

Staffordshire South West
Citizens Advice Bureau

the charity for
your community



**Service Run in Conjunction With
Hednesford Town Council 2014-2015**

Staffordshire South West Citizens Advice Bureau has received funding from Hednesford Town Council to provide an advice service at the Pye Green Community Centre since 2009.

The Bureau provides an advice worker from the times of 10.00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Thursdays weekly. The service is available for people to drop in and wait, rather than fixed appointment times, and, informal feedback shows that this suits service users best.

The adviser dealt with 136 enquires in Pye Green Community Centre.

54 clients were disabled or suffered from long term health problems.
40 clients were over the age of 60.

Enquiry Areas

Advice Area	Total
Benefits	70
Consumer except, Financial Utilities	4
Debt	20
Employment	8
Health and Community Care	2
Housing	13
Legal	2
Relationships & Family	11
Travel, Transport & Holidays	2
Utilities	4
Grand Total	136

The majority of clients presented with benefit enquiries (70).

The changes in 2013 linked to Welfare Reform are still affecting benefit claimants greatly. The benefit enquires particularly relate to the changes from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payment (36) and to the claiming process for Employment Support Allowance (28).

The adviser has assisted in 9 benefit appeals in the area of Working & Child Tax Credits, Personal Independence Payment, Employment Support Allowance and Housing Benefit.

20 enquiries had debt as their presenting problem, for those with complex multiple debt issues the adviser made appointments and referred clients onto specialist advisers.

Housing and Relationships & Family follow closely as issues being presented. The adviser has found clients are presenting with more complex issues and they find being able to access the service locally enables them to get the face to face help they need in the area they live.

Total Amount of Debt dealt with

Debt Area	Number	Amount owed
Benefit overpayment	3	£12,710.02
Gas	1	£400.00
Other	4	£501.39
Water rates arrears	1	£307.28
Grand Total	9	£13,918.69

Financial Outcomes

In total financial outcomes with a value of **£197,042.68** have been awarded as a result of these interventions, all of which began with a visit to the Community Centre.

Outcome Area	Number	Annualised Value
Benefits & tax credits	66	£190,832.92
Benefit / tax credit gain - a new award or increase	55	£180,061.52
Benefit / tax credit gain - award or increase following revision or appeal	2	£1,494.30
Benefit / tax credit gain - overpayment reduced or not recovered	2	£1,592.62
Benefit / tax credit maintained	1	£7,214.48
Complaint successful	1	£470.00
Debt	2	£6,109.76
Budgeting change	1	£409.76
Reduction/removal charges	1	£5,700.00
Health & community care	1	£100.00
Free or reduced charges/costs	1	£100.00
Grand Total	71	£197,042.68

The Bureau is able to provide vouchers to clients in immediate need to access food; clients are referred to the bureau to receive a voucher.

During 2014-15 Staffordshire South West Citizens Advice Bureau have dealt with 379 clients from the three Hednesford local authority wards.

The figures above cannot illustrate the value of the advice to the individual clients seen.

The case study below shows the very real difference that can be made to people's lives.

The client came to Pye Green outreach with his sister. The client is a council tenant holding joint tenancy with his sister, he is 71 years old and suffers from severe asthma, arthritis in his knees and hands, anxiety and panic attacks; he walks with the aid of walking sticks and has to have an inhaler all the time with him. The client tries to be as independent as he can, however his sister states she has to cut his food up for him as he is unable to manage, he struggles with stairs which then make him very breathless and so has to stop part way. The client's sister says that her brother panics when he is outdoors as he is very unsteady on his feet and has fallen over a number of times. She also helps him to get dressed as he has problems with his arms.

The client had partially completed an Attendance Allowance form and wanted help to check over the form to see if they have covered everything.

The adviser reviewed the application form that client had completed and assisted in parts that were incomplete, the client had indicated that he doesn't have difficulties with most things and when questioned he said it was because he managed in "a roundabout way". The Adviser explained to the client why detail is paramount in completing the form.

The client quickly received a decision from Department of Work and Pensions regarding his application and was awarded Low rate Attendance Allowance of £54.45p/w. The client returned to Pye Green outreach, he was very grateful for the help that he had received and came to thank the adviser for helping him as he said that if it hadn't had the help and support he wouldn't have put the form in as he believes there are people far worse than him. The adviser felt that the client should have been awarded higher rate as he met the criteria for this. The adviser called Department of Work and Pensions to request a mandatory reconsideration; they took the clients details and stated they would call him back within 5 days to see why he disagrees.

It was explained to the client what criteria he meets and also written down for him the points he needed to raise when they called him back. Client again thanked the adviser for helping him as he would not have taken things as far if left up to him as he is very grateful for them awarding him any benefit at all.

1 week later the client returned. He was extremely surprised at how quick Department of Work and Pensions contacted him back, he stated it was the same day, he said he was very panicky and nervous on the phone, however the lady he spoke to helped to calm him down, he said that he has now been awarded high rate

Annual Council Meeting 19 May 2015 agenda Item Page 48

Attendance Allowance of £81.30p/w, he is truly grateful for the services that have been provided through CAB at his local community centre which also is very close to his home which has meant that he could access services easily and close to him.

The outcome of his successful application will enable client to gain more independence and less reliance on family. He will be able to pay for assistance with his passion, which is the garden which has been making him anxious with the amount of work that needs to be completed. He feels he will now be able to contribute to payment of transport for hospital appointments as he relies on other people to assist him.

The financial outcome for the client amounts to £4,227.60 per annum.