling to Kirkham.

Our **Telephone Adviceline Service** has been up and running since the beginning of November 2015 and operates between 10am and 4pm each day. They will be initially be assisted using the Citizens Advice Public Website; If the client requires more in-depth help then an appointment will be made for them at their local Office. We do not currently offer advice by email.

We continue to offer financial advice through our **MoneyPlan** project. This is delivered by a trained Financial Adviser volunteering their services free of charge. He is able to offer a free first interview, giving generic financial advice to our clients according to their specific situation. Appointments are booked through us and the Adviser uses a room in our premises. Should the client require further help we provide a list of financial advisers in the area and at that point they are advised that they are likely to be charged by whomever they choose to contact.

The government-backed **Pensionwise** service is also delivered at our Kirkham office once or twice per month. Clients who are over 50 and have personal or workplace pensions can receive free guidance on their options as they plan for retirement.

We continue to explore ways of increasing our levels of service to the whole of the Fylde. We have updated and simplified our website, enabling the public to find us easily and to access general Citizens Advice information through a link to www.citizensadvice.org.uk. Links are also provided from here to other useful websites. Citizens Advice Fylde has a Facebook page and is on Twitter.

Partnership Working



We are a referral agent for **Fylde Foodbank** who share the lower floor of our building and operate from the Kirkham premises on a Monday and a Friday. This has also allowed us to contribute to **Lancashire County Council's** Crisis Support scheme, through which emergency support (mainly food) can be provided alongside the offer of advice that might improve the client's situation more generally.

We attend the **Fylde Homelessness Action Group** and provide statistics on Debt, Housing and Welfare Benefits to Fylde Council as requested. We work closely with Fylde Housing department, particularly with the housing and homelessness officers. Citizens Advice Fylde remains a Hate Crime Reporting Centre for the Fylde, working closely with Lancashire Police.

We also continue to develop a good community network throughout Fylde which will benefit clients through increased service awareness and referral procedures. We produce a regular newsletter that goes to all members of our Management Committee, all Fylde Borough Councilors and to our partner agencies.

Other Projects



Rosemary – This project began in January 2017 and was initially funded by The Allen Lane Foundation for one year. It involves the specialist training and provision of a Domestic Violence worker for Fylde for one day a week. Natalie Reeves is the project worker; she is qualified as an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA). She supported 27 clients with 80 issues from April 2018 to March 2019, many of whom were at high risk or facing an emergency situation such as the need to find new

accommodation. Natalie also participates in and Chairs the Fylde and Wyre Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

At Home

This project has been funded by **United Utilities** for three years for the provision of a home visiting service for one day a week. The idea is to provide advice to those unable to visit the office or St Annes, while at the same time helping to combat social isolation. Robert Egford is the project worker. From April 2018 to March 2019, Robert made 126 home visits. The health and well-being of clients is greatly enhanced by the work done and it is a service we really hope to be able to continue. Part of the project is also for volunteers to be trained up to continue the work.

ReachIT

From January 2018 until March 2019 were part of the ReachIT project led by the Workers' Educational Association with funding from the Big Lottery/European Social Fund. ReachIT is a digital inclusion project that aims to ensure that no-one in Lancashire is lacking in basic computer skills. Two part-time members of staff were employed to administer the project and deliver IT training to eligible participants.

Customer Satisfaction



We are part of a National Citizens Advice Initiative called the Customer Experience Survey. We are asking our clients if they are happy to be contacted by Citizens Advice directly to give feedback on the service they have received.

The latest report shows that for the overall client experience of using our service, 73% of clients felt it was positive or very positive.

76.7% thought the service had helped them to find a way forward. We would obviously like this to be higher but many problems are ongoing and clients may still be using our service. 88.7% of clients said that they would be likely or very likely to recommend our services to friends and family.

Recruitment and Training



Recruitment remains a priority for us in order to fully staff Adviceline and to support those wishing to transfer from Adviceline to full Advice. To support this a portion of our reserves continues to be used to fund a one day a week Volunteer Development post. The numbers on Adviceline are currently stable, and some Adviceline volunteers are going on to train as full advisers. All Citizens Advice offices are finding it difficult to attract volunteers. We do have a number of volunteers who come to us and work with us to help us but also to improve their skills. These volunteers have been very successful in subsequently gaining employment.

Funding Bids



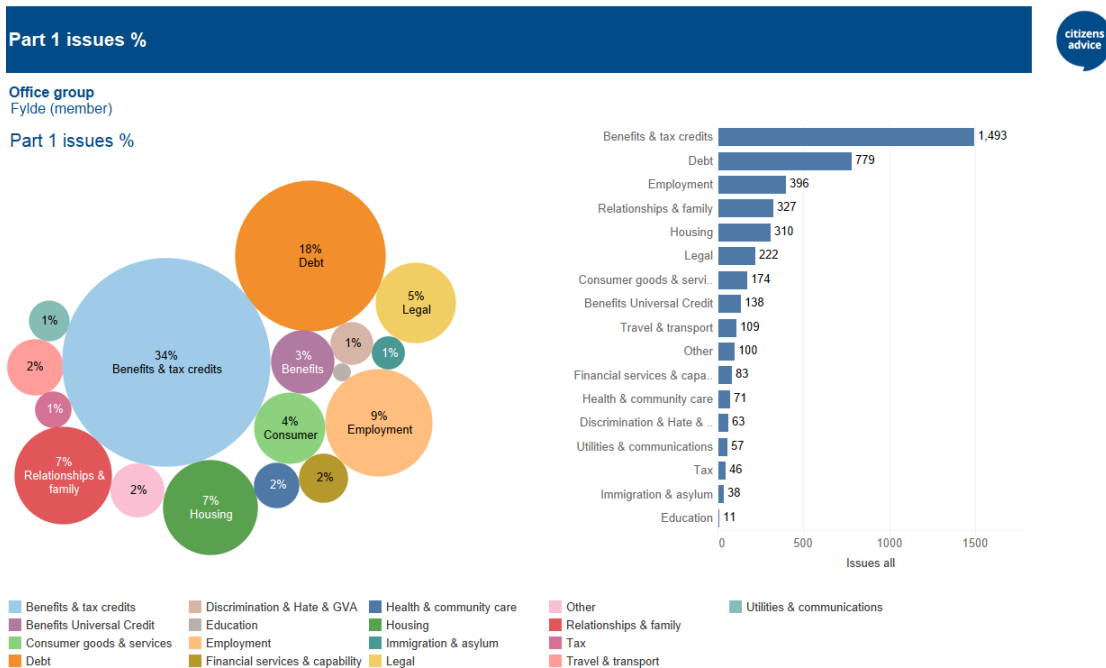
At present our office is preparing bids, and awaiting outcomes from submitted bids, to continue the Rosemary domestic violence project.. We are constantly exploring avenues of funding, particularly concentrating on opportunities where deprivation does not need to be high and that would benefit our Fylde demographic. We continue to explore these opportunities both as an individual office and in partnership with other Citizens Advice offices throughout Lancashire.

Statistics for April 2018 to March 2019

In all, we helped **1895 individual clients** deal with **4417 issues**.

Our impact on society can in part be measured by the following figures, however a price cannot be put on the peace of mind and feeling of wellbeing that comes from knowing that your issues have been listened to and an action plan put in place for dealing with them.

Main Issue*

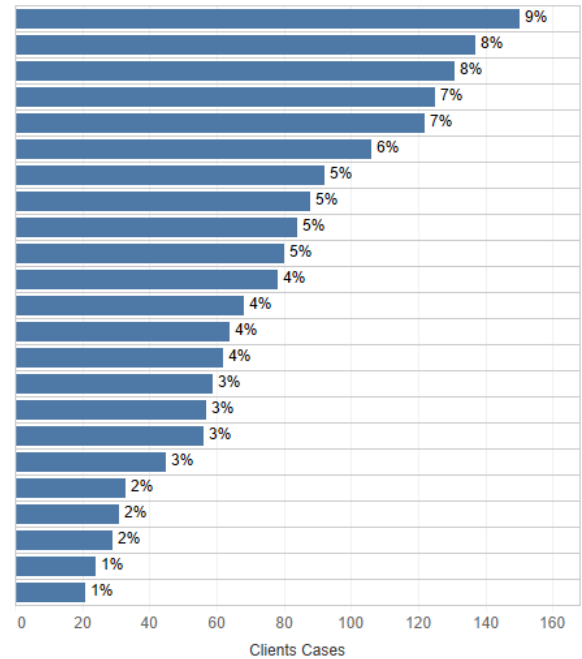


*Clients may come with multiple issues. This information therefore shows either the sole issue or the first of these multiple issues.

Clients by Ward

Ward

Local Authority Ward	Local Authority	
Medlar-with-Wesham	Fylde	150
Warton and Westby	Fylde	137
Kirkham South	Fylde	131
Central	Fylde	125
Kirkham North	Fylde	122
Ashton	Fylde	106
Heyhouses	Fylde	92
Kilnhouse	Fylde	88
Fairhaven	Fylde	84
Freckleton East	Fylde	80
Park	Fylde	78
St Leonards	Fylde	68
Ansdell	Fylde	64
Staining and Weeton	Fylde	62
St Johns	Fylde	59
Freckleton West	Fylde	57
Newton and Treales	Fylde	56
Clifton	Fylde	45
Lea & Larches	Preston	33
Elswick and Little Eccleston	Fylde	31
Ribby-with-Wrea	Fylde	29
Ingol & Cottam	Preston	24
Singleton and Greenhalgh	Fylde	21



Key Statistics

Fylde CAB

03/04/2018 29/03/2019

citizens
advice

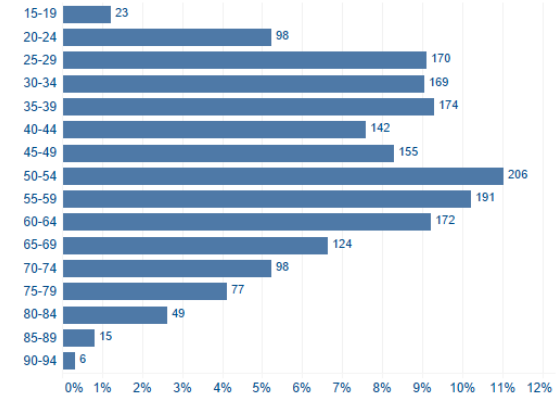
Summary

Clients	1,895
Quick client contacts	588
Issues	4,417
Activities	4,205
Cases	1,928
Outcomes	
Income gain	£114,050
Re-imbursements, services, loans	£1,192
Debts written off	£26,010
Repayments rescheduled	£1,080
Other	£5,924

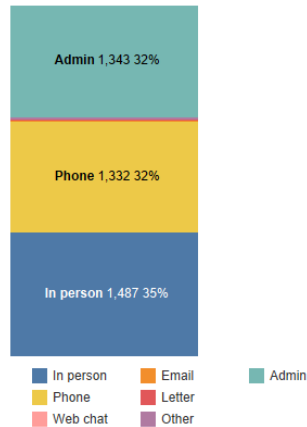
Issues

Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	1,493
Benefits Universal Credit	138
Consumer goods & services	174
Debt	779
Discrimination & Hate & GVA	63
Education	11
Employment	396
Financial services & capability	83
Health & community care	71
Housing	310
Immigration & asylum	38
Legal	222
Other	100
Relationships & family	327
Tax	46
Travel & transport	109
Utilities & communications	57
Grand Total	4,417

