



Kington Town Council

Services Committee

Members of the Services Committee you are hereby summoned to attend
a meeting of the Services Committee at
The Old Police Station, Market Hall Street, Kington, on
Monday 17th July 2023 at 6.30pm or on the rising of the Planning Committee, whichever is later
for the purpose of discussing the following business.

Committee Members:

Cllrs. E. Banks, R. Banks, T. Bounds, A. Dixon, M. Fitton, J. Gardner,
K. Greig, P. Sell, & R. Widdowson

Agenda

1. To elect a Chair of the Committee for the forthcoming year
2. To note apologies, declarations of interest and requests for dispensation
3. To agree Minutes of the meeting held on [18th October 2021](#)
4. To elect a Vice Chair of the Committee for the forthcoming year
5. To discuss collaborative working with Kington Medical Practice
6. To discuss the following standing items:
 - a) Buildings currently occupied by the Town Council and such other buildings that can be determined as Community Assets
 - b) Provision of public conveniences
 - c) Provision for young people
 - d) Tourism and Tourist Information Centre
 - e) Arts, culture and museum provision
 - f) Social care, support services and information and advice provision
 - Report from Talk Community Hub in Kington
 - Review of information from Citizens Advice Bureau on activity in Kington
 - g) The Leisure Centre
 - h) LHS Foundation
 - i) Educational provision
 - j) Markets
7. Date of next meeting and items for the agenda

Issued by
Liz Kelso
Town Clerk
On 10.07.2023

Key Statistics

Kingston, Herefordshire 2022-23

01/04/2022 31/03/2023

citizens
advice

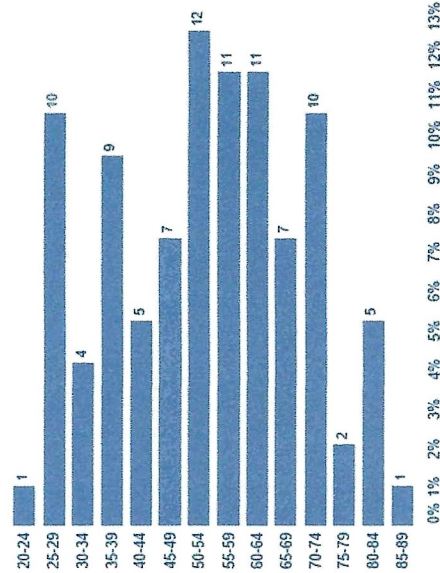
Summary

Clients	105
Quick client contacts	
Issues	396
Activities	562
Cases	129
Outcomes	
Income gain	£29,630
Debts written off	£16,948
Repayments rescheduled	£1,310
Other	£520

Issues

Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	42
Benefits Universal Credit	26
Charitable Support & Food Bank	10
Consumer goods & services	6
Debt	18
Employment	9
Financial services & capability	11
GVA & Hate Crime	1
Health & community care	3
Housing	15
Immigration & asylum	3
Legal	6
Other	3
Relationships & family	11
Tax	3
Travel & transport	2
Utilities & communications	9
Grand Total	396

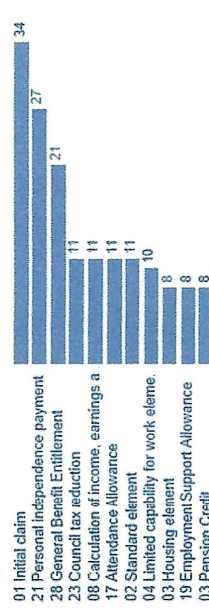
Age



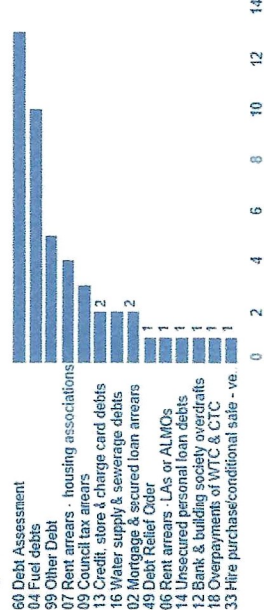
Channel



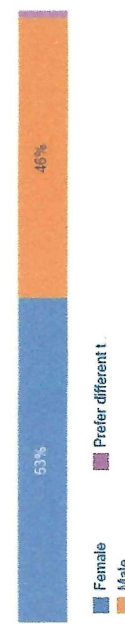
Top benefit issues



Top debt issues



Gender



Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity



Citizens Advice Herefordshire (part of Citizens Advice Worcester and Herefordshire)

Kington Outreach Update

April 2022– March 2023

We continued to offer Face to Face advice at Markwick Close Community Room, supported by our subject specialists and supervisors at our Hereford Office. Our Outreach Volunteer Operations and Training Manager, Stephanie Large has held promotional events across the county, including Kington, to raise awareness of the service and recruit new volunteer advisers.

Outcomes 2022/2023

See Key Statistics Dashboard 01/04/2022– 31/03/2023

The attached Dashboard details all the enquiries actioned for Kington residents

- Advised 105 individual clients
- Advised clients with 562 Activities (telephone calls, letters, completing forms etc)

The main enquiry areas include:

- Benefits and Tax Credits (64%)
- Debt (17%)
- Financial Capability (10%)
- Utilities (9%)
- Charitable support (9%)
- Housing (14%)

54% of all clients receiving assistance were either disabled or had a long term health condition.

Cost of living Crisis and Energy Costs

Demand for our services continues to increase compared to previous years. This is a reflection of the difficulties that the community are experiencing following Covid 19 and the current Cost of Living Crisis. The coming months are going to be extremely challenging due to the issues caused by the general Cost of Living, including food, energy prices and interest rate rises. Citizens Advice Herefordshire is one of local agencies where people can gain access to crisis support:

- There has been an increase in clients coming to us for access to fuel vouchers, food bank vouchers and grants. Additionally, requests for assistance to claim from the Household Support Fund.

- Benefit payments are not tracking inflation; therefore, clients are finding it increasingly difficult to budget. These clients will need income maximisation and benefit advice.
- The increase in interest rates, the impact on credit card bills and mortgage payments will add to the already rising number of clients seeking debt advice.

In April 22 our debt team received 59 new cases across the organisation, in March 23 there were 132 cases.

Current Operations

Available Advice Sessions for Kington Residents

- **Face to Face Advice** - These are now Fortnightly at Markwick Close Community room
- **Telephone Advice** - Clients can continue to receive advice by telephone, email from our advisers working from the Hereford Office or working from home.
Telephone advice and appointments are delivered by our Volunteer Advisers at our Hereford Office: 10.00am – 3.00pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Specialist Services

With the support of our core stakeholders, we have been able to demonstrate a level of stability of the service to enable us to approach funders who may be willing to support more individual projects, including:

Access to the following specialists is available via face to face interviews or telephone:

- **Specialist Debt Advice (Funded by the Money Advice Service)** – including an Approved Intermediary to advise on insolvency options.
- **Macmillan Benefits Advice Service (Funded by Macmillan Cancer Support)** and Generalist Benefit Casework – We have benefit specialists to offer advice on benefit issues, including appeals and casework for complex issues.
- **Pension Wise Guidance Service** - A service funded by Government to provide individuals advice regarding their pension options on retirement.
- **The National Lottery Community Fund Housing and Benefit Specialists**

Additional staff, afforded by our successful application to The National Lottery Community Fund, giving us extra capacity for specialist advice in the areas of Welfare Benefits and Housing.

Continued support from our stakeholders will allow us to seek funding from additional sources for development of the service.

Plans for the Future

During the coming months we are expecting enquiries to continue to increase due to the issues caused by the general Cost of Living, including food, energy prices and interest rate rises. We will need to continue to look for sources of funding and additional grant support.

We will need to continue to recruit and train additional volunteers to meet the increased demand we are experiencing. There is ongoing recruitment planned with interviews having been held in March and April 23 for the next training cohort.

As part of our National Lottery Communities Fund project, we aim to increase advice provision and accessibility further across the county, including specialist advice for clients' key issues. Plans for expansion include a further drop-in session at the Hereford City office and provision of more Outreach services in the South Wye area and the Market Towns.

Some key action points will include:

- Work with Herefordshire Council to promote access to Crisis Support (Household Support Fund and partner agencies).
- Continue to monitor the current issues being experienced by the community. This includes ensuring our team is fully aware of all avenues of crisis support available locally and nationally to advise our clients fully; additionally, reporting issues to our National office for wider analysis and campaigning.
- Training of newly recruited Volunteer Advisers.

Case Studies 2022/2023

1. Benefit Entitlement

The client visited our Outreach advice session.

She was employed in a care home and was about to retire. She needed advice and assistance as she had not yet claimed her State Pension and was extremely concerned by how she was going to manage her finances on a pension.

She lives alone in a 2 bedroom socially-rented property. She was not used to dealing with the household finances. She was widowed last year and her husband would generally take care of the household bills.

The adviser completed a benefit calculation to check her entitlements. She would be able to apply for her State Pension, £146 per week, Pension Credit, £36.60 per week, Housing Benefit £97 per week to help with rent costs and £24.71 Council Tax reduction per week to take care of her Council tax bill. A total of £304.31 per week in new benefit claims.

The client was not confident to claim these benefits online as required and did not have access to the internet. A further appointment was made for the client to assist with the applications.

The client's income for their retirement will now be maximized and she was signposted to the additional cost of living payments that these benefits will give access to. This will enable her to start to plan her budget and move forward in her retirement.

2. Cost of Living – Energy Costs

The client came to outreach session with her husband. They wanted to know if they will receive £400 discount on their energy bills as advertised by the Government in the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS).

They live in a caravan park and their contribution to electricity costs is paid to the site owner. They also recently found that the property is a 12-month holiday let.

The adviser was able to confirm to them that the Government had made an announcement that further funding will be available to provide equivalent support of £400 for energy bills for the 1% of households who will not be reached through the EBSS. This includes those who do not have a domestic electricity meter or a direct relationship with an energy supplier, such as park home residents. Applications were opened in January 2023. The clients were invited to return for further assistance with the application process.

The client might be also be able to get £150 discount as part of the Park Homes Warm Home Discount Scheme. The adviser helped the client to register an interest in the scheme on the Park Homes Warm Home Discount website.

The adviser noted that the clients may be vulnerable in their accommodation, as they were not sure of the details of their tenancy arrangements. If this is a holiday let, they may be at risk of eviction, as a property intended as a holiday let will not offer them statutory protection. The client has been offered an appointment with our Housing specialist to investigate this further.