



Crisis Intervention

Q1 report 2020/2021

Delivered by Citizens Advice Hertfordshire



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Summary

Life is becoming more complicated. The last 3 months have been difficult for people in a way that no one could have anticipated but our service has continued to adapt to meet the needs of our community at a time when it is needed more than ever. All offices across the county have adapted delivery models and have continued to offer advice to all residents.

This is a summary of Crisis Intervention achievements for the last 3 months. Citizens Advice offices across Hertfordshire are here for everyone, whenever they need us. Over 100 volunteers are delivering advice remotely and our specialists are carrying out telephone appointments. We are working more closely with partners to identify and address emerging issues across the county.

People helped with Crisis Intervention	926 unique clients 1,120 overall clients	Financial gains	£206,150
People helped with Welfare Benefit Appeals	48 unique clients 90 overall clients	Financial gains	£109,785
People helped in crisis via British Sign Language	27 unique clients 45 overall clients	Financial gains	£103,054

Overall

1,001

Unique clients helped

1,255

Overall clients

£418,989

In financial gains

75%

Of clients were able to access advice that suited their needs

72%

of clients were financially better off as a result of our advice, information and support

78%

of clients said that their wellbeing improved as a result of our advice, information and support

Meet Jessica*

Jessica contacted us for help with debt, she was struggling to find a way forward and advised us she had a number of issues that were affecting her wellbeing. During our appointment with Jessica, we established that she had over £15,000 owing to various creditors, both priority and non-priority. There was a shortfall between her income and expenditure of around £120 per month and she was very close to the start of the eviction process. Using our holistic advice model, it became apparent that her financial situation was such that she could not afford to replace some essential household items. It was decided that along with trying to help Jessica with her debts we would also help her to replace these items.

How we helped

During the appointment, the adviser established that Jessica did not have a working fridge-freezer or a wardrobe to store her clothes. A hardship application to a charitable trust was completed using the information collected during the appointment, and Jessica worked with us to obtain additional evidence needed, such as bank statements.

The result

Around 10 days after the application was submitted, the application was approved and the trust sourced the items for Jessica. These will improve her situation at home and her wellbeing. She will be able to shop for food more effectively and less often now she can store food correctly. She will be able to eat more fresh food.

We are continuing to support Jessica with her debt and housing issues and are proactively looking at possible debt solutions which will fully relieve the burden of the debt and allow her to start afresh with a clean slate.

