

Citizens Advice Hertfordshire

October 2020

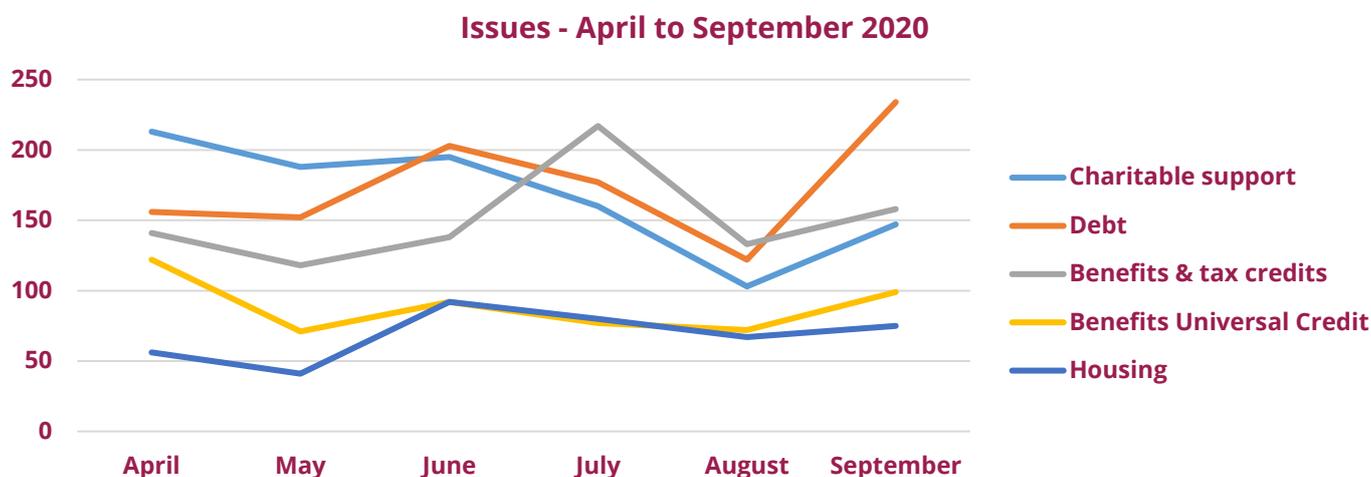


Welcome to our October newsletter! The Hertfordshire Citizens Advice Service newsletter provides updates on our county-wide projects. Thank you to all our funders, partners and stakeholders for their investment in and support for our work; this partnership work is vital for the 1.2 million residents of Hertfordshire, any of whom could one day need our help.

COVID-19 - Updates

Hertfordshire Citizens Advice responded quickly to the rapid changes brought about by the COVID-19 health pandemic and since March 2020, the large majority of our face-to-face services have been suspended. Some of our face to face services have now reopened but our teams continue to utilise our telephone and email channels to ensure we can provide the essential services that so many of our local residents need. We always work proactively to address the key issues people are facing.

Our case management system gives us a unique insight into the types of issues our clients have faced in recent months. The below graph illustrates this in more detail:



The needs of our communities are changing daily, but we are on hand to move people forward and get them the help they need. Our data is an excellent resource to identify the spikes and declines in demand giving us a clearer picture of what demand may look like in the future.

You can see there is a steep incline for debt advice in the last month, in line with the start of term and a lot of people returning to work. July saw a spike in benefits advice, specifically for Personal Independence Payment. We can see that all our top 5 issues increased in September.



For advice, speak to our advisers today on
Please call 03444 111 444

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Crisis Intervention – Performance Q2

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.

We have responded proactively to the changing needs of our clients over the last 3 months. Our Hertfordshire Crisis Intervention service ensures some of our most vulnerable clients get the support they need, at a time of great uncertainty.

809

Unique clients

1,069

Overall clients

£463,601

In financial gains

People Helped Crisis Intervention – Q2

719 unique clients
930 overall clients

Financial Gains

£250,762

People Helped Welfare Appeals – Q2

45 unique clients
88 overall clients

Financial Gains

£128,036

People Helped British Sign Language – Q2

45 unique clients
72 overall clients

Financial Gains

£75,857

86%

Of clients were able to access advice that suited their needs

92%

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

84%

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

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Scams Support and Prevention Project

In our last newsletter, we gave a 1 year review of our Hertfordshire Scams Support and Prevention project. The project has continued to support clients throughout lockdown, with a heightened awareness across the county for COVID-19 related scams.

Covid-19 means there has been heavy reliance on digital means to keep in touch with family and friends and to enable working from home. But this reliance has left many people susceptible to scams; scammers operate when we are at our most vulnerable. Scams can and do happen to anyone at any time, which is why this project is so vital.

So far this year, we have provided awareness information to over **6000 residents in the county**, with additional coverage on social media and in the press.

Each of the 10 local offices across Hertfordshire has taken a proactive approach to providing information to all clients on a number of fraud/scam related issues, embedding this into our telephone service and email advice.

To get advice on scams, **get in touch with your local office today on 03444 111 444.**

DEFRA Project

We are pleased to say that each local office across Hertfordshire has been working closely with Hertfordshire County Council to implement support to Hertfordshire residents who are struggling to afford food and other essentials due to COVID-19. The funding from Hertfordshire County Council has been used for locally determined solutions to increase capacity and manage the additional demands resulting from COVID-19.



All projects are operating on a 12-week basis, addressing key local issues and supporting some of our most vulnerable clients.

Have you experienced issues as a result of COVID-19? **Get in touch with your local office today on 03444 111 444.**



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GambleAware Project

Citizens Advice has been commissioned by GambleAware, an independent charity tasked to fund research, education and treatment services to help reduce gambling-related harm (GRH), to deliver Gambling Support Services across Hertfordshire. Citizens Advice Stevenage provides education and training to organisations with frontline workers to prevent and minimise GRH, and attends local and national events to raise awareness of GRH and the services that are available to those affected.

Our project worker has continued to provide advice and support via digital means for our clients during the COVID-19 pandemic and offers online training to frontline workers. Want to know more? Get in touch with our Stevenage office on admin@castevenage.org.uk

British Sign Language (BSL) project

Citizens Advice works hard to ensure the service that it provides is as inclusive as possible. Now, thanks to funding from Hertfordshire County Council, we can offer advice directly to clients in Hertfordshire who communicate using British Sign Language (BSL), Sign Supported Language (SSE), or lip-speaking. Redmond Kaye, who is deaf himself and whose first language is British Sign Language, is based at Citizens Advice Welwyn Hatfield at its Queensway offices in Hatfield, offering county-wide support

To contact the Deaf Advice Service, text 07756 148591 (standard network rates apply) or email bsl@whcab.org.uk

Welfare Benefit Appeals project

Our Welfare Benefit Appeals project supports advocates for and represents clients at tribunals, when their benefits have been turned down. The appeals caseload is intensive, and requires in depth understanding of welfare benefit rules and regulations. Our caseworker prepares detailed appeal submissions on behalf of clients and continues to support at tribunal where possible. 90% of appeals prepared by our caseworker are successful, compared with the national average of 64%.

To contact the Welfare Benefit Appeals service, you can contact appeals@castevenage.org.uk



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