

October 2021

Dear All

Welcome to our latest newsletter which follows on from our AGM which took place online on Thursday 14 October. We would like to thank those of you who took the time to attend our AGM to hear about our work.

At our AGM, we presented our Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021. This document is now available to view on our website at <http://www.pwadvice.org/>.

Such a lot has changed for PWCAC over the last year. One of the highlights has been the completion of our Relocation Project and our move to No. 94 in February, followed by our Official Opening by Greg Clark MP in April. We have had such great feedback from everyone who visits about how much more accessible, welcoming and professional our reception area and interview rooms are.

At the start of the year, we carried out our annual client satisfaction survey. We were delighted with the outcome – **100%** of those surveyed stated that they were **“VERY HAPPY WITH THE SERVICE THAT I RECEIVED”** and **100%** stated **“I WOULD RECOMMEND THE SERVICE TO OTHERS”**. Some of the comments we received include the following:

“I was more than satisfied with the advice and help I received and I would definitely recommend your service to others. The follow up calls to make sure things had happened were great. Thank you.”

“Absolutely fantastic, there was never a rush and they took plenty of time to explain everything”

We are now halfway through our new financial year and it has been another busy year so far. Some of our numbers for the first six months can be found below:

4

Appeals won at the First Tier Tribunal

277

New cases opened

485

People helped

2,299

Volunteer hours provided

3,417

Case notes generated for clients

£380,739

Financial gain for our clients

Welfare Benefit Tribunals

We continue to offer our clients personal representation at the first-tier tribunal and have a 100% success rate since the start of the financial year, winning four out of four appeals.

We have found that we are submitting far fewer appeals recently as our success at the Mandatory Reconsideration stage has significantly increased. During the same period, we have made seven Mandatory Reconsideration requests for our clients and six of those have succeeded. That leads to a much better outcome for our clients. These requests are processed relatively quickly, by comparison with appeals, and clients are saved the considerable stress of waiting for and attending an appeal hearing.

Debt and Money Advice

There has been a lot of press about the financial pressure on people with the end of both Furlough and the Universal Credit Uplift last month. We are finding that many clients have developed quite serious and complex debt problems during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our excellent referral partners offer much needed support for clients facing hardship and we can work together to help mutual clients find a longer term solution.

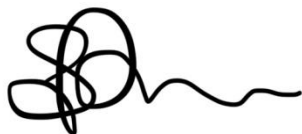
Our experienced debt advisers can help clients no matter how big or small the issue they face. We can put clients into a Breathing Space scheme to give enough time to access debt advice and we also have an Insolvency-Service approved Debt Relief Order Intermediary who can apply for a DRO on behalf of clients who meet the criteria. Since the start of the financial year, we have had £25,168 worth of debt written off for our clients. Please feel free to refer anyone who you think needs our help.

New Manager

This will be my last newsletter as Manager of Paddock Wood Community Advice Centre. I have been involved with PWCAC since 2015 as a volunteer and took on the role of Manager as the Charity's first ever paid employee in 2017. Up until that point, the Charity was solely run by volunteers and all our Advisers and Caseworkers are voluntary still.

It has been a great pleasure to work with such a dedicated team and I am proud of what we have collectively achieved for our clients over the last few years. I would personally like to thank all of you for the support you have given PWCAC during this time. Our new Manager will be starting in November and I wish her and all at PWCAC every success for the future.

Yours Faithfully



Suzi Rich
Manager

Paddock Wood Community Advice Centre

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