



2016/17

Report to Chesterfield Borough Council

1. Introduction

Derbyshire Law Centre continues to deliver high quality free legal services to the residents of Chesterfield Borough. A detailed review of the services that we have provided can be found in our annual report 2015/16 where the overview ends on 31.8.2016. The annual report can be downloaded from our website.

1.a Impact of the recession and reduction of public and voluntary sector services

The Law Centre continues to see a rise of people being represented at County Court preventing homelessness to many families in Chesterfield. We continue to advise employees with poor terms and conditions such as zero-hours contracts or not ideally being paid the Living Wage. All this affects their ability to pay their debts including their mortgages or rents. We continue to work in partnership with Chesterfield CAB, DUWC and Financial Inclusion and Advice Derbyshire to look at ways of managing demand for advice.

1.b Derbyshire Law Centre's legal services

The Law Centre's core service is to deliver free specialist legal advice, assistance and representation in social welfare law:

- Community care
- Debt
- Discrimination
- Employment
- Housing and homelessness
- Immigration
- Mortgage Rescue scheme
- Tackling hate and harassment

2. An overview of the past ten months since 1.4.2016

2.a Sharing premises

Sharing premises has been and continues to be beneficial for our staff and clients who can get advice under the one roof as well as making fewer trips for different advice which protect their incomes. The move has also been beneficial for our legal team as working in close proximity with other advice agencies mean that

we can conclude our cases quickly. We have now moved upstairs temporarily and the move has gone smoothly.

2.b Provision of advice, assistance and representation

We continue to advise people on:

- Community care matters such as advising disabled and older people and their carers on: their rights to access care services, choosing residential homes, staying in their own homes, how care bills can be paid and managing disability-related debts.
- Debt issues that include managing and writing off debts, negotiating payments with creditors, representing clients at court, developing a pay plan, increasing incomes through benefits advice. We often establish the client's trade and where applicable we approach their associations such as the British Legion to ask for payment to write off debts such as mortgage or rent arrears.
- Employment matters such as zero-hours contracts, not being paid the NMW, discrimination in work – mainly on the grounds of sex, race and disability, wages are not being paid, unfair dismissals and redundancies.
- Housing /homelessness matters for instance advising, assisting and representing families at risk from being evicted from rented properties; managing housing related debts that put their tenancies at risk; setting aside court orders right up to the last minute to negotiate a rescue package for tenants to ensure they have a roof over their heads; advising and assisting on serious disrepair that affects tenants' health as well on illegal evictions.
- Immigration issues involve us advising and assisting on entering and staying in the UK, uniting families together, etc.
- Mortgage Rescue where we advising, assisting and representing families at risk from being evicted from mortgaged properties. This includes setting aside orders to come up with an alternative rescue plan to keep them within their mortgaged properties or buying time to secure alternative living arrangements. Our service also involves managing debts and increasing incomes to assist them to remain in their mortgaged properties.

We also continue to represent tenants and mortgagees at Chesterfield County Court duty scheme two days a week where this mainly involve us persuading for suspended possession order or an adjournment.

2.c Provision of intensive one-to-one support for those with multiple and complex needs

With funding from Building Better Opportunities and European Union, via D2N2 and Framework/ Advice Nottingham, we have secured funding to recruit 1.4 FTE personal navigators who provide one to one support to those who require intensive support to manage their tenancies, finances and debts. This service is for residents in North Eastern Derbyshire including Chesterfield Borough.



LOTTERY FUNDED



In addition we have secured funding from the Big Lottery Fund via the Help through Crisis programme for those who need one to one bilingual support to get through crisis and return to stability within their households. This is aimed at those whose first language is not English living in Derby city and Derbyshire.

2.d Community care service

With funding from European Union and Building Better Opportunities, we have for the first time employed a qualified social worker to learn to become a community care specialist adviser. His role will primarily involve

him gaining support packages through carrying out Needs Assessments to support Opportunity and Change's beneficiaries to become work ready.



He will also be expanding our current legal aid contract in community care as we are the only legal aid agency to have this contract in Derbyshire.

2.e Advocacy service

The Law Centre for the first time have recruited an Advocate to work one to one with individuals to help them to say their wishes. She will be working closely with our Advice Worker specialising in community care law. Her role will enable and support Opportunity and Change's beneficiaries with complex and multiple needs to develop a support plan stating how their social care needs will be met.

She will be working in close partnership with representatives from Derby City and Derbyshire County Council, Adults Social Care departments.



2.f Feedback from clients and users

Feedback from clients have demonstrated that there is a high level of satisfaction. 68% have said that our service have achieved positive health and well-being such reducing anxiety and stress.

2.g Volunteers

We continue to recruit and train new volunteers to become telephone assessors to provide us with additional resource in managing demand for advice.

2.h Derbyshire Resettlement Advice service

This new service is funded by The A B Charitable Trust. This involves our Immigration solicitor to provide free legal advice to refugees and their families living in Derbyshire. The advice service is aimed at those who are separated across the international borders as a result of persecution, trafficking, conflict and migration. This service complements Chesterfield Borough Council in housing a small number of Syrian Refugees.

