

C-19 Portishead Advice Service

As a consequence of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the 19th March 2020 we closed our face-to-face drop-in services and all our outreach locations, including in Portishead. We initially stood down our team of volunteer advisers and redeployed our 26 paid staff to home working. On the 23rd March we set up a remote telephone, email and webchat service initially being delivered by our paid staff team.

We have established new ways of working for our advice teams and we now have 25 volunteer advisers delivering telephone and email advice and our paid staff continuing to deliver casework level advice, all via home working. During lockdown we have also trained 9 new advisers via video link and they are due to come on to the rota in the next 6 weeks.

We have distributed all our available IT and telephony equipment to our staff (paid and volunteer) for home working and we are actively fund raising to be able to purchase additional equipment so we can set up more volunteer advisers to deliver remote advice.

We have attached the following documents:

- North Somerset Key Statistics Dashboard for the period 23rd March 2020 to the 30th June 2020. We have provided advice to **2,817** unique clients in this period with **5,352** issues.
- Advice Trends for Portishead residents up to 30th June 2020. This demonstrates a significant drop in client contacts for April and May but a sharp increase in demand in June. This reflects the drop in demand we experienced across all channels at this time and the increase in demand as the lockdown measures have been eased.

Over the last 3 months we have encouraged our clients to access advice through remote service delivery: telephone, email and webchat (Help to Claim). We have promoted these services through our social media and o-line platforms, through partner agencies and through the North Somerset Together Network.

However, we are acutely aware that many vulnerable individuals are not able to access our services because they are digitally disadvantaged as a consequence of lack of access to technology / wifi or due to mental or physical capacity.

For clients who are digitally disadvantaged due to lack of access to technology, we are exploring how we can deliver virtual face-to-face advice through video conferencing. This will require clients having access to computers / wifi in confidential settings in community locations i.e. community centres, parish halls etc. Once these 'zoom booths' have been set up local residents will be able to use a video link to access Citizens Advice services and other services for example GP consultations, counselling, or to help combat loneliness and isolation by being able to make contact with friends and family. We are piloting this new way of working with colleagues in Nailsea at 65 High Street, and in Weston at The For All Healthy Living Centre and we would welcome a conversation with Portishead Town Council to see how we might develop 'zoom booths' for Portishead residents.

For clients who do not have the capacity to access remote services we are working towards providing a limited physical face-to-face service. This will be delivered by a small team of paid staff who will receive additional mandatory training to deliver C-19 safe face to face advice in

community locations from across North Somerset and from our head office at 39 Oxford Street, Weston-super-Mare. We will be looking for appropriate C-19 safe community locations for our advisers to be able meet clients to deliver this physical face-to-face service and again we would welcome a conversation with Portishead Town Council to identify appropriate venues for this purpose.

During lockdown we continued with the refurbishment of our new office of 39 Oxford Street in Weston-super-Mare and we were finally able to move in on the 11th June 2020. We currently have a small team of 4 paid staff members on site whilst everyone continues to work from home.

We are currently doing our risk assessments in 39 Oxford Street and creating two C-19 safe interview rooms. We are installing perspex screens in both our reception area and in the two interview rooms, plus additional safety measures to ensure the safety of both our clients and our staff. We hope to be able to offer physical face to face appointments for our most vulnerable clients within the next few weeks.

We are very grateful to Portishead Town council for your continued support throughout this period and we look forward to continuing our discussions with you as to how we can develop our virtual and physical advice service offer for your local residents.

For up to date information about our advice services please see our website: www.nscab.org.uk.

Fiona Cope

Fiona Cope ~ Chief Officer

Citizens Advice North Somerset

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Citizens Advice North Somerset is the trading name of North Somerset Citizens Advice Bureau
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2906303. Charity registration number: 1052967



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Appendix 1: About Citizens Advice North Somerset

Citizens Advice North Somerset (CANS) is an established and well regarded local independent charity that provides free, impartial and confidential generalist and specialist advice on a range of issues including benefits, debt, employment, housing, consumer problems, family and personal matters, legal procedures, education, health and discrimination.

We hold the following quality marks:

- AQS (Advice Quality Standard) which demonstrates our organisation is easily accessible, effectively managed and employs staff with the skill and knowledge to meet the needs of our clients. This is a requirement for The Money Advice and Pension Service and Macmillan Cancer Support.
- SQM (Standard Quality Mark) which demonstrate our organisation is well run and able to offer excellent client care. This is a requirement of The Legal Aid Agency.
- Citizens Advice membership sets out detailed requirements all local Citizens Advice must meet to be part of the service. These include: Quality of Advice Assurance; Governance and Strategic Planning; Financial Management; Operational Performance; People Management; and Equality Leadership.