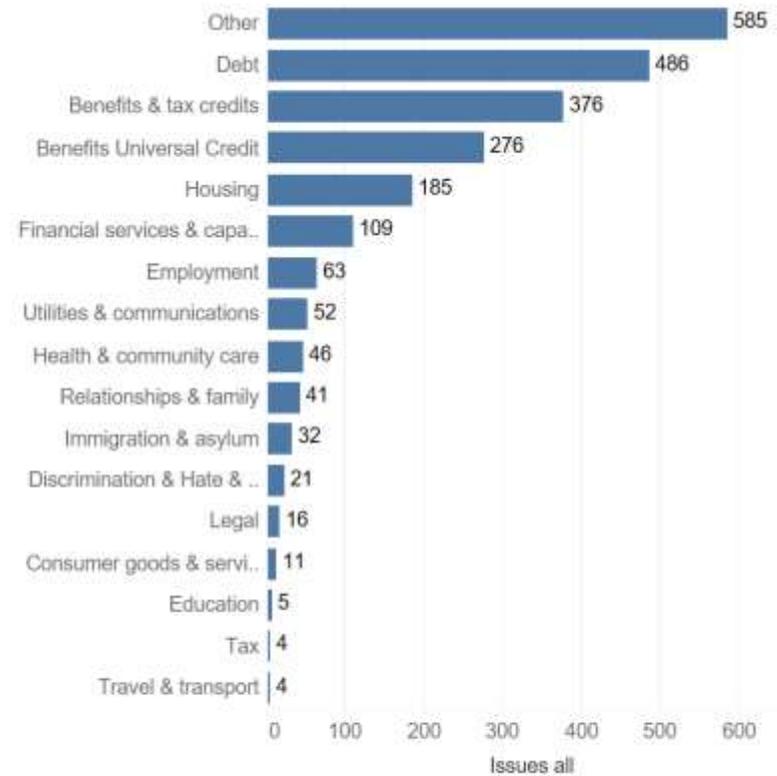
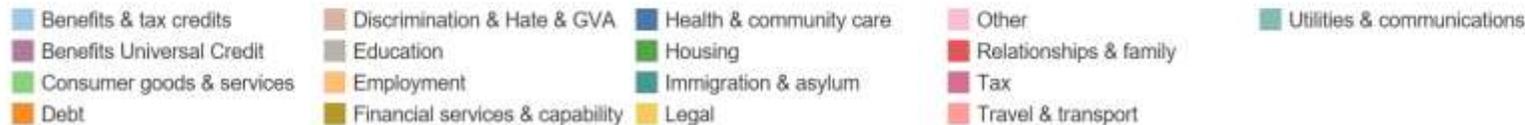
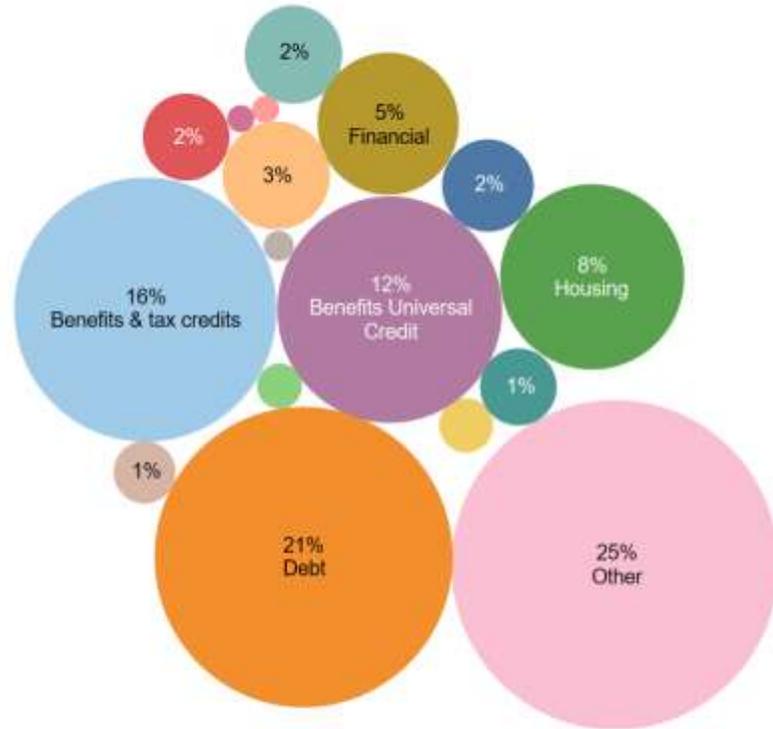
***name changed for confidentiality**



Advice Issues and demographics

Office group
Multiple values

Part 1 issues %



Our data over the last 3 months reflects the pressures felt on society as a whole. The top three issues are 'other', debt, and benefits and tax credits. Our 'other' advice issue code is used for issues such a need for food banks and charitable support. 86% of people helped in this category needed support from foodbanks. The next table shows the most common, specific advice categories with our top three issues.

Other	Debt	Benefits and Tax Credits
Food banks	Council Tax	Personal Independence Payment
Charitable support	Debt Relief Orders	Council Tax Reduction
Applications for charitable support	Credit Cards	General benefit entitlements

We are also able to capture additional information through our case management system to show the demographics of those using the service. In Q1, there has been a relatively equal split between female and male clients and over half of our clients have a health condition or disability that affects their everyday life. Where the client has provided their date of birth, our most in demand age range is amongst 35-44 year olds. We are focussed on ensuring our service is as accessible as possible to those from BAME communities.

