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**citizens
advice
bureau**

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An insight into Citizens Advice Hampshire



in contact



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Thank you

Our update for the Hampshire Advice and Information Community



During the 20 months I have been CEO of Citizens Advice Hampshire I have met many people and witnessed many changes across the advice network. Some of this has been instigated locally through a need to adapt and be flexible to an ever changing environment. But some change has been forced upon us through government legislation, local austerity measures and the introduction of new ways of working on the national stage. The response to this need for change often takes the form of working in collaboration rather than in competition.

Citizens Advice Hampshire is part of an extended family of professional and committed staff and volunteers. It is also part of a trusted brand which puts us in a strong position when it comes to maintaining and securing new partnership working. We are already involved in a number of successful partnerships such as Healthwatch Hampshire, Local Welfare Assistance, Hampshire Macmillan, Financial Capability, Web-chat and Hampshire Adviceline.

We don't enter these collaborative working arrangements lightly. Before making any decision, we measure the benefit new partnerships will bring to our member bureaux and their clients whilst ensuring any new negotiations do not duplicate those already happening at a local level.

Citizens Advice has a growing recognition of the valuable role a consortium such as ours can play and has approached us with a view to working with them more closely. Not only that, Citizens Advice Hampshire is held up as an exemplar of best practice for other bureaux consortia to follow. I have been invited to speak to other consortia and we have had a number of conversations with bureaux recently that are keen to learn about the way we do things.

We are always looking for opportunities to work with new partners; not just to deliver services but to make best use of our collective research and campaigning resources to lobby for better local provision. If you or your organisation would like to investigate the benefits of working alongside Citizens Advice Hampshire in the future, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these with you.

Paul Bright, CEO – Citizens Advice Hampshire

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Citizens Advice Hampshire
Let's work together

Pension Wise

helping navigate the pensions maze

The way people are able to access their pension savings when they reach age 55 changed in April ...



Our local Pension Wise service is provided by Rushmoor CAB and can be accessed at a number of locations in Hampshire: Aldershot, Andover, Eastleigh, Farnborough and Tadley. A team has

been recruited and trained to deliver the guidance sessions along with admin staff to support the service delivery.

During a face-to-face appointment, the adviser will discuss with the client: pension and retirement information; highlight all the things they need to consider by asking for information and raising issues; help users to understand the pros and cons of the options they have; practical next steps and things to think about before they decide what to do; and empowering users to ask questions, shop around and avoid pension scams.

Want to know more: Visit <https://www.pensionwise.gov.uk/>

Opening the doors to telephone advice

Hampshire bureaux answer more than 1600 calls each month demonstrating the value our clients place on this essential service.

Hampshire Adviceline is rated as one of the best in the country for its high quality and responsive service. Operating out of ten bureaux our advisers regularly answer twice the national average number of calls. Such is the reputation of our telephone service that we have a further three bureaux lined up to join us within the next four months and four more waiting in the wings.



Not only that, Citizens Advice has approached us to be an 'early adopter' of their new Phone Strategy. This means we will be at the forefront of the development and roll-out of a service which offers our clients a consistently high-quality phone service no matter where they are, provides a service which integrates with other advice channels, and supports advice provision across the country by enabling bureaux to support one another and their clients.

Of course, our existing service won't be affected during the development phase but we will have the opportunity to work with other bureaux to agree on and work to the same high standards, support one another to meet client demand and be involved in developing the tools and techniques needed to deliver the best telephone assessment and advice service in the best way.

Know someone who could use our help? Call us on 03444 111 306.

Hampshire Advice Network

8 July 2015

Join us and our guest speakers at the next Hampshire Advice Network event on **Wednesday 8 July 2015** at Winchester Guildhall.

At the event in February, attendees were asked to rank their most pressing challenges for the year ahead. It was

no surprise that finances and the need to change day-to-day working practices was high on the list. So we will focus on these at our next event and offer the opportunity to learn from and share experiences and ideas from other local agencies.

Invitations will be issued in June. If you want to know more contact Michelle Smith at admin1@citahants.org



Governance Review

Preparing for the future

Since forming nearly seven years ago, the environment in which we work has markedly changed. Bureaux have merged/are merging, funding cuts have hit hard at a local level, county-wide funding opportunities are increasing but with tougher criteria, and significant changes are proposed at a national level for bureaux and consortia.

As the landscape has changed, so must we. This is likely to involve a wholesale change in our structure and the roles and responsibilities of the Trustee Board, its supporting committees/steering groups and staff.

An away-day planned for June will help pave the way to a new approach. More information will follow once a blueprint has been developed, agreed and member bureaux consulted.

Local Welfare Assistance - helping people in crisis

Through negotiation with Hampshire County Council, Citizens Advice Hampshire and Basingstoke Citizens Advice Bureau successfully applied to take over delivery of the Local Welfare Assistance Helpline.

