

# Citizens Advice Hertfordshire

August 2016



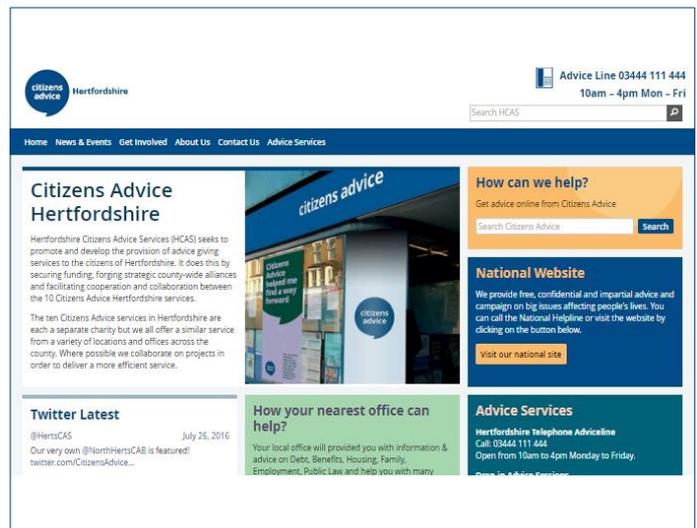
## New Herts-wide website goes live

Local residents and stakeholders across Hertfordshire can now access all ten of the Citizens Advice services based across the county from one website.

The new website [hcas.org.uk](http://hcas.org.uk) provides maps and contact details for all the offices and outreaches across the county, details on county-wide initiatives such as Telephone Adviceline and includes an option to get in contact via an email form on the site. The site meets the latest web usability standards for a much improved user experience, and can be easily accessed on mobile devices and tablets.

Catherine Bennett, Communications Officer at Citizens Advice Hertfordshire said: "We are delighted to have launched our new-look website for the county.

It has been completely re-designed and updated to make it simple for visitors to find their nearest local Citizens Advice office and provide information and guidance on the local services available to Hertfordshire residents."



"We want to offer people as many ways as possible of keeping in touch with us. We know many people prefer the Internet as a way of making contact with us and now it is much easier to do so."

# Holistic help for crisis intervention

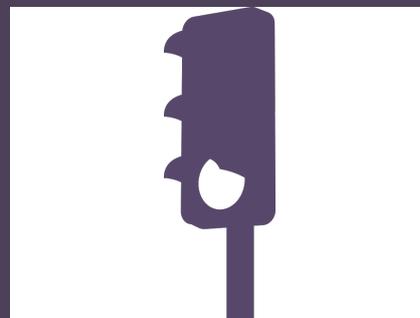
Citizens Advice Hertfordshire has established the Crisis Intervention Project, funded by Hertfordshire County Council, to help us begin the process of unpicking the reasons why someone falls in to a crisis situation.

The holistic nature of the Citizens Advice service enables us to take the steps required to help the service user solve the underlying problem, build resilience, and seek to avoid the problem re-occurring in the future.

This may be problems with debt, welfare benefits, housing, employment, or another enquiry area, but we ensure that we take a comprehensive approach to the problems the service user is facing, delivering our specialist advice in a way which suits the user.

## Crisis case study

**Mrs T suffers from physical and mental ill health, and had received Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) since 2009. She recently received a letter stopping her ESA after her last medical assessment deemed her fit for work.**



Mrs T presented other issues regarding benefits being withdrawn, and rent arrears and credit card debts totalling more than £2,000. The majority of the debt is due to delays in notifying the local housing authority of a change of circumstances – she separated from her partner, but due to their financial situation they both still live at the same address.

Colleagues at Citizens Advice Dacorum took immediate action, and provided Mrs T with a food voucher due to loss of benefits and debts. For her credit card debt, the credit card company were contacted and have now placed her debt on hold.

With the withdrawal of ESA, we explained that she can appeal the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) decision and helped complete a Mandatory Reconsideration letter; an outcome is still pending. Colleagues also completed a benefit check for her regarding existing health issues, and explained she might be entitled to a disability benefit called Personal Independence Payment. She has contacted DWP to request a benefit form and we will be assisting the client complete the form shortly.

Mrs T was advised to claim Job Seekers Allowance while her ESA claim is under appeal, and to explain to the Job Centre that she is doing this whilst her ESA claim is under appeal; the client has done this. She is also taking advice on coping with depression and anxiety and with the client's permission we made a Synergy referral to Herts MIND. Mrs T was very grateful that one organisation could support her with all her problems she faced.