We deliver face to face services from 21 locations across North Somerset and South Bristol in Jobcentre Plus offices, community buildings, libraries, church buildings, Weston General Hospital, Weston Hospice, Weston Court House, home visits (currently limited to Macmillan clients), a shopping centre, a homeless shelter, an addiction rehabilitation centre, and pop-up locations as and when required. We are part of Avon Adviceline delivering telephone advice to residents across South Gloucestershire, Bristol and North Somerset. We provide digital advice services via email for anyone living in North Somerset and webchat as part of our Help to Claim service.

In 2018/19 we helped 7,000 unique clients with over 18,000 issues. We perceive our value through the positive impact our services have on individual lives, which in turn benefits local communities and society. Using the New Economy Manchester cost benefit tool our overall value in 2018-19 was:

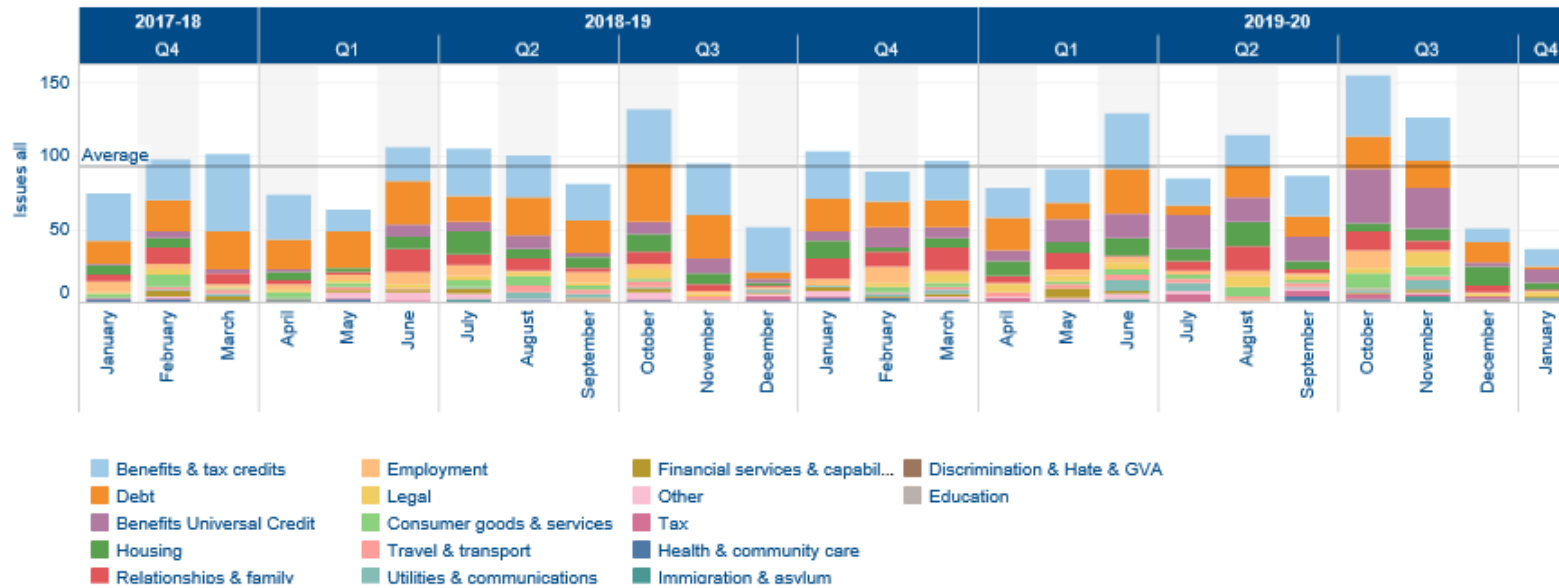
- £2,321,733 Fiscal benefit – savings to local and national government
- £12,578,086 Public Value – improvements in health, well-being, participation and productivity
- £13,685,544 value to the people we help (financial outcomes i.e. debts managed or written off, grants received and benefits claimed).
- £327,932 Value of our volunteers and their contribution they make to the service

For every £1 invested in Citizens Advice North Somerset £28.46 is going back into the local economy and directly helping local people.