Starting on 1 April 2015 the one-year grant funded service provides a telephone helpline for local people who feel they have nowhere else to turn. Due to a drop in funding, discretionary payments to callers has stopped although there is still access to a range of local charities and services which provide furniture and white goods to those in need.

This Hampshire County Council helpline provides advice and information to any household where assistance is needed to stop a situation from developing into a crisis. Available for both the public and professionals its aim is three-fold:

- To provide the tools for families and households in crisis to deal with their immediate problem, build resilience and to move forward.
- To share knowledge and information about the help available through community networks with other professionals.
- Using the intelligence gathered in delivering the service to help Hampshire County Council identify and develop the necessary support and provision to address the critical needs of some of Hampshire's most vulnerable residents.

Graham Hatcher, CEO at Basingstoke CAB explained: *"We often see people at crisis point, so understand the importance of helping them to deal with their immediate problem and to have the tools to prevent it happening again. Although still early days, the majority of calls taken have covered food, utilities and furniture with the underlying issue being around benefits."*

"The role of the assessor is to find out from the caller what their situation is and what we can do next to support them. Some of the calls are more complicated than others; the good news is that our help can result in a successful outcome."



Making a difference ...

In November 2014 Steven (43) was admitted to the Royal Hampshire County Hospital in Winchester with back pain. It was subsequently diagnosed as multiple myeloma (bone cancer). Steven's spine then collapsed breaking three vertebrae in his back. In a body cast and bedridden for 4-5 weeks, Steven ended up spending several months in hospital.

At the time of his hospital admittance Steven was working in Andover and sleeping on his friends' sofa. His job involved hard physical labour and as a result of the injury to his spine he had to give up work. His injured spine also meant he was no longer able to stay with his friends as he had to sleep with a back support.

As he had to leave the hospital, Steven's social worker was only able to find him a place at a care home until more permanent housing could be secured. When he called the helpline Steven had been at the care home for several months and was desperate to leave.

Steven's support worker eventually found him suitable housing but it was completely unfurnished. Although he had received the key and was already paying rent, Steven could not move as it had no furniture and he could not afford to buy any. The local council agreed that once Steven had moved in to his new accommodation, a home visit to carry out a benefits check would be arranged. Unfortunately Steven couldn't move in until his new home was furnished: he was stuck in a vicious cycle.

Our assessor arranged for a caseworker from Winchester Citizens Advice Bureau to visit Steven at the care home to carry out a benefits check. Furniture was sourced through the Furniture Re-Use Project at a heavily reduced price (a fridge-freezer was even supplied for free) and a grant was identified to cover this cost.

With this help Steven was able to move into his new fully furnished property with all of his benefits having been applied for or put in place.

Have you got clients who need our help? Call us on 0300 330 1150.

Healthwatch Hampshire

Partnership in Action

In partnership with Help and Care and Action Hampshire, we support our Hampshire bureaux to provide a face-to-face advice, information and signposting service to their clients in relation to health and community care. Many clients who access this service are usually able to help themselves once they receive some initial support – either through leaflets and other information or by signposting them to other agencies.

If the issue is more complex or it is clear the client needs more support, an appointment is made for them at their local bureau for advice – generalist or specialist depending on the complexity of their situation.

We also offer support to Hampshire people who want to complain about NHS services through our Healthwatch Hampshire NHS Complaints Advocacy Service. This help can range from providing information to help someone pursue a complaint themselves to offering the support of an experienced advocate who can guide a person through the sometimes complicated complaints process. Usually clients might complain because they have been denied access to a service they have a right to or they have already spoken with the organisation which should provide the service and are not happy with the response they received. Clients might also want a commitment that procedures will be improved so that other people don't have the same experience they had.

Support where it's needed

A client visited their local Citizens Advice Bureau in March 2015. Her father had been a resident at a Hampshire-based care home until his death the previous November. The client was anxious about the quality of care her father had received – cold or inedible food, dirty surroundings, unhelpful staff – and although she had complained to the Home's management there had been no improvements.

The client and her mother were hurt by the lack of care shown by managers and staff. As a result she wanted to prevent other families from experiencing the poor quality of care her father had endured so the bureau volunteer talked her through the options available. This included signposting the client to organisations she could contact including the Healthwatch NHS Complaints Advocacy Service.

After assessing her options, the client contacted the Healthwatch Hampshire helpline seeking further help. Through discussions with the client it transpired that she had already related her concerns to Hampshire County Council Adult Services which had placed her father in the Home. As a result the Care Quality Commission immediately inspected the premises, rated it as inadequate and gave its management team a deadline to comply with their requirements.

Despite reassurances that things were now in hand the client wanted to pursue a formal complaint as she felt her family was owed an apology. She was able to do this through following the guidance available from the Healthwatch Hampshire website or through the Healthwatch NHS Complaints Advocacy Team.



