

WEALDEN CITIZENS ADVICE - HAILSHAM BUREAU Report on Performance - end-year review 2015/16

Aim

To provide the advice people need for the problems they face and to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives. The service is free, confidential, independent and impartial and values diversity and promotes equality and challenges discrimination. The service is available to everyone informing people of their rights and responsibilities.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Opening Hours

Following the award of additional funding through the Big Lottery Fund under our *Better Together* project, Hailsham bureau provides advice: face to face, over the phone, by email and by skype during the following opening times; these opening times have been maintained despite the end of Lottery funding in August 2015 and will be continued through 16/17 following successful fundraising.

Day	Face to face	Telephone	email	Skype
Monday	9.30 to 3	9.30 to 3	9.30 to 3	10 to 12
Tuesday	Closed except for specialist appointments	9.30 to 12		
Wednesday	9.30 to 3	9.30 to 3	9.30 to 3	10 to 12
Thursday	9.30 to 3	9.30 to 3	9.30 to 3	10 to 12
Friday	9.30 to 3	9.30 to 3	9.30 to 3	10 to 12

In addition, we are able to offer specialist appointments at the bureau in money advice and welfare benefit appeals with the support of local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) who are funding expert services to the end of 16/17 when existing County Council and Lottery funding expires.

In April 2015 Wealden Citizens Advice joined ADVICELINE - the Citizens Advice national telephone service, in partnership with other East Sussex bureaux. This means that telephone advice is now available 5 days a week until 4pm every day within the county. Callers ringing outside these times have access to a central Citizens Advice team until 5pm and also to recorded information. Joining ADVICELINE has enabled us **to help 10% more people across the District than we did in 14/15.**

2. Our service

Overall Wealden Citizens Advice helped **4,586 people with 19,974 issues** in 2015/16.

The Hailsham bureau helped **1,712 clients** in 2015/16, **9.5% more than last year.**

45% of Hailsham clients reported a disability or long term health condition and 27% were 60 or over.

Hailsham clients raised **7,892 issues** - giving a ratio of **4.6 issues per client**. A full summary of the issues handled is attached at annex A.

Of the issues raised the main five areas of advice were as follows: welfare benefits 29%; debt 28%; housing 7%; employment 7%; relationships & family 5%.

The bureau gained over **£1.6m** in known improved financial outcomes for clients over this period, **over £1.2m of which was made up of additional income** e.g. previously unclaimed benefits and tax credits. The actual amount is likely to be significantly higher as some clients will have been able to take their own action, following initial bureau support.

3. Research & Campaigns

The Hailsham bureau leads our work on research & campaigns, submitting 230 evidence forms to national Citizens Advice. Citizens Advice have changed the way they call for evidence so we now make fewer but more detailed submissions on issues of national concern.

Current areas being targeted for action concern:

- The operation of the welfare benefits system (around half of all evidence forms submitted). We are working with Food Banks on gathering evidence on the impact of delays in resolving benefit applications and appeals.
- Fuel poverty - where we have been successful in securing funding to operate public information events across the district helping people to secure the best deal on their energy supply. We are currently looking at operating more events in over 50s housing.
- The costs of letting agents and the restrictions on private renting as part of our work on reducing homelessness.
- Employment rights (including zero hours contracts).
- The changes to council tax arrangements where, since April, all residents are facing paying at least 20% of the charge.

4. Our staff & Volunteers

We are fortunate to have 38 volunteers at Hailsham.

These volunteers are supported by:

- Full time equivalent advice session supervision
- A full-time money adviser (half of which is devoted to supporting those with mental health issues)
- 8 hours a week admin support
- A share of full time equivalent trainer
- Access to the help of specialist staff e.g. Hastings Advice & Representation Centre advice on benefit appeals.

Wealden Citizens Advice is also supported by 11 volunteer trustees.

5. Other service developments

We are currently focusing on how we can increase the number of people we can see and our reach into the local community.

We have been awarded funding from Sussex Community Foundation to support the development of our volunteers so that our receptionists can help more people with information on days we are particularly busy and can undertake more outreach work. To that end we are also piloting a touchscreen advice kiosk in Hailsham, where we hope the results will enable us to fund advice points in locations across the district.

We have also been funded to pilot the operation of a single point of contact for those needing advice or support who live in a cold home as envisaged in the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) Guidelines. This will be delivered in partnership with the County and District Councils and HWLH CCG.

Our First Aid for Debt East Sussex (FADES) Lottery funded project which supports those in financial difficulty with mental health issues is now being evaluated. Early results suggest that addressing practical debt issues is having a positive impact on client health and is reducing the number of times clients need to see their GP, so saving money for the NHS. This support will continue through 16/17 thanks to funding from the East Sussex CCGs.

Annex A

Part 1	Number of Advice Events	% Issues	Unique Client Count	Ratio of issues per client
Benefits & tax credits	2,257	29%	725	3.1
Consumer goods & services	203	3%	122	1.7
Debt	2,233	28%	434	5.1
Education	33	0%	21	1.6
Employment	499	6%	209	2.4
Financial services & capability	378	5%	126	3.0
Health & community care	105	1%	59	1.8
Housing	572	7%	283	2.0
Immigration & asylum	40	1%	23	1.7
Legal	403	5%	220	1.8
Other	317	4%	164	1.9
Relationships & family	407	5%	217	1.9
Tax	114	1%	65	1.8
Travel & transport	76	1%	47	1.6
Utilities & communications	175	2%	82	2.1
Discrimination	80	1%	49	1.6
Grand Total	7,892	99%	1,592	5.0

Information regarding the funding of the Hailsham Bureau

<i>How much will it cost to run the Hailsham Bureau 5 days a week in 16/17?</i>	
Premises (inc. fuel bills, rates etc)	10,500
Salaries (supervisor, 1 day per week trainer, cleaner, 1 day per week admin asst, share of CEO and District Administrator time, money adviser)	67,821
Staff expenses	1,800
Volunteer expenses	3,500
Office costs, inc IT & comms, insurance etc	9,100
Governance (fees to CitA, audit etc)	3,300
Total	96,021

<i>How will we fund that service in 16/17?</i>	
Hailsham Town Council	12,079
Wealden District Council	50,000
Local parishes (estimated)	4,000
Total	66,079
Has to be raised from other sources inc Lottery, charitable trusts	29,942

With the exception of a 3 year sla with Wealden District Council and a further 3 year sla with Crowborough Town Council, WCA has to bid for all sources of funding every year. This involves over 30 bids per year to local councils in addition to charitable trusts, other statutory services such as Clinical Commissioning Groups. This is a significant overhead for the charity.

A 3 year sla is delivered in return for the provision of an agreed service/outcomes.

Things we would like to do:

- Have an extra work station to support expanding our ADVICELINE capacity and webchat (cost £500)
- Have a touch screen kiosk so that at time we are busy clients can access information with support. (cost £1.7k)