For more information please visit our website: www.nscab.org.uk

Appendix 1: Advice Issues – Portishead residents

Graph of issues for last period and previous period



	2019-20 Q1		2019-20 Q2			2019-20 Q3			Grand Total	
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November		December
Benefits & tax credits	20	23	38	19	21	28	42	29	10	230
Benefits Universal Credit	7	16	17	23	17	16	37	27	3	161
Consumer goods & services		2	4	2	6	2	10	7		33
Debt	22	11	30	6	21	14	22	19	13	147
Discrimination & Hate & GVA			1	1					1	3
Education	1								1	2
Employment	1	5	3	3	4	2	12	2	1	33
Financial services & capability		6	2		1		1	2		12
Health & community care		2				3	1			6
Housing	11	7	12	8	16	6	5	9	13	85
Immigration & asylum			2			2	2	5	1	12
Legal	6	3	5		7	2	4	9	1	37
Other	1	1	3	2	1	2		1		10
Relationships & family	4	11	1	7	17	3	13	6	5	67
Tax	3	1		5	1	3	3	1	2	19
Travel & transport	2	3	3	3	2	3	1	2		18
Utilities & communications			8	6		1	2	7		24
Grand Total	78	91	129	85	114	87	155	126	51	899

Appendix 2: Portishead Generalist Service – Q1-3 Year to Date 2019-20

Key Statistics

Citizens Advice North Somerset (member)

08/04/2019 18/12/2019

citizens advice

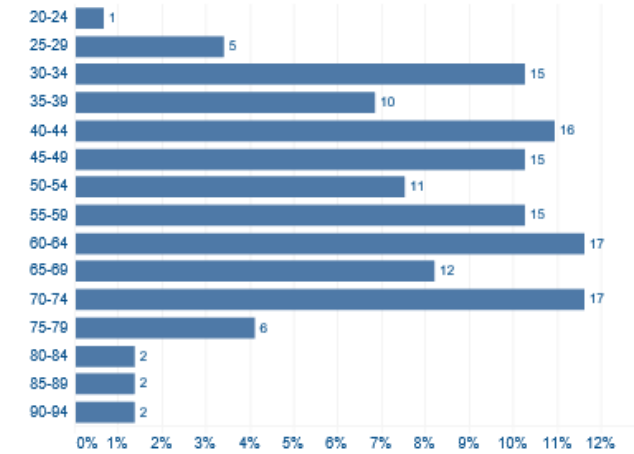
Summary

Clients	194
Quick client contacts	1
Issues	405
Activities	222
Cases	150
Outcomes	

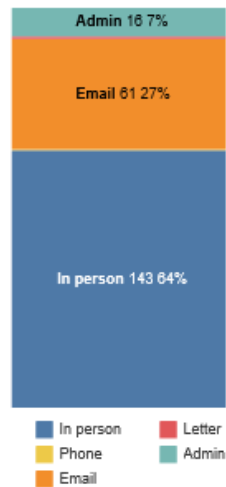
Issues

	Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	85	52
Benefits Universal Credit	38	31
Consumer goods & services	14	8
Debt	50	28
Discrimination & Hate & GVA	1	1
Education	3	3
Employment	19	11
Financial services & capability	12	10
Health & community care	6	5
Housing	48	30
Immigration & asylum	4	2
Legal	39	31
Other	7	7
Relationships & family	42	27
Tax	10	8
Travel & transport	11	8
Utilities & communications	16	7
Grand Total	405	

Age



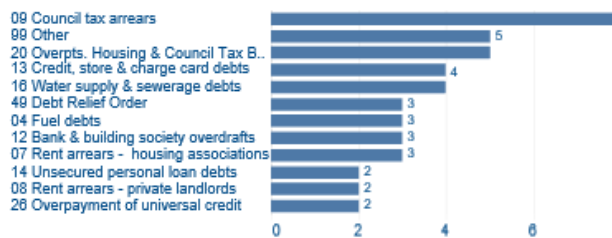
Channel



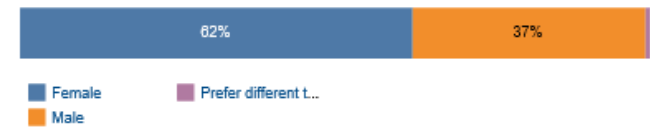
Top benefit issues



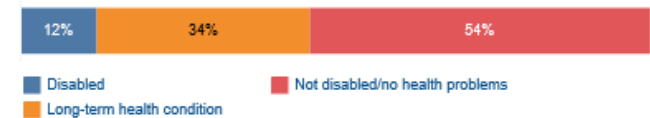
Top debt issues



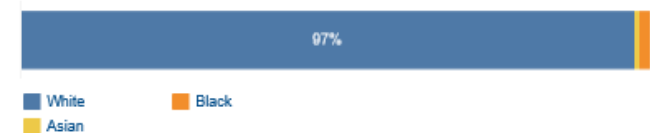
Gender



Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity



Appendix 3: Portishead Residents seeking help from CANS - Q1-Q3 Year to date 2019-20

Key Statistics

Citizens Advice North Somerset (member)

01/04/2019 24/12/2019



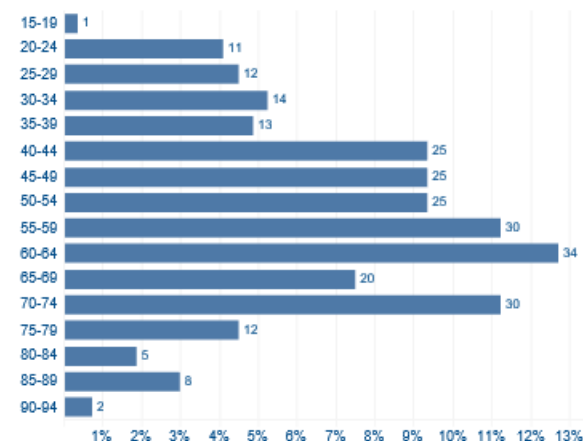
Summary

Clients	273
Quick client contacts	
Issues	899
Activities	766
Cases	284
Outcomes	
Income gain	£116,090
Re-imburements, services, loans	£730
Debts written off	£40,298
Repayments rescheduled	£6,977
Other	£1,040

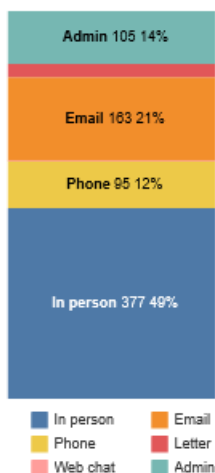
Issues

	Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	230	102
Benefits Universal Credit	161	56
Consumer goods & services	33	19
Debt	147	49
Discrimination & Hate & GVA	3	3
Education	2	2
Employment	33	17
Financial services & capability	12	10
Health & community care	6	5
Housing	85	47
Immigration & asylum	12	6
Legal	37	30
Other	10	9
Relationships & family	67	31
Tax	19	15
Travel & transport	18	14
Utilities & communications	24	11
Grand Total	899	

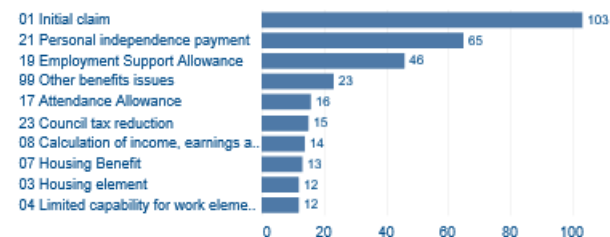
Age



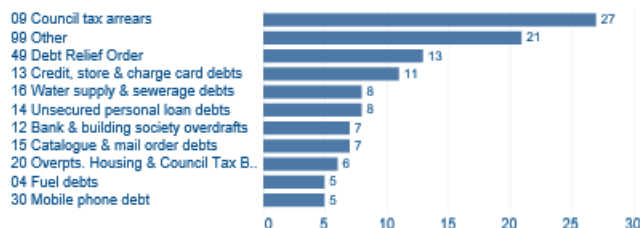
Channel



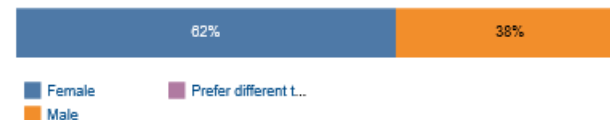
Top benefit issues



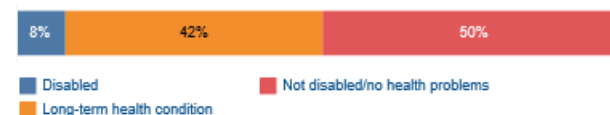
Top debt issues



Gender



Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity

