

May 2023

Dear Supporter,

Welcome to our latest newsletter and the first of the new financial year.

Huge growth in demand for our services

Demand for our free, independent advice services was **78% higher** in the first three months of 2023 than in the equivalent three months of 2022 (when measured in terms of client contacts), a reflection not only of the cost of living crisis and the lasting shadow of the pandemic on personal and financial resilience but also, we believe, because clients find our face-to face advice services both accessible and friendly. At PWCAC we have always been careful to deliver our services in a manner which best suits the most vulnerable in society who tend to be those with health, literacy or digital access limitations who need a high degree of personal support to solve their problems.

Our impact in the year to 31 March 2023

9 of 11

Appeals won at the First Tier Tribunal

7,559

Contacts with clients

927

People helped

£1.2m

Financial gain secured for our clients

5,200

Volunteer hours provided

17

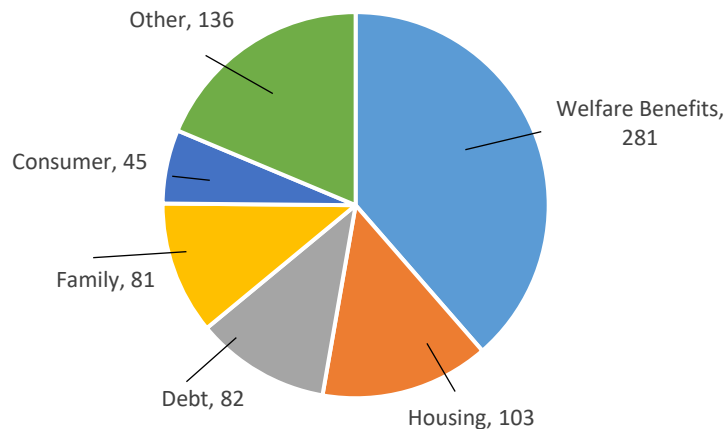
volunteer advisers

What we've been doing

- Our top four advice areas over the last year were welfare benefits, housing, debt and family matters, but consumer issues have been increasingly complex and time-consuming.
- Our clients were from the Borough of Tunbridge Wells (66%), Tonbridge and Malling (15%) and Maidstone (12%). The remainder come from beyond these boroughs.
- Between November and March we assisted Citizens Advice in a trial of a Kent Money Advice Service helpline, taking calls from clients who were struggling with debts and either referring them to relevant services or supporting them with our own caseworkers.
- We have been working closely with the Paddock Wood Lions to provide those struggling with their utility bills with extra financial support.

- Since April we have welcomed *We Are With You* to our town centre premises: their NHS talking therapies complement our practical advice. If any other local charities would like to hire space on a regular basis, we would be happy to hear from them.

New Cases in 2022-23



Other includes employment, domestic violence, money guidance, immigration etc.

The year ahead

- We look forward to our three new generalist advisors completing their training and becoming fully fledged members of the team.
- Having struggled to recruit a suitably qualified candidate last year, we will continue to explore options for expanding our capacity for welfare benefits advice, be that in the capacity as a part time consultant for complex case work, or as an Advice Session Supervisor with responsibility for all the advice we issue.
- All-staff training in how to help clients who are experiencing domestic abuse will greatly enhance our advice in this sphere.

Thank you

We would like to thank all our trustees, volunteer advisers, supporters, funders, referral partners and clients for promoting, supporting, and using our service throughout the last year.

We look forward to your continued support so that we can maintain our service to the residents of Paddock Wood and surrounding areas.

Yours faithfully

Katie Hargreaves

Senior Manager

Paddock Wood Community Advice Centre

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