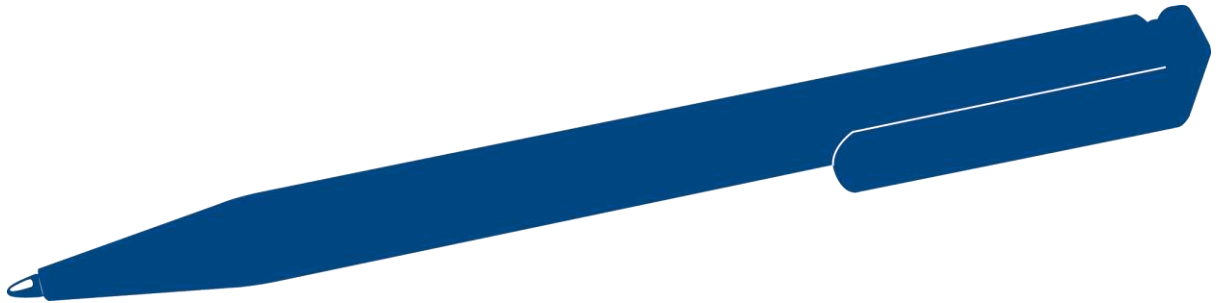


Report to Environment, Health and Housing Committee 2018



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Overview

This report concentrates, for statistical purposes, on our work during the year April 2017/March 2018. However, it also includes some information on developments since April 2018, along with our plans for the future.

Citizens Advice Fylde has been serving the Fylde community since 1968, which means that we recently celebrated our 50th birthday. 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 a Tuesday for appointments and on a Wednesday for drop-ins.

Our Vision:

To be recognized as the prime source of help and advice serving the Fylde community.

Our Mission:

To empower people in the Fylde to work through their problems and to challenge injustice.



Staffing



Our core staff during the reporting period were: Kim Cook, Chief Executive Officer - 27 hrs pw and Louise Pope, Operations Manager - 37 hrs pw, along with Natalie Reeves, Session Supervisor/ Advisor (Outreach)/ Volunteer Development/ IDVA - 28 hrs pw.

Kathryn Crameri took over as Chief Executive Officer on 1/8/2018 (21 hrs pw), and Angela McCarthy-Grunwald joined us as Administrator at the same time (10.5 hrs pw). Louise Pope will be leaving us in September.

We have 27 Advice volunteers, including 10 trained Adviceline Assessors, 11 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 December 2017 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 on 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. We run this service in a 'hub' with other local offices (Wyre, South Ribble, West Lancashire and Chorley) and our clients will reach an Adviceline Assessor when they call Adviceline. If they are a Fylde Client and a Fylde Assessor is free they will be directed to us but if no-one is free in Fylde then one of our partners will answer. 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



As noted above, the Adviceline service is a collaboration between us and the **Lancashire West** group of offices.

From June 2018, we are working in tandem with **Fylde Council** to provide debt advice to clients who find themselves in a precarious housing situation. The aim of the project is to help clients with debts to avoid the detrimental effects this can have on their security of accommodation. Keith Spencer is employed 16 hours per week to deliver this advice, and clients are referred by Fylde Council.

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 32 clients from April 2017 to March 2018, many of whom were at high risk or facing an emergency situation such as the need to find new accommodation. Natalie also participates in the North West's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

The project has received financial support from **The Clothworkers Foundation** which has allowed us to create a comfortable dedicated space for interviewing clients and for managing the project, with provision for any accompanying children.

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 2017 to March 2018, Robert made 98 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 we have been 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 have been employed to administer the project and deliver IT training to eligible participants, eventually with the help of volunteers. A full update on statistics will be given in next year's report, since the project was not fully up and running in the current reporting period.

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, 82% of clients felt it was positive or very positive.

For whether the client's problem was solved by using our service, 73% of clients said that it was. We would obviously like this to be higher but many problems are ongoing and clients may still be using our service. For whether they would recommend our service to family/friends, 85% of clients said that they would be likely or very likely to do so.

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 through the DWP 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. The office is using a portion of its reserves to fund a one day a week post in order to allow more management time to be focused on funding applications. 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 2017 to March 2018

In all, we helped **1873 individual clients** with detailed information and advice.

Many of these clients would have had more than one issue to resolve, and made contact more than once.