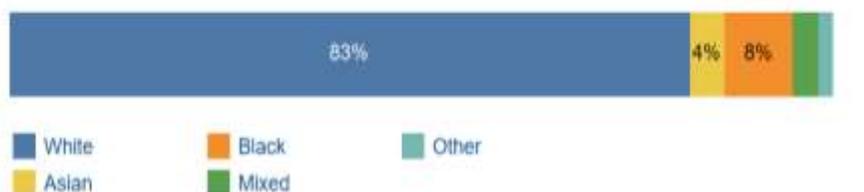
Gender



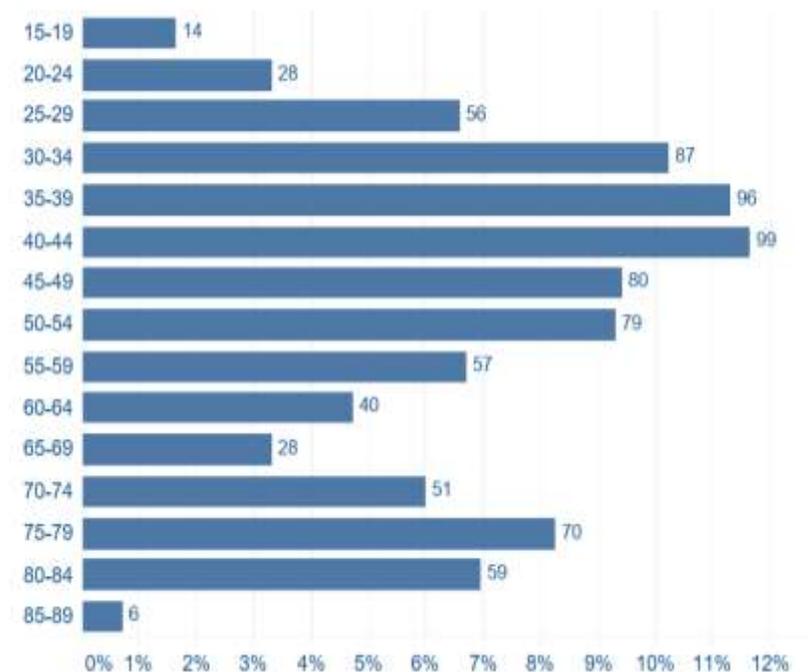
Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity



Age



Reviewing Q1 and moving into Q2

We are working in an uncertain and fast moving environment. In Q1 we ensured our clients still received the service they desperately needed during the early stages of the pandemic. We also monitored important legislative changes, the local and national support available to clients, and worked even more closely with community partners. We moved our workforce over to home working and continued with a 'business as usual' approach to relieve the pressure on our clients wherever possible.

Top 3 issues - April	Top 3 issues - May	Top 3 issues - June
Food banks	Food banks	Debt
Debt	Debt	Charitable Support
Benefits	Benefits	Benefits

All offices across the county are going into Q2 with a proactive approach. We are planning and preparing for longer term service delivery adaptations and are working together to ensure our services respond to clients' changing needs. Whilst our drop in services remain closed at the time of writing, our teams are continuing to work from home to deliver essential advice services and projects.

We know that Q2 will be an uncertain time for many residents. Many of the protective measures that were implemented to protect those who had been furloughed or were experiencing lower incomes will be reduced or removed. Our teams are preparing for a spike in demand and are encouraging people to seek advice early to ensure they have the information and advice they need to make informed decisions for the future.

We are continuing to work closely with community partners to ensure residents know that our service is open to support Hertfordshire communities and we will continue to share service changes where necessary.





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Citizens Advice Hertfordshire

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