2.j Living Rights

The Living Rights project, funded by European Union, is aimed to inform EU citizens, public officials and local agencies of the right of the EU citizens living in the UK. This project has been well received by EU citizens where our senior solicitor continues to receive thank you cards for their gratitude in receiving advice about their rights.

2.k Derbyshire Pro Bono service

The Law Centre has secured funding from Access to Justice to set up Derbyshire Pro Bono scheme. This scheme aimed to secure non-financial resources to support the Law Centre to continue to provide free legal services to residents on low and unstable incomes within across Derbyshire including Chesterfield Borough. We have hosted and supervised law students from Derby University to assist clients with debt and housing problems as part of a module on their law degree. We have, so far, supported 3 students on placements of one day per week. One student found the experience so rewarding, she continued to volunteer with us in her own time.

2.l Building Better Opportunities in Sheffield City Region project

We have been contracted by South Yorkshire Housing Association to provide specialist advice and assistance for up to 72 beneficiaries with multiple and complex needs over the next two years across Chesterfield Borough, Bolsover and North East Derbyshire Districts and Derbyshire Dales.



Conclusion

We are grateful for the financial assistance and support that Chesterfield Borough Council has given the Law Centre to date. This enables the Law Centre to lever in additional funding from outside the Borough for the benefit of Chesterfield's residents and its public sector services.

We would be happy to give a short presentation about the work we do.

Teresa Waldron, 31.1.2017

DUWC – Annual Report

The Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres works out of four venues in the Chesterfield Borough area. As well as the Rose Hill East venue we operate sessions in Brimington, Staveley and Hasland.

The Centre continues to receive superb support from Brimington Parish Council. At all our venues during the Calendar Year 2016 we have dealt with 490 enquiries from Brimington residents during the year as well as representing 9 people at tribunal. DUWC volunteers have leafleted the whole area and will continue to advertise our weekly service at the Community Centre.

Our Staveley Advice sessions at the Library receive much needed support from the Working Neighbourhood Fund and the Staveley Town Council. 33 people received help and representation at their Appeal Tribunal and 955 enquiries at all venues.

The Hasland outreach has begun operations at the start of the year, thanks to the Grassland Hasmoor Big Local and has had a steady uptake of enquiries with many responding to the advertising and literature encouraging take-up. 160 enquiries have been received at all venues.

Our Headquarters on Rose Hill East at the lower Ground Floor of the Town Hall have been inundated with enquiries from throughout North Derbyshire. There have been 2859 recorded contacts at this venue during the year.

The workload is rising and the staff and volunteers are under pressure. We ask for your patience as, undoubtedly, waiting times will increase as the number of tribunals increases and the support required increases.

Chesterfield and District Shopmobility annual report 16/17

We have continued to provide a scooter equipment and wheelchair loan service for people who have mobility difficulties and who come to Chesterfield shopping. Our service also enables people to access all amenities provided throughout Chesterfield.

The development of our Chesterfield based hire service within local communities and leisure sites enables people to have access to the countryside and Heritage sites within Chesterfield and Derbyshire. This is within our policy to promote leisure and equal opportunity, building upon our partnership working with local business to high profile the service available to disabled people and those with mobility impairment whether short term or long term.

The provision of our short-term and long-term hire scheme is specifically designed to meet the needs of individuals with mobility needs to gain independence within their local villages, therefore enabling them to become more active within their local community and combating isolation.

We are also in the process of developing our 'keep moving Keep safe' maintenance and repair facility to provide an affordable service that is designed to keep people independent whilst their scooter is being repaired, we provide a free scooter to maintain independence.

Our driving tuition and driving test promotion take up has increased in 2016/17 we will continue with our have a go days to promote safety.

Future developments. 2017/18

We continue to evaluate the services we provide and our funding and finance sub group are continually looking for project funding to cover the additional services we offer, we review the affordable costs to our membership but are constantly aware as a user led organisation the additional costs for disabled people to come into Chesterfield to use the facility offered by the town by providing an affordable service we continue to attract disabled people to shop in Chesterfield.

Social media and our website play an important part in attracting new visitors to the town we will develop both these mediums also are promoting our services with a leaflet campaign for 2017/18 for people without access to the internet.

Colin Mitchell

Chairperson.

Review of Advice Provision Chesterfield Citizens Advice Introduction– 2016-17 To Date

We provide information, advice, advocacy and support that helps people to resolve their problems. This report is about the people we help, the services we provide, the impact we have on the community and residents of Chesterfield.

We help over 6,000 `unique` people a year. Many of them are vulnerable and poor. They are often ill and disabled. There is a strong correlation between where users of Chesterfield Citizens Advice live and the most deprived wards of the borough.

Amongst the trends in people seeking advice have been:

- Trends in insecure employment, including zero hours contracts, placing financial pressures on family life
- Significant demand for debt services with a growth in enquiries where people obtaining household goods (TV, white goods, furniture) on expensive weekly `hire` terms with a view to eventually owning
- More crisis interventions where people have no money for eating or heating
- People with mental health problems accessing the support they need
- Continued problems with the key disability benefit, Personal Independence Payments

Amongst our strengths is the location of services across town including GP surgeries and Children's centres. We have strongly supported the Borough Councils Health, Wealth and Wellbeing initiative. This involves identifying unique areas in deprived /socially/financially excluded wards. Staff visit with publicity, `door knocking` and follow up with appointments for residents requiring assistance. Recently work took place in the `coal board` estate at Brimington generating a significant number of CAB appointments. This further helps us reach the most marginalised and excluded in our communities. We also support `meet, eat and treat` & other health partnership locality events.

We have continued to develop our service despite financial restrictions. One success has been strengthening our money skills work to support people who have been affected by homelessness, domestic violence and other `life shocks`. The Big Lottery Fund has informed us that it will renew funding for a further 3 years to develop this in partnership with Pathways and Derbyshire Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Service & others. We are starting a small project to increase awareness of the role of financial abuse as part of domestic abuse, working with frontline staff such as local authority workers. Although some Children's centres are closing across town, we will endeavour to ensure there is community-based advice for areas losing provision.

We have continued to campaign for better public policy. Recently we have challenged the Department of Work and Pensions over lost and misdirected mail sorting leading to delays in entitlement to essential benefits and acute financial hardship. We have completed successful media work in conjunction with Peak FM to encourage people to seek help with debts at an earlier stage and to be able to recognise `warning signs`.

Our paid staff and volunteers are the mainstay of our service. They work in very challenging circumstances, many times having to go beyond the call of duty to help people.

We are very grateful to the Council for their continued support. Without this, the vital services we deliver would not be possible.

Neil Storer
Chief Officer
January 2017

CAB Performance against Indicators in SLA Summary

Local Authority Strategic Objectives	Role of Chesterfield Citizens in contributing to meeting these	Predicted results by the end of year 2016-17
To make sure that local people benefit from the growth in Chesterfield Borough	Provision of advice/support to enable people to seek, gain and maintain employment. Assist	Exceed Target
To improve the health and well-being of people in Chesterfield Borough	bring income into local economy and/or ensure income is retained there. 16,400 enquiries dealt with per year 4500 new unique clients per year £3 million of debt rescheduled £3 million of financial gains for clients	Anticipated out-turn: 20,000 enquiries 6,000 new unique clients £ 4.5 million debt rescheduled £ 5million financial gains
To improve access to technology that meets the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors	Target: 4000 unique users of CCAB website/iPad information point per year	On target
To increase the supply and quality of housing in Chesterfield Borough to meet current and future needs	<i>Provision of housing & fuel advice to enable people to seek, gain and maintain the housing they need.</i> <i>Target:</i> <i>675 housing enquiries dealt with annually</i> <i>450 fuel poverty enquiries dealt with annually</i>	Exceed Target Anticipated out-turn 1000 housing enquiries dealt with 650 fuel poverty enquiries dealt with
To reduce inequality and support the more vulnerable members of our community	<i>Provision of quality advice and support to help the most vulnerable members of the community resolve their problems and access financial support</i> <i>Work with partners to deliver an intensive support and advice package in 4 areas in the year. (Health, wealth & wellbeing project in conjunction with CBC and others)</i> <i>Targets:</i> <i>16,400 enquiries dealt with per year</i> <i>4,500 new clients per year</i> <i>£3 million of debt rescheduled</i> <i>£3 million of financial gains for clients</i> <i>Deal with 1170 enquiries per annum from Holmehall, Grange-wood, St Helens and Middlecroft.</i>	Exceed Target Anticipated out-turn: 20,000 enquiries 6,000 new unique clients £4.5 million debt rescheduled £5 million financial gains 2400 enquiries Holmehall, Grangewood, St Helens and Middlecroft

Annual Report - 2016/17

CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

LINKS: THE CHESTERFIELD & N.E. DERBYSHIRE CVS & ACTION LTD

Links provides support to voluntary organisations and community groups operating in the local government districts of Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire. Links also leads projects and works in partnership across a wider area of Derbyshire.

Progress against targets has been good.

A Sustainable Community

- Advised groups on legal structures and status, as well as provided supported on policy formation to enable groups to seek and secure funding to support members of the local community. Organising bi-monthly funding workshops for groups to meet and discuss their project ideas with various different funders.

A Cohesive Community with equality of access to services

- Given one to one advice to groups and attended CBC Equalities and Diversity Forum. Links was a key partner of CBC in organising this year's Holocaust Memorial Day Event on 25th January 2017.
- Being the Locally Trusted Organisation to host the Big Local Project covering Hasland & Grassmoor to support community engagement.

A Community with Decent Homes for All

- Disseminated the information on Decent Homes Standard of Chesterfield Borough Council and other related information.

A Working and Learning Community

- Advised potential social enterprises at funding surgeries.
- One to one advice to groups including the provision of information on business planning for VCS groups.
- Provided information to VCS groups on developing policies and running a VCS group.

A Safe, Healthy and Active Community

- Advice given to VCS groups (including BME, learning disabilities, disability and mental health groups) on the promotion of and organising activities around community safety, healthy living and active community engagement. Developed a BME Public Health Project with the support of the Chesterfield Health and Well Being Partnership and DCC Public Health to engage with members of the BME communities.