A new appointment

In April Ben Gillett joined us as our new Healthwatch Hampshire Delivery Manager. With a strong professional background in NHS management roles,



Ben is responsible for the day to day operational aspects of Healthwatch Hampshire in bureaux and will work closely with staff and volunteers. Ben will build on the great work already done during the first two years of the partnership ensuring bureaux colleagues continue providing a consistently high quality service to Healthwatch clients.

Contact us ...

- Drop in to your local CAB: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>
- Phone: 01962 440262
- Email: enquiries@healthwatchhampshire.co.uk
- Visit: www.healthwatchhampshire.co.uk/

Let your fingers do the 'talking'

In a bid to increase the way that clients can access advice, seven of our bureaux are now providing a web-chat service along with a further 76 bureaux in England and Wales.

Basingstoke, Gosport, Havant, New Forest, Rushmoor, Tadley and Winchester bureaux are taking part in a one-year pilot to develop an on-line service which will at some point also include email provision.



Clients can access the web-chat service via the national Citizens Advice website - www.citizensadvice.org.uk – and by clicking on the tab which best describes the issue they are facing. If visitors to the site can't find what they are looking for they can opt to 'chat now' with an assessor in real time.

The on-line service offers an initial assessment of the client's situation – the same as if they used the phone or chose to 'walk-in' to a bureau in their area. If it is clear that simply providing information or signposting the client to other sources of help is not enough, an appointment can be made with their local bureau or, if a specialist debt adviser is on-line, the client can be transferred directly to them for more comprehensive and tailored support.

Feedback to date has been positive with more and more clients choosing to use the service every week.

Business Plan

Planning for the future

Our 2015-16 business plan is now available to download and view on our website - <http://citahants.org/publications.html>. It sets out our vision and targets for the future, information on the structure and role of the consortium and a review of our performance against last year's milestones.

Financial Capability Training

Job Centre Plus clients can now benefit from financial capability training delivered by Portsmouth CAB from Job Centres in Cosham and Eastleigh.

This is great news and thanks to a £25,000 grant from the Department of Work and Pensions secured by Citizens Advice Hampshire.

Depending on the success of the training, we are hopeful that further funding may be available next year.

Hampshire Macmillan Citizens Advice Service

Our team of Macmillan advisers work from outreach locations including hospitals, hospices and Citizens Advice Bureaux across Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight. The team offers advice on a range of issues including money matters, benefits and employment to those living with or being treated for cancer and regularly secures over £1m per quarter in financial outcomes for its clients.

Service Manager Sue Alford has been very successful in securing a contribution to future funding from our partners, including hospital trusts, hospices and charity trusts to deliver the Hampshire Macmillan service to June 2016. This is in addition to the grant allocated by Macmillan Cancer Support and is a great achievement during a time of increasing austerity - speaking volumes about how the Service is valued for the difference it makes to clients' health and wellbeing. A strong evidence base and a highly regarded reputation has ensured the continuation of the Service for at least another year.

Since starting in 2009, the Service has supported over 10,000 patients with a household reach of 20,000, received 99% user satisfaction, and had 100% of health care professionals who said that there would be an adverse impact on their role without this service.

Want to know more? Our annual report is now available on our website - <http://citahants.org/publications.html>. **Need access to advice? Contact us at: 0844 847 7727.**

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

Who is Citizens Advice Hampshire?

Who we are

- Citizens Advice Hampshire is a charity created in February 2008 to support the 14 independent Citizens Advice Bureaux in Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight.
- We were set up to identify and develop options for improving services across the county and we take on large projects that are not feasible for a single bureau.

What we do

- We support Hampshire bureaux by facilitating knowledge and skills sharing.
- We enable collaboration between bureaux and other charities/organisations.
- We partner with other organisations and charities on special projects.

Hampshire Common Referral System

One of the key requirements of the Advice Services Transition Fund (ASTF) programme established by the Cabinet Office and the Big Lottery was the introduction of systems and processes to make access to advice easier for local people at a local level.

Eight Hampshire ASTF projects tasked Citizens Advice Hampshire with researching and procuring an on-line system which, while being simple and straightforward to use, was also secure and robust enough to meet stringent encryption and information assurance constraints.

In November 2014 we launched the Hampshire Common Referral System to which 55 local advice and information providers have subscribed. To date nearly 100 referrals have been made between local agencies at district/borough level.

Benefits for agencies

- Collecting referral data means that trends can be identified and advice provision gaps filled.
- Increases access to advice for clients.
- Provides timely alerts/updates when referrals are requested and actions/outcomes recorded.

Benefits for clients

- Clients only have to tell their story once. All the relevant information about the client and their issues is recorded in one place and can only be accessed by the agencies working with that client.
- Clients are less likely to get 'lost' in the system as their referral status is tracked and monitored from referral requested, to acknowledged, rejected or closed.
- Shared access to details about partner agencies and the services offered means the client is referred to the right agency first time reducing wasted time and referral fatigue.

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