

July 2021

Dear Supporter,

Welcome to our latest newsletter and the first of the new financial year. We were delighted to resume our full face-to-face service back in April and our Quarter 1 statistics (April – June 2021) demonstrate how busy we have been since then.

Q1 Statistics:

97

People seen for the first time

138

New cases opened

293

People helped

1,183

Volunteer hours provided

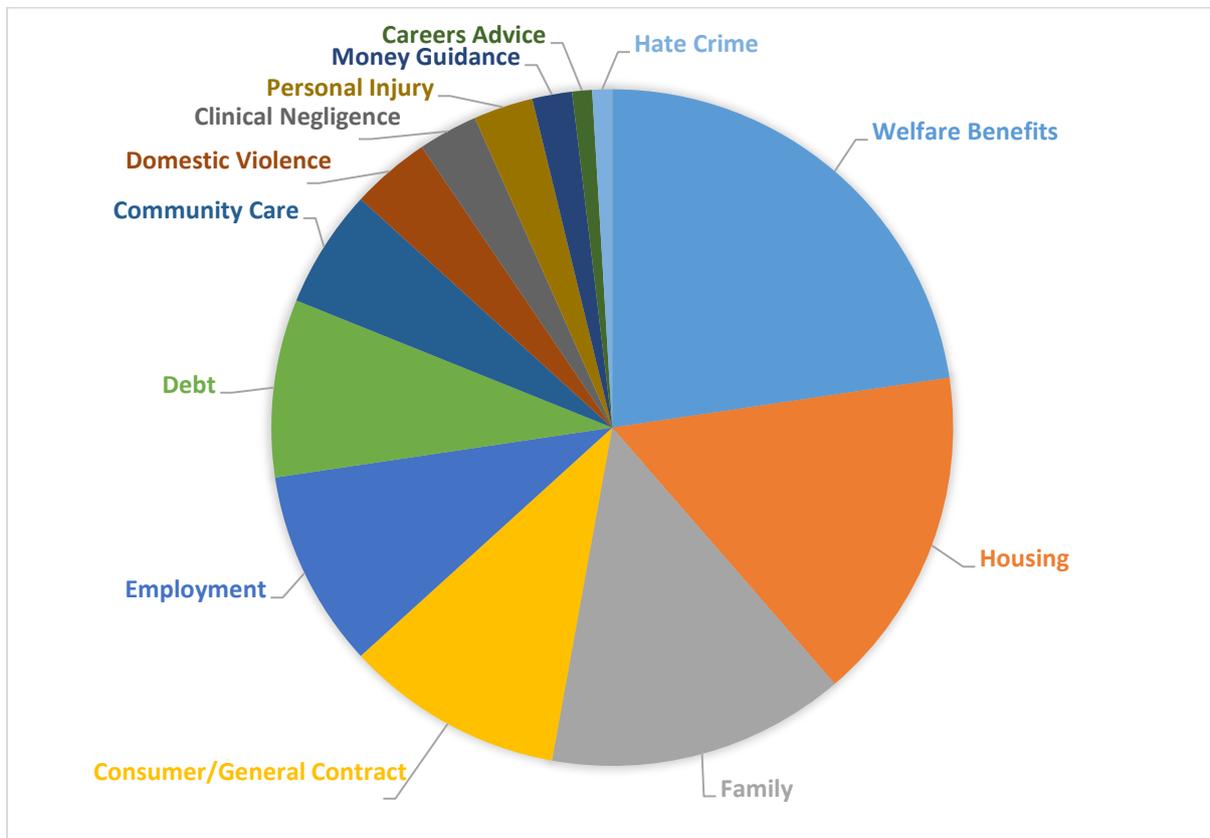
1,665

Contacts with our clients

£101,216

Financial gain secured for our clients

New Case Breakdown



Impact of Covid-19

Like many agencies, we are starting to see the impact of the covid-19 pandemic, with problem debt, domestic abuse, employment issues, evictions and mental health problems being very common themes during appointments.

Welfare Benefits remains the number one issue we help people with and the DWP recently announced that more applications were made for the Disability Benefit 'Personal Independence Payment' between January and April, than at any time since it was introduced in 2013. Our trained advisers help many clients each week to fill out their application forms for PIP, and many other benefits they are entitled to.

Welfare Benefit Tribunals Service

In the latest quarter we assisted three clients in their appeals against decisions on Personal Independence Payment. All were successful. For now, appeal hearings are being held by phone, which seems to work quite well, except when the Tribunal Service forgets to call us to join the hearing, as happened (not for the first time) with one of these three.

So far this calendar year we have successfully assisted clients with eight benefit appeals. This number of appeals is much lower than the mid-year average, of fourteen, for the past two years. In part, at least, this is a function of our greater success at the Mandatory Reconsideration stage, avoiding the need for time-consuming appeals.

Breathing Space

The Government launched a new Debt Respite Scheme 'Breathing Space' on 4 May 2021. The scheme gives eligible people with problem debt, including those experiencing mental health problems, legal protection from action by their creditors for a period of time, known as 'Breathing Space'.

The scheme can only be accessed through a debt advice provider, which has been authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to provide debt counselling. We are registered with the FCA and the Insolvency Service to put people into the scheme and have experienced and fully trained debt advisers ready to help people.

Annual General Meeting

We hope to see you all at our Annual General Meeting, which will be on Thursday 14 October at 7:30pm, pending the Government guidance applicable at the time. Please put the date and time in your diaries. Formal notice and further information will follow nearer the time.

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

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

Paddock Wood Community Advice Centre

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