

# Citizens Advice Hertfordshire

September 2015



## Hertfordshire Citizens Advice: Delivering Disability Benefits advice in homes across the county for HCC

**Welwyn Hatfield Citizens Advice is the lead partner for the Benefit Take Up & Outreach Project and is delivering services to Hertfordshire County Council acting through Health and Community Services. The project includes a home visiting service and telephone helpline.**

The home visiting element of this valuable and successful project consists of three outreach workers, covering all of Hertfordshire, and is designed to help clients apply for Attendance Allowance (AA), Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA). Those provided with a service include traditionally 'hard to reach' groups such as those living in rural or remote areas, the disabled and housebound, the elderly, ethnic minority elders, including those whose first language is not English, as well as older people living in the less affluent areas of Hertfordshire.

The project, which is funded until March 2016, consistently exceeds against its targets both for the number of meetings with clients and the value of claims submitted. Overall the service aims to submit benefit claims in excess of £1.43m each year.

During the period of April to June this year, the service received a total of 149 referrals resulting in 134 successful claims. For more information on this project contact 01707 280414.



### Case study: How the project helped Tony

Outreach Worker: "I had a referral from the Advice Services Transition Fund project at our Citizens Advice offices to complete the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim for a client with severe mental health problems, exacerbated by the prospect of eviction.

Tony was assessed at home and was awarded enhanced rate daily living and mobility PIP. This award, along with the considerable back pay due to lengthy claim delay, meant that Tony is now able to stay in his property.

Tony is extremely relieved and can now concentrate on his recovery, rather than debt issues."

citizens  
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For advice and more information on these and other Hertfordshire wide Citizens Advice projects

**Please call 03444 111 444**

# HCC funds Citizens Advice Apprenticeships in Hertfordshire: Alice's story

**Last year, for the first time, the 10 Citizens Advice services across Hertfordshire were able to offer apprenticeships funded by Hertfordshire County Council. These apprentices join one of the local Citizens Advice offices as a trainee and work towards a new Level 3 qualification in providing legal information and advice.**

Alice Loukaides works at the Citizens Advice in Stevenage, where she has recently completed an Advanced Apprenticeship in Legal Advice. With support and guidance from her colleagues, her confidence and skills have grown and she is now looking forward to a bright future within the legal advice sector. Here's her story so far.

**What did your role as an apprentice at Stevenage Citizens Advice entail?** I started with some telephone training for the advice line, which allowed me to become more familiar with the role. After developing my advice work, I undertook more training to become a gateway assessor; this involved seeing clients face-to-face, rather than speaking on the telephone. Then, after my full training, I became a full advice generalist adviser, which meant I was able to carry out full advice appointments.

**What does your current job entail?** My current job role has developed slightly from the apprenticeship role. Although I'm no longer advising through the gateway service, I'm still advising clients on a daily basis. My current workload includes working with our Stevenage Borough Housing team, which assists Stevenage Borough Council tenants with their issues.

**What was your personal highlight of the apprenticeship?** My personal highlight was being able to work with so many knowledgeable colleagues and volunteers at Citizens Advice. They taught me a lot during my apprenticeship and supported me during my time as an adviser. I also have a very supportive management team which has assisted me throughout the whole process, which I really appreciated.



**"During the last year, Alice has helped over 700 people singlehandedly. This represents nearly 10 per cent of our clients across the whole organisation; we have 80 volunteers and 30 staff, so this shows you how well she has done. Not only that, she has now secured a full time role in the organisation, which is a result of her hard work."**

**Daniel Marshall**  
CEO at Citizens Advice Bureau Stevenage

## Hertfordshire Citizens Advice British Sign Language Service

**This service has been set up to provide advice in British Sign Language (BSL) and Sign Supported English (SSE) to Deaf people across the whole of Hertfordshire. The dedicated adviser is able to provide a parallel service on issues such as debt, housing, employment and benefits to Deaf people that would currently be provided to hearing people.**

The BSL adviser has been seeing clients since 1st July 2014 following recruitment and training. Since July 2014, 329 appointments for 57 clients have been booked by the BSL adviser. As the project continues it has been found that, with the limited services available to Deaf people, they do return for further appointments often with a different issue some time later. Based on the current figures, the average number of appointments per client is 5.8, demonstrating a high level of engagement with the service.

Welwyn Hatfield Citizens Advice are continuing to raise the profile of the service by providing talks to deaf clubs, youth groups (those with young adults) and liaising with social services and charities. For more information on this project email [adrians6@whcab.org.uk](mailto:adrians6@whcab.org.uk)



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