

Annual Report 2020



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Overview

This report concentrates, for statistical purposes, on our work during the year April 2019/March 2020. However, it also includes some information on developments since April 2020, 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 would normally take a mixture of appointments, drop-ins and telephone enquiries through our Adviceline system. Our St Annes Outreach would be at the Town Hall on Tuesdays for appointments and on Wednesdays for drop-ins.

However, due to COVID, the service has been a telephone only service from March 2020.

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: Natalie Reeves, Chief Executive Officer and Lisa Bolton, Advice Service Manager - along with Robert Egford, Session Supervisor, Kim Cook, Volunteer Development Officer and Oleg Melehovs Administrator.

We have 24 Advice volunteers, including 8 trained Adviceline Assessors, 13 trained Full Advisors and 3 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 2020 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.

Until March 2020 we had 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 continued 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.

From March 2020, all appointments are carried out by telephone. We offer a form filling service, this is carried out by the client posting the form to us and it is filled out through a telephone appointment and then returned to the client to check and sign.

We continued 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 used 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 was 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 29 clients with 60 issues from April 2019 to March 2020, 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 2019 to March 2020, Robert made 92 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.

Fylde Energy

From February 2020 we have been running the Fylde Energy Project, funded by the Energy Saving Trust. This is a project offering help and support with energy related issues, including bills, tariff checks and disputes. Two part-time members of staff were employed to administer the project and deliver the advice and support. From December 2020, this has been enhanced by an emergency COVID fund from Fylde Council to offer financial support for clients suffering fuel poverty as a result of the COVID crisis.

Help to Claim

Funded through National Citizens Advice by DWP we continue to offer help and support to claimants with their initial Universal Credit claim.

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, 74.2% of clients felt it was positive or very positive.

82.4% 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. 95.1% 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



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.

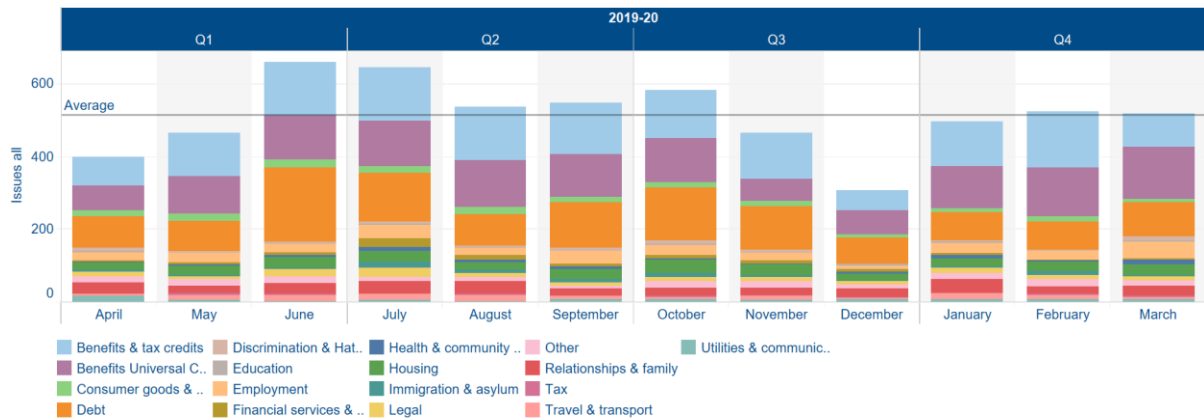
Statistics for April 2019 to March 2020

In all, we helped **1652 individual clients** deal with **6029 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*

Graph of issues

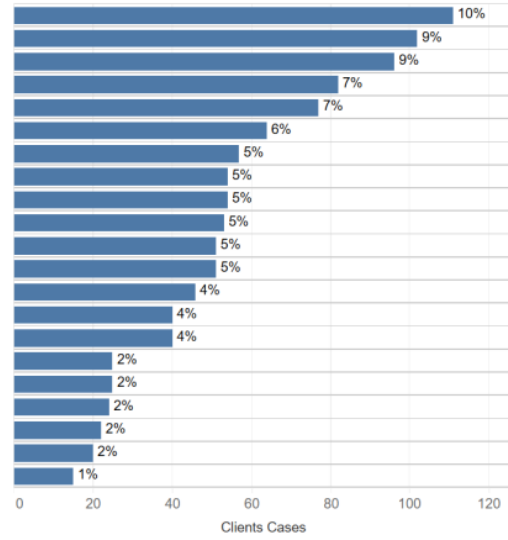


*Clients may come with multiple issues. This information therefore shows either the sole issue or the first of these multiple issues.

Clients by Ward

Ward

Local Authority Ward	Local Authority	
Medlar-with-Wesham	Fylde	111
Kirkham North	Fylde	102
Kirkham South	Fylde	96
Central	Fylde	82
Warton and Westby	Fylde	77
Ashton	Fylde	64
Kilnhouse	Fylde	57
Fairhaven	Fylde	54
St Leonards	Fylde	54
Newton and Treales	Fylde	53
Freckleton East	Fylde	51
Heyhouses	Fylde	51
Park	Fylde	46
Freckleton West	Fylde	40
St Johns	Fylde	40
Ansdell	Fylde	25
Clifton	Fylde	25
Staining and Weeton	Fylde	24
Ribby-with-Wrea	Fylde	22
Elswick and Little Eccleston	Fylde	20
Singleton and Greenhalgh	Fylde	15



Key Statistics

Fylde (member)

01/04/2019 31/03/2020



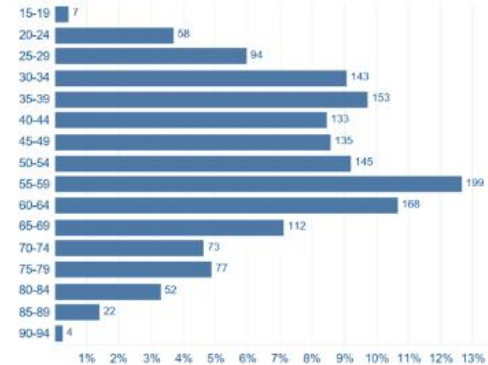
Summary

Clients	1,652
Quick client contacts	664
Issues	6,029
Activities	4,752
Cases	1,894
Outcomes	
Income gain	£1,217,350
Re-imbursments, services, loans	£8,879
Debts written off	£177,069
Repayments rescheduled	£8,061
Other	£31,808

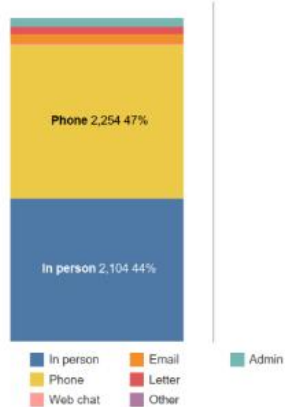
Issues

Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	568
Benefits Universal Credit	425
Consumer goods & services	75
Debt	304
Discrimination & Hate & GVA	38
Education	7
Employment	130
Financial services & capability	64
Health & community care	28
Housing	142
Immigration & asylum	37
Legal	69
Other	111
Relationships & family	145
Tax	14
Travel & transport	76
Utilities & communications	41
Grand Total	6,029

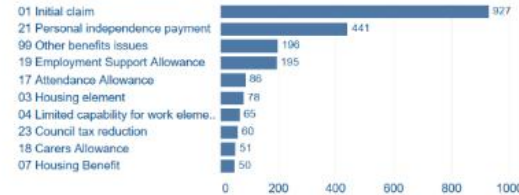
Age



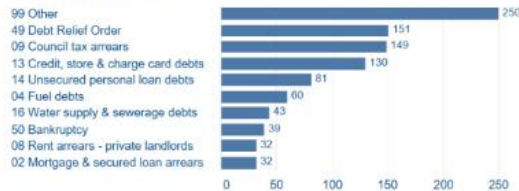
Channel



Top benefit issues



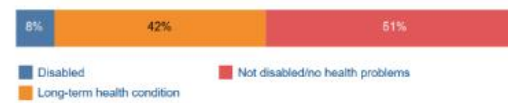
Top debt issues



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 made a particular local contribution to two national campaigns in 2019/20:

New Energy Report – Picking up the pieces

This report was published on 21 June 2019. It finds that thousands of people who owed money to failed suppliers have lost out on consumer protections and faced aggressive debt collection when these suppliers failed. In addition, UK energy consumers are picking up the bill for failed suppliers, to the tune of £172 million.

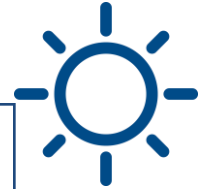
Citizens Advice are asking the government to use their forthcoming Energy White Paper to close the protection gap for consumers who owe money to suppliers when they collapse and to minimise the cost to consumers of energy supplier failures.

Scam Awareness Month

In 2019 National Citizens Advice decided to have just a fortnight rather than a month for Scam Awareness and to target the campaign at the over 45's. Static information boards were displayed at Kirkham and Freckleton Libraries. Information stands were placed in Dobbies Garden Centre and in Morrisons with Trading Standards. Anne provided a talk for 'Just Good Friends' in Kirkham in conjunction with Trading Standards and the Police, which was very well received. We emphasized the importance for clients to report scams and rogue traders to our Consumerline. This is because it is the main way that the Trading Standards officers are informed of these activities. In cases where the criminals are still in the area, Trading Standards are given a 'hot referral' from Consumerline and officers can be immediately deployed to attempt to apprehend them. We therefore stressed to clients the importance of reporting it to Consumerline and assisted them to do this.

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.

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 20121

Supported by:

