



**Arun &  
Chichester**

# **Annual Report 2020-2021**



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Our service is invaluable to our local community and without our volunteers we would not have a service to offer.

Even though the volunteers role can be very demanding and at times stressful. Each and every person that volunteers gives more than is asked.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our volunteers for their continued hard work and commitment.



## Need advice?

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## Visit us

### Bognor Regis Advice Centre

Town Hall  
Clarence Road  
Bognor Regis  
PO21 1LD

Opening Times

Monday & Tuesday  
10:00am - 1pm

### Chichester Advice Centre

East Pallant House  
1 East Pallant  
Chichester  
PO19 1TY

Opening Times

Monday—Friday  
10.00am - 1pm

### Littlehampton Hub

Littlehampton Library  
Maltravers Road  
Littlehampton  
BN17 5NA

Opening Times

Wednesday & Friday  
10.30am - 3.30pm

## Advice by phone

**Adviceline: 0808 278 7969**

**Website: [www.arunchichestercab.org.uk](http://www.arunchichestercab.org.uk)**

**Administration Line: 01243 866233**

# Our core service

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## Advice options

Although face-to-face advice has always been the cornerstone of our service, due to the pandemic, we are currently not offering a face to face service.

### **Advice by Telephone/Email/Webchat**

To make sure that people can still receive advice during these difficult times we have a dedicated team of staff and volunteers who man our Telephone Advice Line and, also, provide email and webchat advice. Our staff and volunteers can provide information, general advice, casework and even specialist advice through these channels.

### **Citizens Advice website**

The Citizens Advice online guide <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/> is a comprehensive source of advice, available to anyone at anytime, offering practical and reliable information.



# Chairman's message

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For many years now, Citizens Advice has been valued member of the Local Community, supporting the local residents, using a number of different channels across a wide spectrum of issues some of which were simple and others much more multi-faceted.

The organisation has always been a valued member of the community with its services widely used but never so in such unprecedented and extraordinary conditions that prevailed in 2020-21. The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown periods along with the other health control measures that were introduced, added a complexity to the delivery of our service and also the range of needs and support of the local people in the Arun and Chichester areas.

You will see from the information and detail contained within the rest of the report ,the amazing and herculean effort by the CEO and all of his team, staff and volunteers alike, to not only maintain our excellent service levels but also to exceed them and provide additional support to the local community, especially the most vulnerable, under the most challenging conditions Citizens Advice has ever faced.

The year started with a countrywide lockdown which meant that no face-to-face services could be provided with all offices and outreach facilities closed.

However, through innovation and determination, the staff and volunteers were organised via home working and access to our services were being provided via, telephone, internet, web chat, video calling and following strong safety assessment , home visiting for our most vulnerable residents resumed on a restricted basis.

The Community spirit, togetherness and determination between County and District Councils, GP surgeries, other partnering organisations and Citizens Advice to address the needs of the people of Arun and Chichester was exemplary and the relationship between these organisations was never so important to ensure that the people of the community continued to receive the support they required.

Every year our goal is to support the people of our region, identify areas where we can offer additional required support and to offer these services in a way that addresses fundament issues for our clients rather than just a single issue in itself. To undertake our role continually requires foresight from the CEO and his team supported by a strong and robust fiscal position. I am pleased to say that once again Luca, our CEO, and his management team have, in addition to providing the normal core services, managed to expand our range of services by securing the funding to deliver projects such as the Countywide telephone Energy Advice service, DWP Winter Grant and various other financial hardship schemes. All of this meant that once again the team managed to exceed our financial goals for 2020-21 and maintain our financial stability. Further details of this can be found in the Financial Managers report.

This report is my first as Chairman and it has been an absolute pleasure to be involved with such an efficient and professional organisation.

Over the year, despite the circumstances, we have managed to recruit a further 3 Trustees making 11 in total. This provides a diverse Trustee Board with a varied and encompassing skill set supporting the combined experience of all members. This will be essential as we continue to provide Governance and advice to the CEO as he and his team manage their way through the challenges of a Covid and post Covid world.



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**Hugh Finlay**  
Chairman

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**Like our work?  
Why not get  
involved?**



**See page 12  
to find out  
about  
volunteering**

# CEO's message

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We ended the 2019-2020 tax year just after the Prime Minister's announcement that the nation had to lock-down. Fortunately, we predicted that this was going to occur and by the time of the announcement we:

- Already stopped the delivery of all our face-to-face service (20th March 2020).
- Set up a COVID19 response team to monitor, continuously risk assess the situation and identify opportunities.
- Had a lock-down remote service plan ready to continue to support our clients

What we did not predict was that, due to the announcement our remote working volunteer' mobile phones order would not be delivered on the 24th March 2020. This led to having to make a new order and physically delivering them to the team.

During the 1st lockdown we saw our volunteering workforce reduce from 119 to just 34 while our demand reached levels never seen before. I am very grateful for the commitment of all our volunteers but particularly thankful to these 34 amazing people who helped during such challenging times. I am also thankful to the local MP who recognised their contribution to the local community and awarded them all with the **Volunteer of the Year** award.

Even though we had to change from mostly face to face to an entirely remote service, lost the majority of our volunteer workforce and had the issues with the delivery of the mobile phones, we continued to help people with **no interruption to the service**.

Staff and volunteers worked extra hours and took on new roles by delivering food and topping up pre-payment meters, making wellbeing calls to our local GP's patients and made sure that they had access to food and medicine. They have shown a level of resilience which makes me extremely proud to be part of such an organisation.

Our funders have been very flexible and allowed us to continue to deliver services even if not the ones they were funding us for. The covid support funding that was made available allowed us to put more resources on the delivery of our service and free the management team to recruit more volunteers, develop more remote services and plan on the future.

It also allowed us to secure funding to set up a county-wide energy advice telephone service to support the many fuel-poor residents accessing our fuel vouchers schemes.



Luca Badioli  
Chief Executive



Thanks to the DWP Winter Grant funding made available to us by West Sussex County Council between December 2020 and April 2021 we, together with our partner Citizens Advice in West Sussex (North, East and South), were able to distribute £250,000 worth of measures including boiler repairs, blankets, and coats to make sure that West Sussex residents were kept warm during the past winter.

I am extremely thankful for the respect, support and flexibility shown by our funders.

I also want to thank the local authorities for allowing us, together with others such as Voluntary Action Arun & Chichester, to be part of the local COVID response team. This strengthened an already strong relationship and allowed for the amazing work that we are now doing with them and other partners including on looking at local food systems, monitoring the local financial impact of the pandemic and the sharing of accurate and up to date COVID19 information through the COVID champion.

Although it has been a challenging year, we have learnt that we are an extremely resilient organisation that is able to, during very difficult circumstances, modify the services delivered to make sure that our clients continue to receive our services and that as a community we get together to try to overcome any challenge thrown at us and can work in partnership very effectively.

It is predicted that the year 2021-2022 will see many in financial hardship and it is important that we continue to work together to overcome any obstacle and deliver the services that our communities need.

During this challenging year we helped **11,332** people with **28193** issues with high demand for welfare benefit, employment and relationship & family advice. This sadly reflects the year we have passed with people's increased need to claim benefits, concerns about their employment and reported incidents of domestic abuse.

Due to multiple factors, including the measures set up by government to reduce hardship and not being able to provide a face-to-face service, we saw a reduction of people with long-term conditions and disability approaching our services and the age group of the majority people approaching us shifted from 50-64 in 2019-2020 to 30-44 in 2020-2021.

As we know the BAME communities have been heavily affected by the pandemic and this is also reflected on our data as we saw an increase of 5% from those communities approaching us.

## Making the difference

Client satisfaction is part of the Arun and Chichester Citizens Advice quality assured standards. The views of people who use our services, help to shape the planning, delivery and evaluation of our services.

### Arun & Chichester Client Experience survey 2020-21

| Summary -                                                      | Positive Responses |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| How easy or difficult did you find it to access the service?   | 82%                |
| To what extent did the service help you to find a way forward? | 85%                |
| To what extent is your problem now resolved?                   | 75%                |
| How likely would you be to recommend the service?              | 90%                |

## Finance Manager's message

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We are pleased to report a surplus for the third year running, despite the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has given us over the past year.

So that we could continue to support those that need us, it was vital that we were secured funding to enable us to expand our remote advice facility. With the grants that we were successful in gaining, we were able to invest in new software and IT equipment so that we could provide a video advice service to clients and expand our ability to give telephone, email, and webchat advice whilst our team worked from home. We also invested in Perspex screens, signage, and PPE to ensure staff and clients were in a safe environment during the periods when we were able to open our offices.

Project funding to provide energy advice and fuel vouchers to our clients was also invaluable, as many faced increasing household bills as they spent more time at home but had less income. These issues were also supported from the Winter Grant Scheme that we received from WSCC/DWP, which enabled us to support those in debt with fuel bills or had issues with boilers. The fund was also used to provide essential items such as warm clothing, bedding, curtains and other household items to clients and their families.

We were also successful in securing funding for a debt advice service which is an area that we knew would be an issue as people were placed on furlough or that may have lost their jobs altogether.

As we all worked from home for the whole of the 2020/2021 period, we were able to make savings on our expenditure and therefore reduce our overheads which contributed to achieving a surplus. We did not have any travel or subsistence costs and had reduced premises expenses.

Going forward we plan to get back to our offices again and have budgeted for this in 2021/2022. However, we know that we will have a team of staff and volunteers both in the office and working from home and therefore we will be able to make further savings over the coming year whilst continuing to invest in making our service as accessible as possible through the numerous channels available.

Finally, as always, we need to thank our staff and volunteers. We are so proud of how they have adapted to a completely new way of working over the past year. They have been amazing and provided an invaluable service to the local community and we cannot thank them enough for their hard work and support



**Tracy Rablin**  
**Finance Manager**

# Volunteers

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Volunteers account for around 80% of the Citizens Advice service. Arun & Chichester Citizens Advice is fortunate to have the services of around **96 volunteers**, without whose energy, expertise and commitment we could not operate.

The volunteers help our clients to understand their rights and responsibilities and empower them to take control of their own situations by giving them the advice and information they need in order to make informed choices and decisions.

Many of our volunteers go into paid employment as a consequence of the training and support they receive as a volunteer, and some of that employment stays within Arun and Chichester Citizens Advice.

**If you are interested in being part of our team, or want further information, please visit our website:**

**[www.arunchichestercab.org.uk/volunteer/volunteering](http://www.arunchichestercab.org.uk/volunteer/volunteering)**

## Volunteer story

My journey with Citizens Advice started in June. During the pandemic I made the decision to rearrange my career and to turn my regular life upside-down.

I have started University and to deepen my understanding of the issues arising in my chosen degree, I've started to volunteer as an adviser working remotely. I am really grateful to my Supervisors and colleagues for the support they provide to me every day gaining experience in the adviser role and the knowledge picked up along the way.

Meanwhile I am progressing with my training and I have taken a chance and applied for a part-time paid position within the Projects Team. I have always hoped that I could turn my hobbies of reading and research into helping individuals to stand their ground in difficult times and to empower them to act.

The experience of volunteering with Citizens Advice has changed my life and I am sure there are many more of my colleagues who would agree with me on this statement. I wish the volunteering opportunities would be widely advertised, so more and more people believing in the same principles could connect and work together towards a better future.

# Operation Manager's message - Danni Colclough

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This year has been a challenging year for most, which has brought the service increased demand. Our advisers have had to get used to new systems and remote supervision, which for many has offered its challenges and its rewards. With only 34 volunteers able to continue volunteering from home we knew difficult times were, and are still ahead for us as an organisation.

With an increase in employment and benefit issues as well as seeing an increase in the need for debt advice, we have had to develop new training and offer more remote one to one support for our volunteers and staff, but our teams have most certainly stood strong.

Operationally we have looked at how we can increase resources and are very pleased that we have been able to continue recruiting volunteers, many of these will remain as remote advisers, some even volunteering from out of our area. The opportunity to volunteer remotely has not been something we have offered before but now we have tested this, we see this as a way of improving our service and making volunteering more accessible to those with disabilities and caring needs.

We have found new ways to work with partners and make referrals easier for other organisations and ensured accessibility has become a key objective, offering video calling appointments, online document signing, conference calling, interpreting services and generally being more innovative as an organisation.

Over the coming year we will concentrate on recruiting new volunteers both in centres and remotely to rebuild our work force and continue delivering a high-quality service available to all.



**Danni Colclough**  
**Operations Manager**

# Project Manager's Message

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This year has been an exciting year for me as we have had many new projects start and our team has continued to expand.

We were delighted to be given the opportunity to distribute the DWP Winter Grant alongside our colleagues at CAWS, which saw us employ remote-only staff for the first time, alongside distributing £200,000 of essential support to West Sussex residents.

Our new energy service launched in January 2021, which has continued to go from strength to strength. Our partnership with the West Sussex Fuel Poverty Coordinator and Citizens Advice 1066 has been crucial in ensuring we reach more people and reduce fuel poverty in West Sussex.

November saw us recruit a brand new full-time trainee debt adviser, thanks to distributed funds from the Money and Pension Service. Expanding our debt advice capacity is a priority due to the financial impact of the pandemic and believe this service will be more needed than ever over the coming year.

Our innovation project saw us develop a video advice service, as well as advance our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives, as we translated our appointment request form into Polish and provide Interpreters for a whole host of languages, including British Sign Language.

We've now been delivering our home visiting our service for over a year, the majority of which we haven't been able to visit clients' homes! Our team have been kept busy supporting disabled clients and their carers remotely, and where needed, picking documents up from them. The team have developed new ways of completing forms remotely and have become confident in using 3-way calling to help clients who need support talking to third parties. As we return to home visiting, we'll continue to save time by using new ways of working, combined with seeing clients in person.

This year saw us deliver our Big Energy Saving Network project exclusively online for the first time. The first few months were challenging,, trying to engage clients to change their energy-related behaviour, but we found working in partnership with other organisations allowed us to reach many more people. Building on the success of this, in 2021-22, we are delivering the regional lead role alongside our partners at Citizens Advice 1066.

All of this has happened alongside so many other things – Help to Claim, Social Prescribing, Sage House outreach, Digital Money Coaching and more – whilst building relationships with other organisations and opening funding opportunities for 2021-22..

The next year looks to continue to be a busy one, full of new developments and opportunities. I'm so grateful to have a team of passionate and dedicated project workers, with so many different skills and experiences, without which none of this would be possible.



Charlie Young  
Projects Manager

# One of our Projects

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## Chichester Children and Family Centre Outreach Pilot Project



# Projects

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## **Chichester Children and Family Centre Outreach Pilot Project cont...**

Who did we help?



# Projects

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**Chichester Children and Family Centre Outreach Pilot Project cont...**

# Projects

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**Chichester Children and Family Centre Outreach Pilot Project cont...**

**Case  
study**



# Arun and Chichester Citizens Advice

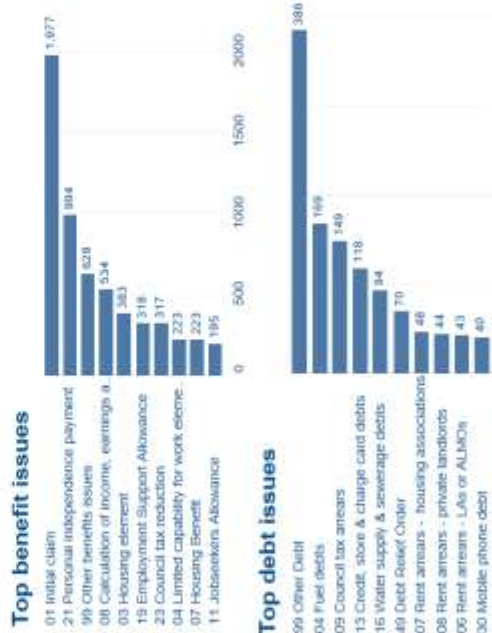
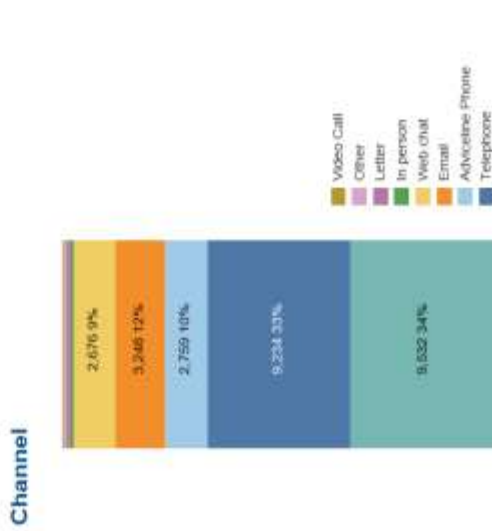
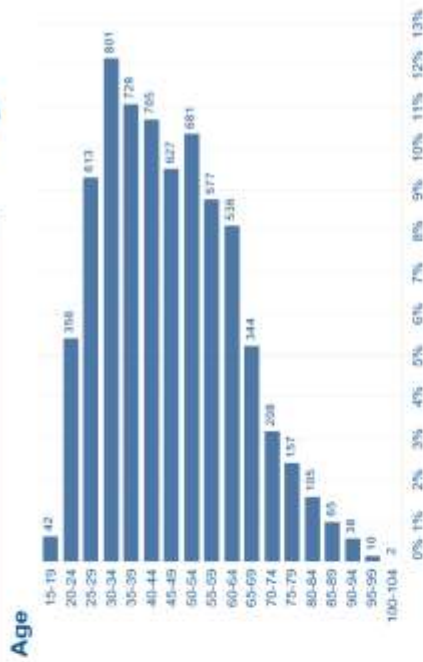
## Key Statistics 2020-21

### Summary

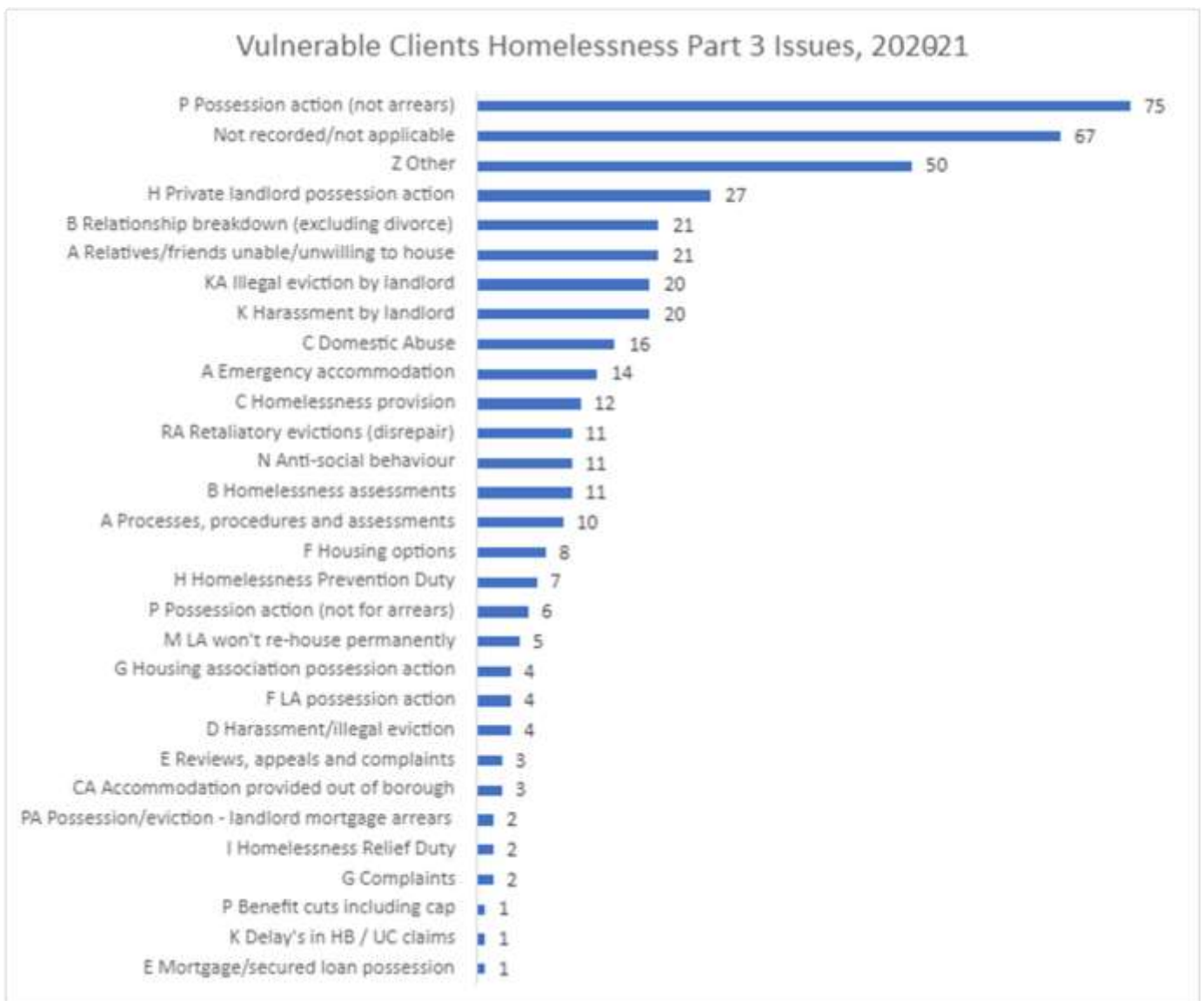
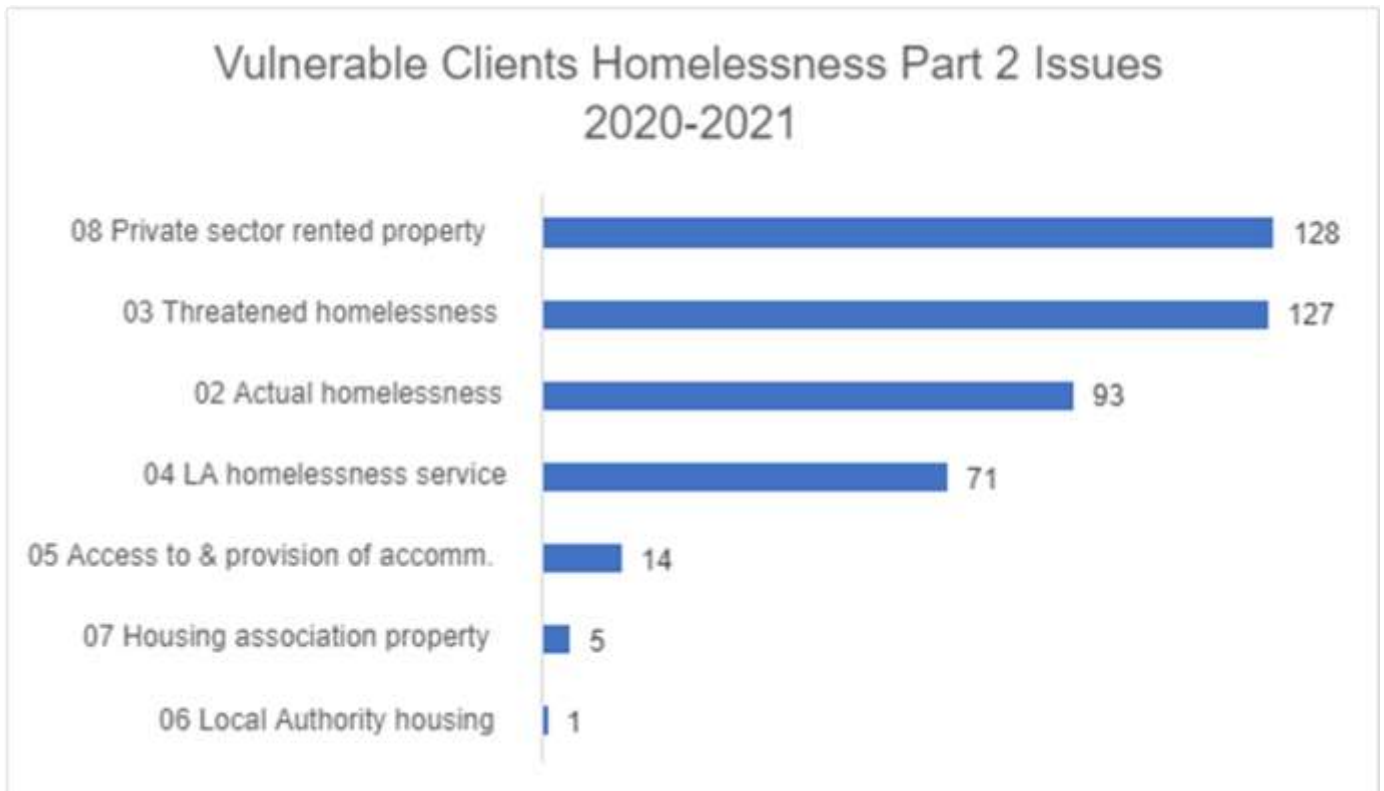
|                                  |               |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Clients</b>                   | <b>10,488</b> |
| <b>Quick client contacts</b>     | <b>844</b>    |
| <b>Issues</b>                    | <b>21,970</b> |
| <b>Activities</b>                | <b>28,193</b> |
| <b>Cases</b>                     | <b>9,007</b>  |
| <b>Outcomes</b>                  |               |
| Income gain                      | £3,087,354    |
| Re-embursements, services, loans | £23,261       |
| Debts written off                | £83,309       |
| Repayments rescheduled           | £2,170        |
| Other                            | £92,222       |

### Issues

| Issues                          | Clients       |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Benefits & tax credits          | 3,531         |
| Benefits Universal Credit       | 3,777         |
| Consumer goods & services       | 496           |
| Debt                            | 1,631         |
| Education                       | 70            |
| Employment                      | 2,967         |
| Financial services & capability | 477           |
| GVA & Hate Crime                | 302           |
| Health & community care         | 1,251         |
| Housing                         | 2,080         |
| Immigration & asylum            | 328           |
| Legal                           | 705           |
| Other                           | 948           |
| Relationships & family          | 1,198         |
| Travel & transport              | 143           |
| Utilities & communications      | 234           |
| Grand Total                     | <b>21,970</b> |

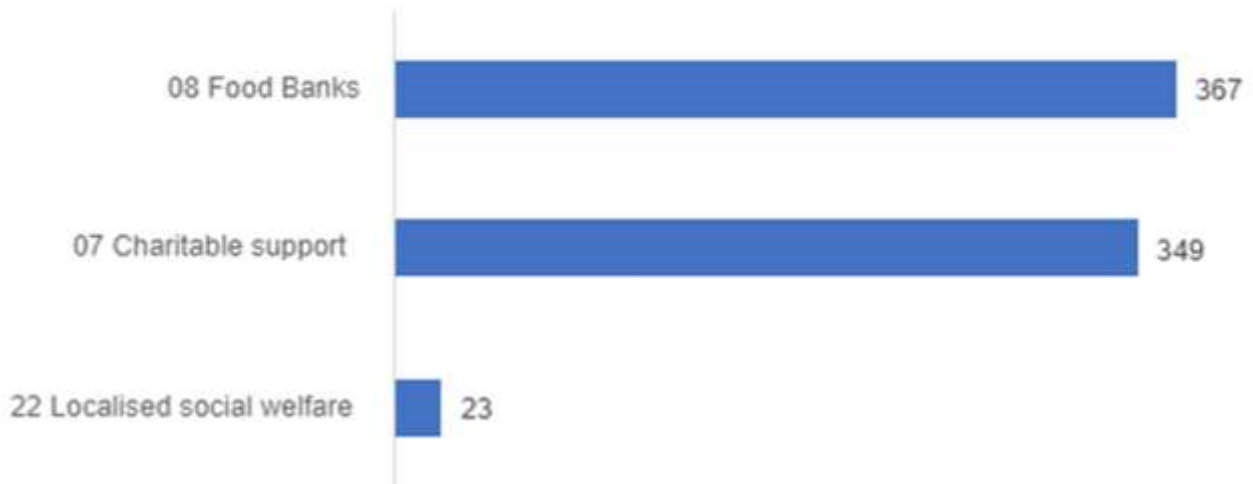


## Vulnerable Clients Homelessness April 2020- March 2021

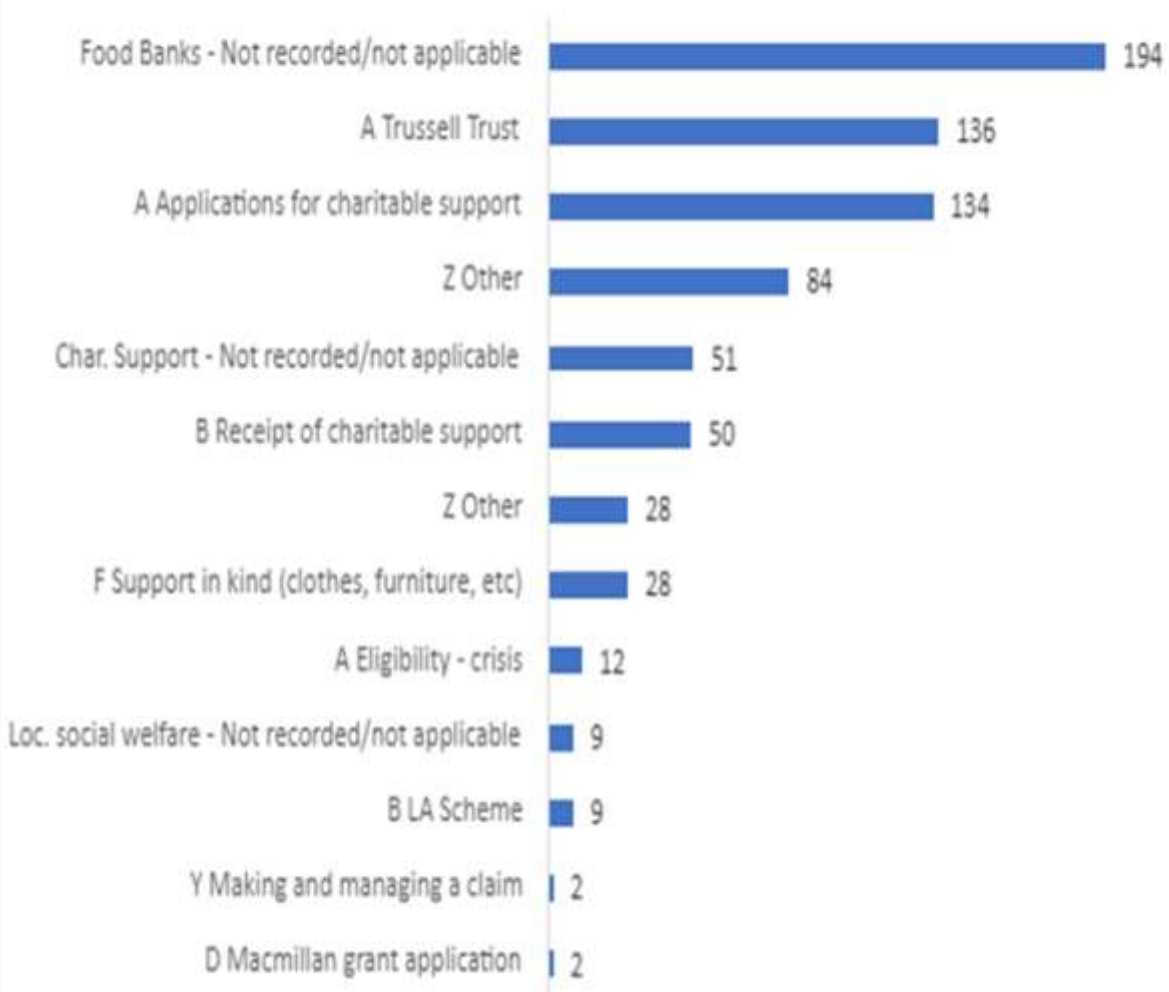


## Vulnerable Clients Charitable Support April 2020—March 2021

### Vulnerable Clients Charitable Support Part 2 Issues, 2020-21



### Vulnerable Clients Charitable Support Part 3 Issues, 2020-21



# Research & Campaigns



**What is Research & Campaigns?**  
Research & Campaigns (R&C) is the integral part of deliver the twin aim of Citizens Advice. Providing advice isn't where it stops.

**Our aim** is to speak up and improve the **policies and practices which affect people's lives, creating a fairer society.**

Paul Davies was appointed as Research and Campaigns Lead on 6th June, 2020. As well as Research and Campaigns, Paul's remit also involved communications and social media. Accordingly, and due to lockdown restrictions, the team's campaign work throughout Q2, Q3 and Q4 focussed on live streamed social media events and raising awareness through social media.

Awareness campaigns 2020-21:

- **Scam Awareness Fortnight, 15-28 June, 2020**

As part of the annual national campaign, we raised awareness through different channels. This included radio interviews and emails to local MPs to help identify and stop scammers. Individuals had become targets of COVID-19 test kit scams

- **Big Energy Saving Winter, October 2020 – March 2021**

As part of the national movement the Big Energy Saving Network (BESN), we supported vulnerable consumers to take action to reduce their energy bills and improve their homes' energy efficiency. We delivered several online events to groups of vulnerable energy consumers and front-line workers to promote our specialist energy advice service (launched Jan 2021) and refer clients on to them. We also published a series of videos on Youtube about home insulation and energy saving tips

- **Debt Awareness Week, 22-28 March 2021**

In conjunction with the charity Step Change Debt Charity, we participated in the annual campaign to open up the conversation around debt and encourage people who need help or advice to engage with debt-advice organisations like ourselves

- **Brexit and EUSS awareness campaign**

We raised awareness about how to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme and the deadline on 30th June, 2021

# Research & Campaigns

The R&C Team also carried out research into:

- **Council Tax Reduction issues surrounding Legacy Benefits and Universal Credit**

We researched the potential impact on clients when they move from a Legacy Benefit to Universal Credit. We issued a call for evidence on Casebook.

- **[COVID-19 Report](#)**

Throughout Q3 and Q4, the team researched the impact of covid-19 in the local community in preparation to release the COVID-19 Report. They investigated the trends in our data and used them to make predictions about the kind of support we will need to give in the near future.

### **Live-streamed events about money and benefits**

To support clients throughout lockdown in the pandemic, the R&C team supported two live-streamed events focused on helping those facing financial hardship during the winter. The events were performed in partnership with Citizens Advice West Sussex and streamed simultaneously across multiple social media channels.



## 2021-22

The R&C Team continues to research and monitor the impact of Brexit and Covid-19 on our community.

Alex Bailey was appointed Research and Campaigns Lead in August 2021. The communications aspect of the role was separated out and Guy Crossley is now Communications Lead. Alex and Guy continue to work closely together.

# How our service helps clients.

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How we helped the client.



# Our Aims and Principles

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Our service aims:

- To provide the advice people need for the problems they face
- To improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

## Our Vision Statement

To be the first port of call: support and empowerment for a positive future.

## We seek to:

- Continue to develop a high quality advice service, which meets the needs of the communities we serve.
- Develop and maintain a workforce that is engaged and motivated, through training and support.
- Raise awareness of our social policy work internally and externally, and contribute to researching and campaigning in respect of local and national issues.
- Build a strong foundation for the future by continuing to stabilise our financial position.
- Sustain a vision for the future which demonstrates honesty, integrity and a team spirit.

# Trustee board

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**We are grateful to the Trustees and others who have served on the Trustee Board:**

**Chair**                      **Hugh Finlay**- Elected  
**Vice Chair**                **Jack Wheale**- Elected  
**Treasurer**                **Louise Martin** - Elected

**Trustees**                    Nicola Cutler - (Resigned 20/9/21)  
                                  Rodney Clare- Elected  
                                  Andrew Hall - Elected  
                                  Jane Lewis      (Resigned 20/9/21)  
                                  Sarah Merwood Co-opted 15/2/21  
                                  Geoff Palmer Elected  
                                  Ken Porter - Elected  
                                  Kate Prager    Elected

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## Acknowledgements

The Trustees, Management, Staff and Clients would like to thank the individuals and organisations who have assisted and supported us in the past year.

Our special thanks go to:

Members and Officers of Arun District Council, Chichester District Council and West Sussex County Council.

The Councillors of our Town and Parish Councils

Our MP's, Sir Peter Bottomley, Nick Gibb, Andrew Griffith and Gillian Keegan

MS Society

Citizens Advice Central Office staff

Clinical Commissioning Group

The A C F Primary Care Network

Sussex Community Foundation

The National Lottery

Members of the Tackling Fuel Poverty Together Program

Members of Arun and Chichester Food Partnership

Energy Savings Trust

The Law Clinic pro-bono solicitors

The London Legal Support Trust

Private Donor supporting our Dementia Support Service

All local Citizens Advice in West Sussex

Our public, clients and staff for their generous donations