

Update on services

by Zoe Holter (Company Secretary CAES)

LATEST NEWS FROM CITIZENS ADVICE EAST SUSSEX

Clients visit Citizens Advice for help regarding several issues, many of which are related to benefits and debts. Below is a summary of benefits enquiries across the five CAES bureau in East Sussex, as reported by **Alan Bruzon, Bureau Manager, Eastbourne**. This summary is an overview of the range of benefits enquiries which have been encountered since April 2014.

The summary has also been compared to the percentage of Adviceguide users nationally, who may seek information about benefits or debt through the online information site.

Across the five East Sussex Bureaux, benefits enquiries are currently 29% of the Bureau total enquiry subjects and often go with debt enquiries which stand at 24%, making financial problems over half the total enquiries. Nationally benefit advice sought through the use of Adviceguide stands at 17% compared to 11% of users searching for advice related to debt making financial enquiries 28% of overall enquiries nationally.

The national Adviceguide figures show a 43% rise in benefits enquiries and a 21%

rise in debt enquiries nationally when compared with the same period last year.

Alan reported that in Eastbourne alone there has been a 6% increase in financial enquiries which may be attributable to a greater capacity to offer support through ESCC funding for a full time generalist adviser.

Funding a full time generalist adviser enables Bureaux to target services where they are most needed locally.

The top 5 enquiries within the benefits category across the five Bureaux are:

- **Housing Benefit (HB)**
- Employment & Support Allowance (ESA)
- Other Benefit issues
- Working Tax Credit (WTC)
- Council tax reduction (CTR)

Housing Benefit (and to some extent Council Tax reduction) are usually the highest subcategory as they are related to other qualifying benefits like JSA and ESA.

HB enquiries are mostly related to eligibility and changes of circumstances to existing

Between
1st April 2014 – 30th September 2014

10,195

Number of clients visiting bureau

111,274

Number of clients accessing Adviceguide

Please address all enquiries, responses and other issues raised by this newsletter to:
contact@escab.org.uk

Email us the details of others who would like to receive this newsletter.
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/caes

Patron: Mr Peter Field,
Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex

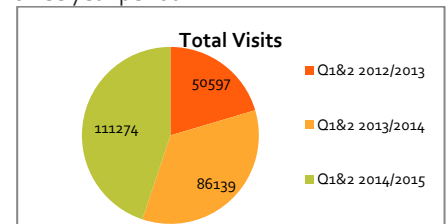
IN THIS ISSUE; EMAIL ADVICE UPDATE

claims and discretionary payments. Page 2 details a focus on **national** housing statistics.

Every year our advice helps over a million people and our campaigns for better policies benefit even more. A total of 333 volunteers make our work possible.

Adviceguide visits 2014/2015 Q1&2

Below is a chart showing the significant increase in usage in the same period over a three year period.



Adviceline

The service is preparing for the implementation of the service, with four of the bureau ready to embark on training and ensuring that all periods were covered.

First Aid for Debt in East Sussex (FADES)

Doctors and health care workers are making increased referrals to this new project as they see how their client group can benefit. The service helps clients with debt problems and either mental-ill health or long-term health conditions to resolve their financial problems.

- providing training and support to paid staff and volunteers
- producing a set of training materials for Bureaux to use in future

The result is a website which clients can use to send their enquiry to the Bureau in order to access advice quickly and efficiently.

This is available via a link from each of the Bureaux own websites. Katie finished this project in September 2014 and we will continue to refine the system and in future we anticipate that it will become a preferred way for clients to make their initial contact.

You can access this website directly via www.eastsussexcab.co.uk

Email Advice

By Alan Bruzon (*Bureau Manager, Eastbourne*)

During 2013 we received funding from Citizens Advice Transformation fund to develop new and innovative services which increased access for clients and involved Bureaux sharing their resources to work collaboratively.

This enabled us to employ Katie Hilsdon, who had been one of our Gateway Assessors, to manage the setting-up of an email gateway system for the 5 Bureaux in East Sussex.

The project started in September 2013 and involved:

- researching examples of systems set up by other Bureaux and identifying best practice,
- liaising with paid staff and volunteers in the 5 Bureaux
- working with a web design company to set up the site

On the case ... A Gas Engineer who had just disconnected an elderly client's boiler referred her to the CAB. Bureau visited the client who had already received assistance under the Cold Weather Service. Benefits check undertaken and additional financial assistance identified. Charitable assistance also identified to assist with the boiler and other disrepair within the property. This was a good example of multi agency interaction assisting the client and good use of fuel poverty assistance provision within the county.

Update – the client has received financial assistance from one charity, some repairs have been undertaken by a second charity and client is still awaiting some additional assistance from a third charity.

to 900 and repairs and maintenance are up 14% to 3,800

Threatened homelessness is up 7% to 15,900 – possession actions are up 10% to 2,600 for HAs, up 12% 2,000 for LAs and up 29% to 3,200 for Private Landlords.

LA homelessness service is up 11% to 3,800

Access to provision of accommodation is up 16% to 8,500. Within this finding and securing PRS accommodation is up 26% to 1,900, emergency accommodation up 11% to 680 and exchanges up 20% to 3,100.

HA property issues are up 8% to 9,300 (repairs & maintenance up 30% to 1,400)

Environment & neighbour issues are up 6% to 8,600

National Focus Housing enquiries 2014/2015

Cablink Statistics
1st April – 30th September

Housing enquiries overall up 9% nationally

Actual homelessness is up 15% to 6,500

Private Rented Sector property issues are up 5% to 29,700.

Possession orders not for arrears are up for Private Landlords by 20% to 2,100, harassment / illegal evictions are up 15%

Citizens Advice 1066
The Advice and Community Hub
London Road, St Leonards on Sea
East Sussex TN37 6AN
01424 721420
admin@citizensadvice1066.co.uk

Eastbourne CAB and registered office for CAES
Unit 6, Highlight House,
8 St Leonards Road, Eastbourne
East Sussex BN21 3UH
01323 413480
info@eastbournecab.co.uk

Lewes District CAB
The Barn, 3 North Court, Lewes
East Sussex BN7 2AR
01273 477924
bureauxmanager@lewescab.cabnet.org.uk

Rother District CAB
Bank Chambers, Buckhurst Road
Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex TN40
1QF
01424 215055/734549
manager@rdcab.cabnet.org.uk

Wealden Citizens Advice
The Hub, Civic Approach, Uckfield
East Sussex TN22 1AL
01825 762807
chiefexecutive@uckfieldcab.cabnet.org.uk

Company Secretary
Zoe Holter
zoe@holter.plus.com