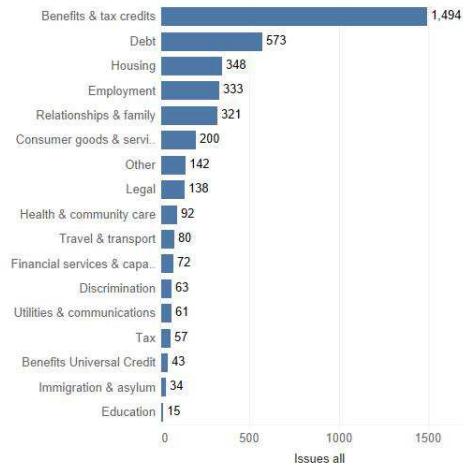
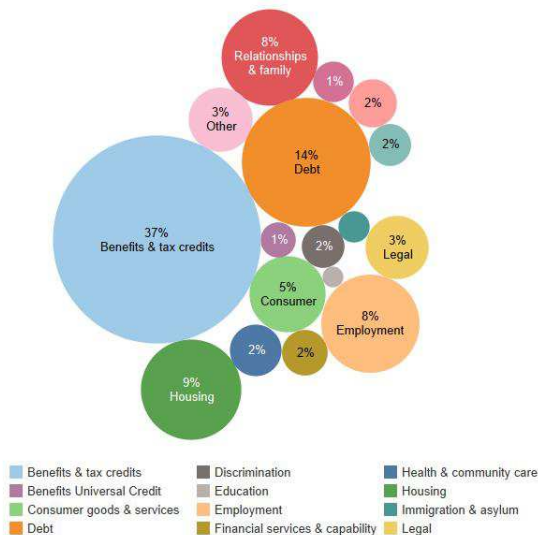
Our impact on society can in part be measured by the following figures, however a price cannot be put on the peace of mind and feeling of wellbeing that comes from knowing that your issues have been listened to and an action plan put in place for dealing with them.

Main Issue*

Part 1 issues %

Office group
Fylde (member)

Part 1 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*

Ansdell	47
Ashton	88
Central	105
Clifton	44
Elswick and Little Eccleston	32
Fairhaven	54
Freckleton East	67
Freckleton West	54
Heyhouses	79
Kilnhouse	76
Kirkham North	93
Kirkham South	127
Medlar-with-Wesham	116
Newton and Treales	50
Park	60
Ribby-with-Wrea	32
Singleton and Greenhalgh	16
St Johns	71
St Leonards	83
Staining and Weeton	44
Warton and Westby	129

*Our Adviceline service partners with Lancashire West, and we therefore respond to calls from outside Fylde when we have capacity to do so.

Key Statistics

Fylde (member)

2017-18

Q1
Q2
Q3
Q4

citizens
advice

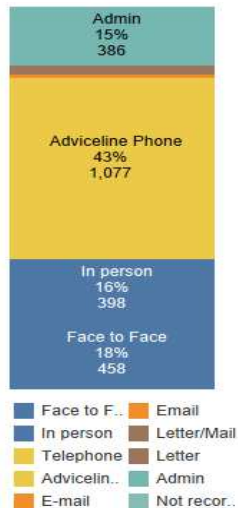
Summary

Clients	1,873
Quick client contacts	677
Issues	4,065
Activities	2,518
Cases	2,084

Outcomes

Income gain	£41,792
Re-imbursements, services, loans	£0

Channel



Issues

Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	1,494
Benefits Universal Credit	43
Consumer goods & services	200
Debt	573
Discrimination	63
Education	15
Employment	333
Financial services & capability	72
Health & community care	92
Housing	347
Immigration & asylum	34
Legal	138
Other	142
Relationships & family	321
Tax	57
Travel & transport	80
Utilities & communications	61
Grand Total	4,065

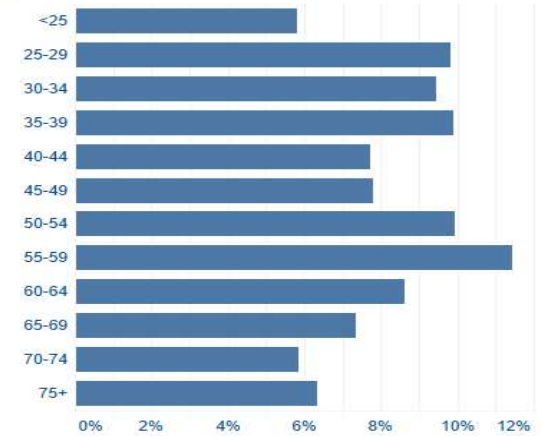
Top benefit issues



Top debt issues



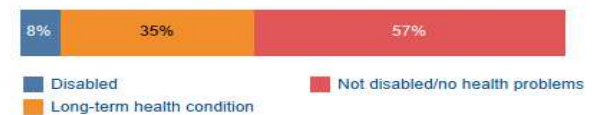
Age



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.

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.

Kathryn Crameri
Chief Executive Officer 2018

Supported by:

