



Working for our Community

Citizens Advice Waverley Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1

October 2008

What CA Waverley has done over the last year:

- Seen 6,612 new users
- Dealt with 21,012 new problems (420 a week)
- Helped clients to manage £9.5 million debt
- Secured £917,000 in benefits and one off payments for our clients—a return of £2.65 for every £1 invested.
- Provided a telephone advice service for 37 hours a week.
- Been open to the public for face to face appointments and drop-ins 83 hours a week
- Made 22,286 client contacts - approximately 446 a week
- Increased use of our outreach services from 270 - 442
- 133 volunteers gave more than 900 hours service a week.

Welcome and What's Next?

Welcome to our first Citizens Advice Waverley Quarterly Newsletter which is to keep you – our key stakeholders and partners - up-to-date with our activities and plans for the future.

Our aim is to help develop a greater understanding of the contribution we make to our community through our work – not only in financial terms, through increased welfare benefits and successfully managed debt, but also in our contribution to improved health and social inclusion.

Over the next year or two the challenges will not diminish, but rather

increase in the face of the 'credit crunch' and economic downturn. Many more people will need to turn to us for vital information and advice and support through a crisis in their lives.

Working together with our partners will enable us to more effectively meet their needs and so help keep our community a thriving and healthy one.

I look forward to continuing to work with you all and hope that you enjoy reading this, our first newsletter.



Norma Corkish
- Chair of Trustee Board



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First Impressions

Skills and dedication

I joined CA Waverley as Advice Services Manager just over one year ago, with very little experience of the voluntary sector (other than sorting out books in a local charity shop!) and with very little expectation of what I would find. What I did find was a warm welcome into a hard-working organisation going through some exciting changes!

Early days

My early impressions were all very positive. I was particularly struck by the skills and dedication of the more than 130 volunteers, and the amazingly small number of paid staff (equivalent to around 6 full time posts) employed to maintain the organisational infrastructure. A lean machine indeed!

“There is a positive feeling amongst our volunteers of being part of a wider team.”

It was also very quickly apparent how hard everyone had worked to make the recent significant organisational and operational changes work so that they really benefited our clients.

Borough wide helpline

The most successful change, without doubt, had been the introduction of a Waverley-wide telephone helpline. This had significantly increased the availability of our service to our clients, meaning that everyone across the borough could now reach us 5 days a week. This had resulted in a greater than 10% increase in the number of people we had been able to help.

As well as being welcomed by our clients, this change had largely been well received by our volunteer advisers, although there were still some lingering concerns about the risk of our turning into another dreaded “call centre.” I am pleased to say that these worries retreated as it has become clear that this new system had opened our services to more people than ever, and had introduced some much needed prioritisation.

District structure

The change that appeared to be taking the longest to embed was the new District structure. Whilst it was relatively simple to bring together the mechanics of a new District wide organisation, it was not so easy to win the hearts and minds of all of our volunteers to its benefits. This was no great surprise, as a number of them had been loyally serving their own local communities for many years. However over time the obvious advantages of the new organisational structure have now reduced these concerns to the very margins, and there is now a very positive feeling amongst our volunteers of being part of a wider team.

Recognition

I quickly realised that I had not only joined a great organisation, but also at a time when it was just beginning to enjoy some well deserved, high-profile recognition for its achievements (and for all the hard work behind them). In Spring 2008 we passed a rigorous audit by Citizens Advice, where the auditor praised our progress as “a considerable achievement [that] deserves recognition”. More recently we were runners up in a national ‘Volunteer Team of the Year’ awards for 2008.

The future

So where do we go from here? We are now working on getting the bal-

ance right between our “curative” advice (i.e. helping people to sort out their existing problems) and our “preventative” training (i.e. helping people to learn the skills necessary to avoid facing those problems in the first place). As a first step we have trained some of our advisers in delivering “financial literacy” training and are currently working with Waverley Borough Council and others to identify the best ways to reach suitable audiences.

Our vision is that this will be the start of a series of projects designed to make our services more visible, accessible and relevant to the people who may benefit most from our advice, and at the times in their lives when this would be of greatest value.

Much of this work will be done in partnership with other local organisations to meet common goals.

Summary

We have come a very long way in the last year or so, but still face many new challenges, not least in helping the increasing number of people facing problems resulting from the “credit crunch.” But I am convinced that with the energy and commitment of our team of volunteers and staff, and working in ever closer partnerships with other local organisations, we will be able to address these challenges in a very positive way that will enable us to continue to be of great benefit to our community.

To sum it up in the words of the song “the only way is up!”

Phil Davies
Advice Services Manager

How Are We Doing?

Internal Successes

In order to retain their Citizen Advice Membership each Citizens Advice Bureau has to undergo a vigorous independent audit of both the quality of its advice and the soundness of its governance.

In May 2008, CA Waverley had its first such audit. We were delighted with the Auditor's recognition of the challenges that we had faced and overcome to achieve our very successful result. He commented :

"The organisation has secured enormous change both by restructuring and in piloting and showcasing improved methods of service delivery. It has completed this while preserving

service quality and stability as well as staff and volunteer satisfaction. This is a considerable achievement and deserves recognition"

This achievement was also recognised by CiTA, our national body, when CA Waverley was runner-up in the prestigious national "Volunteer Team of the Year" Awards for 2008. Our volunteers were highly commended by the judges, who described theirs as an "outstanding achievement in a field of exceptional candidates."

Advisory Group

This year we have also established a new Advisory Group, the purpose of which is to act as a resource to the Board of Trustees on planning, implementation and

evaluation of CA Waverley's services and activities. The group will serve as a formal mechanism to exchange information, ideas and concerns relating to the identified needs of the community.

Members of this group have recently undertaken a consultation exercise with voluntary and statutory agencies in Waverley borough to establish what are seen as major social problems facing the community and the best ways that we can address them.

Berry Rance
District Manager

We estimate that the economic value of our volunteers' contribution to CA Waverley to be around £700,000.



St Mark's Community Centre, Godalming

Developing our Services

Outreach St Mark's Community Centre, Godalming

On 21st October we started a new outreach service at St Mark's Community Centre, Godalming. This consists of a fully trained adviser being available at the centre every Tuesday morning from 10:00 to 12:00. This is initially being run as a 6 week

trial. Subject to uptake and availability of suitable funding, we hope to provide a permanent outreach at the Centre from early next year.

"Don't lose your home/business"

We are currently working in close partnership with Waverley Borough Council (WBC) on developing suitable support

services for people using the new WBC "Don't lose your home/business" helpline.



What Do Our Clients Think Of Us?

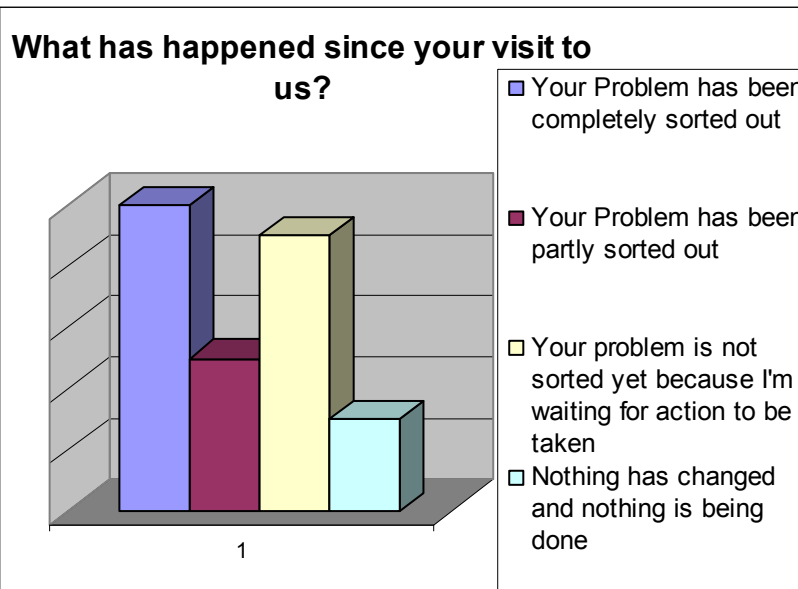
We recently carried out a telephone questionnaire to find out what our clients felt about our services. We contacted clients who had indicated on their "welcome sheets" that they were happy to be contacted. All of those clients who took part said they would use our service again, and would recommend it to others! Although two people were unhappy about the time they had to wait for an adviser, everyone was happy with the length of time

they were given to discuss their problem. Most clients were also happy with our opening times, although two commented that they were disappointed to find the Cranleigh bureau closed when they visited, and a further two said that would like to see the Cranleigh bureau open for longer. 72% of clients' polled said that CA Waverley was "crucial" to resolving their problems, with the remaining 28% believing it had been "fairly important."

Everyone found our advice and information easy to understand.



"I would recommend CA Waverley to anyone. The way you can talk people round and put at ease and go through the problems one by one. I can't praise anyone high enough."
 Mr E.
 -Debt



"Thank you for doing what you do. It's a marvelous service."
 Mr B.
 -Benefits

"It's nice to know there is someone to turn to." "I feel more confident to now do it myself."
 Mrs K.
 -Tax

"I'm now at ease as I was always worried the bailiffs would be round, I could never relax."
 Ms K.
 -Debt



"Very good, brilliant. I was put very at ease as I was upset."
 Ms J.
 -Debt

"The chap I dealt with was brilliant."
 Ms B.
 - Education

Prescription Survey Results

CA Waverley recently asked it's clients how the recent increase in prescription charges had affected them. The results make very interesting reading and indicate that a significant number of people are either find-

“Students shouldn't have to pay for prescriptions.”

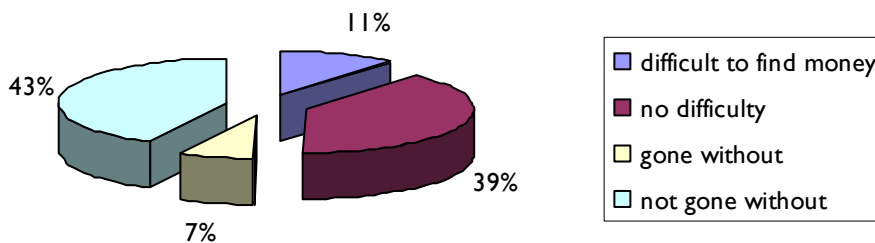
ing the new prescription charges difficult to afford or are simply going without their required medication. These finding have been fed back to a Citizens Advice national organisation.



“Unfair that those on low incomes like me have to go without because of cost.”

“Son still in school but has to pay for prescriptions.”

NHS Prescription Charge Results



Fighting the Credit Crunch

Representatives from CA Waverley will be joining Jeremy Hunt and representatives from Waverley Borough Council and an energy saving organisation at a series of meetings across the borough to listen to people's concerns and offer advice on the current financial crisis.



The dates of the meetings are:

Friday 7th November from 6:00—7:00pm in the [Barley Room at Farnham Maltings](#);

Thursday 27th November from 6:00-7:00pm at [Haslemere Museum](#);

Thursday 11th December from 7:30-8:30pm at the [Baptist Church in Godalming](#).

Citizens Advice Waverley

Village Way
Cranleigh
Surrey
GU6 6AF

Montrose House
South Street
Farnham
GU9 7RN

10 Queen Street
Godalming
Surrey
GU7 1BE

Well Lane House
Well Lane
High Street
Haslemere
GU27 2LB

Advice Line: 0844 848 7969

www.citizensadvicewaverley.co.uk

Citizens Advice aims:

- to provide the advice people need for the problems they face
- to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

Registered charity no. 1098859



Working for our Community

Citizens Advice Waverley

News from the Bureaux

CRANLEIGH

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Sandra Taylor as the new administration officer for Cranleigh. She had been volunteering as an Information Assistant since March 2007, and we are delighted she has taken up this post.

FARNHAM

The Friends of Farnham recently ran a very successful (and fiendishly difficult!) quiz night to raise funds for the bureau. A good time was had by all and the evening raised nearly £1,000!!!

GODALMING

Annabel Foster and Angela Wainwright recently jointly taken over the role of Advice Manager for the Godalming bureau. Annabel previously worked as an adviser at Godalming for more than 5 years. Angela was an adviser at our Haslemere bureau for a number of years, including four years working as bureau deputy manager.

Fond Farewells

One of the District's long-



est serving advisers, Audrey Sayers, retired in September this year. Audrey had worked at Cranleigh

Godalming bureau also celebrated its 30th anniversary this year.



Godalming bureau opens in Friends Meeting House, Mill Lane on 15th May 1978

Volunteers from Godalming Bureau recently raised £283.84 with a street and supermarket collection.

HASLEMERE

We were very pleased to welcome Jeremy Hunt MP to one of our recent Haslemere team meetings. Jeremy was thankful for the service provided by CA



Waverley and said he understood the problems faced by our clients; although Surrey looks prosperous, some of its inhabitants still face significant problems including poverty, lack of proper housing etc. He recognised the importance of the voluntary sector organisations like CA Waverley in supporting such local people.

Haslemere bureau is preparing to celebrate its 70th year in existence in 2009! It was one of the very first 200 Citizens Advice Bureaux to be established.



to the work of Godalming CAB.

Godalming bureau also said goodbye to Christine Lonsdale who worked as Advice Manager since 2006 and previously as Deputy Manager since 2003. Chris had made a major contribution to the development of the Godalming bureau and its role in the District structure, and we wish her well in her new ventures.

We said goodbye this month to Shirley Baring-Johnson, who had worked as an adviser at the Godalming bureau since 2002. Shirley was recently honoured by the town mayor in recognition of her "outstanding contribution"