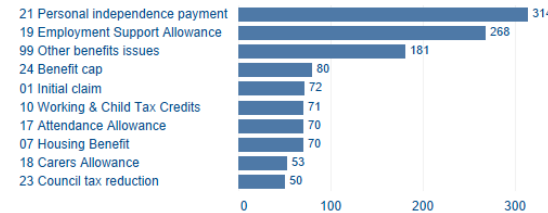
Age



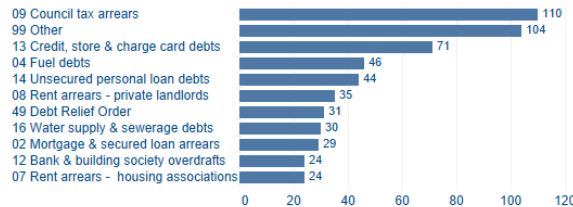
Channel



Top benefit issues



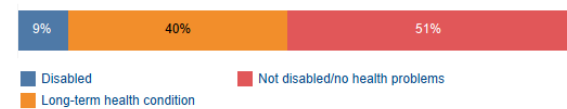
Top debt issues



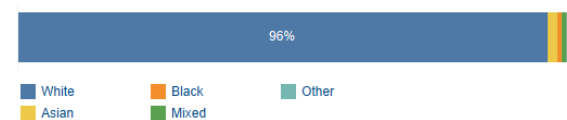
Gender



Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity



Research and Campaigns



Research and campaigns work is a dual aim of Citizens Advice. We believe that raising awareness of both national and local issues and identifying trends is key to a 'prevention rather than cure' approach, benefitting clients and society as a whole.

The profile of research and policy work within Citizens Advice is kept high by the publication of press reports and by the appearance on TV and radio of our chief executive Gillian Guy.

At Fylde, we have a Research and Campaigns co-ordinator, Anne Gray, who continues to be involved with reporting trends and issues to Citizens Advice nationally which have been identified through our advice work and statistics. Our Trustees often also assist with this work. We continue to receive updates from Lancashire Police and Trading standards on a regular basis, keeping us updated on consumer issues, scams and frauds which may affect our clients. We are part of the Lancashire Research and Campaigns Cluster Group, which allows us to work together with other Citizens Advice offices on issues relevant to clients across Lancashire. We use our Twitter and Facebook pages to post information about these issues and to direct our followers to useful resources.

Examples of current national campaigns can be found on <https://wearecitizensadvice.org.uk/>.

Our office has made a particular local contribution to two national campaigns this year:

Big Energy Saving Week

Many people stay on the same tariff or with the same supplier for years without realizing they could be getting a better deal elsewhere. They could be saving around £300 a year, particularly if they have never switched before. The focus of this year's campaign was therefore on encouraging people to 'Check, Switch and Save'. As well as leaving information boards in the two libraries for a week each, we had an information stand at Dobbies Garden Centre for a day, engaging the shoppers in conversations about energy switching and energy saving, as well as publicising an event we were holding at Freckleton Library the following week. At the library event people could bring their energy bills along and Citizens Advice Advisors would explain to them what the different things on the bill actually mean and show them how to compare energy prices using the Citizens Advice comparison tool, which is impartial and compares the whole of the market.

Scam Awareness Month

New, ever more sophisticated scams are evolving all the time, so it is important that people are able to identify the key characteristics of a scam, even if it isn't one they've heard about before. Pension fraud is one type of scam we highlighted this year and recent figures have revealed the current scale of this crime, with people losing £90k on average. As we have an ageing population in the Fylde this is of particular relevance to us. Information boards and leaflets were placed in Kirkham and Freckleton Libraries for a week each, as well as in the reception area of our offices.

The Future

Citizens Advice Fylde is committed to continuous improvement of its practices and procedures in order to ensure provision of, and access to, its core services for all Fylde residents. This includes actively looking to increase our accessibility through our outreach provision.



We will continue to work closely with Fylde Council and other voluntary agencies in Fylde to provide a holistic approach to our clients' issues. We will strive to source new funding and partnership working in order to meet demand. We will use the resources provided by our national membership of Citizens Advice to support our strategic planning for the future, drawing on regional networks in order to learn from good practice elsewhere, and participating in new initiatives if appropriate opportunities arise.

We are currently looking at using our skills and expertise to provide domestic abuse training to employers in our local area.

If anyone would like to contact me for a chat about what we do and/or about volunteering opportunities they would be very welcome to do so. I can be contacted on 01772 673014.

Natalie Reeves
Chief Executive Officer 2019

Supported by:

