

Annual Review 2017-18

"I do not know how we would have managed without the support you all gave ..."



**citizens
advice**

Rushmoor



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During my first year as Chair of the Trustee Board, I have been impressed by individual board members' work, from overseeing health and safety, to ensuring successful compliance with our national Performance and Quality Framework.

We have committed to some key developments in our business plan, and have been especially impressed with the huge improvement in our telephone response.

Trustees are actively involved in the big challenge of making our Farnborough relocation a success. As Universal Credit finally arrives, our well-established partnership working will be critical to ensuring the right support for vulnerable local people.

We are sorry to say goodbye to some committed and long standing trustees this year, but look forward to welcoming new talent to our thriving board.

Mark Chatterton

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Chair's foreword



Our whole team's commitment to delivering a high quality service in a rapidly changing environment has been demonstrated this year, not least:

- Increasing access through our new outreach with Rushmoor's Housing Options Team
- Our new CLEAR Project, funded by NatWest's Skills and Opportunities Fund, taking forward some long standing goals to develop resilience with the Nepali Community
- Extending our Domestic Abuse services to reach new communities
- Delivering "Energy Best Deal" sessions

Full roll out of Universal Credit in Rushmoor in October 2018 has coincided with the announcement of the new Universal Support service. Our aim is to strengthen existing, positive partnerships with DWP, Rushmoor Borough Council and others, to make sure local people get the help they need.

The expansion of our Pension Wise team is a vote of confidence in this excellent service. The in depth help delivered by our dedicated Heathlands team to our most vulnerable mental health clients, demonstrates how we shape our service to meet very different client needs.

Our wider team delivers high quality services addressing huge spectrums of problems and people; the fantastic improvement in our telephone response is the result of consistent and focused work by everyone.

Our district wide team of exceptional volunteers and paid staff ensures a responsive, flexible and highly regarded service, which puts clients at the centre. This commitment will continue to inform our challenges in 2019, not least the relocation of our Farnborough office.

Alex Hughes

Chief Officer

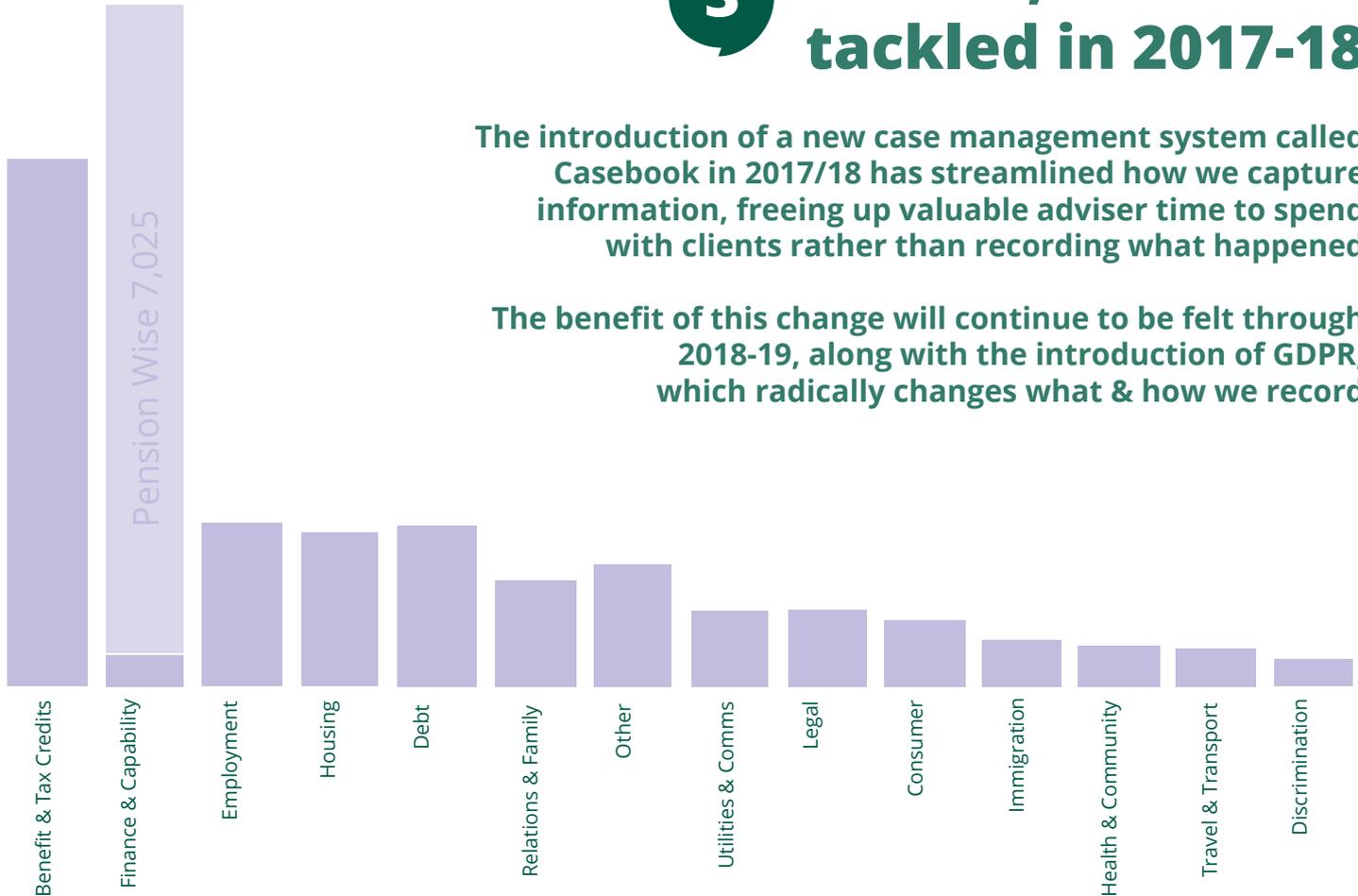
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22,974 Issues tackled in 2017-18

The introduction of a new case management system called Casebook in 2017/18 has streamlined how we capture information, freeing up valuable adviser time to spend with clients rather than recording what happened

The benefit of this change will continue to be felt through 2018-19, along with the introduction of GDPR, which radically changes what & how we record

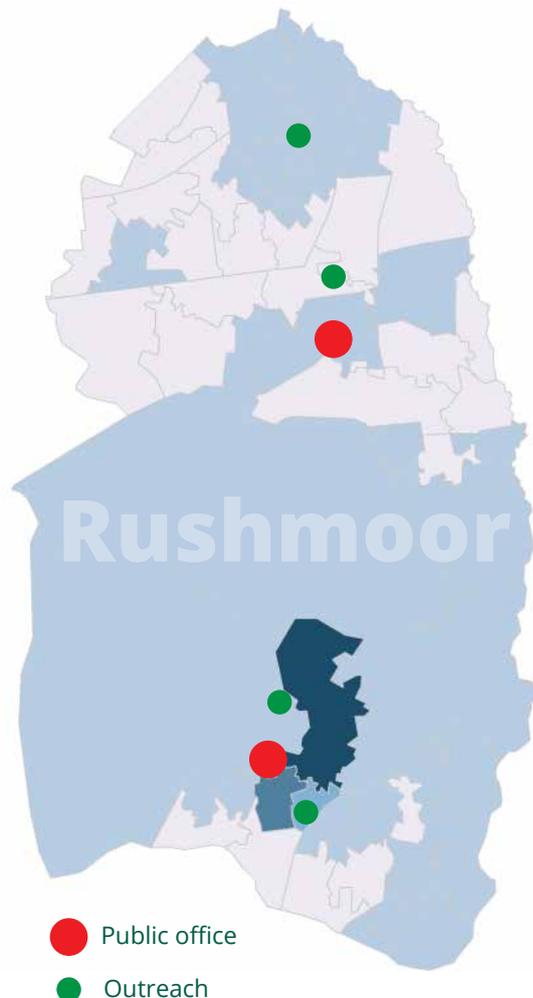


4 Our community

Development days involving trustees and staff identified a clear desire to improve how we engage with our local community – existing and potential clients, other charities, community groups and people interested in supporting our work. So this is now informing our plans to:

- Ensure our new location in Farnborough is used as a real opportunity to improve how we meets the needs of our community
- Find more proactive, interactive and fun ways of creating a dialogue with those who support us
- Improve our links and interaction with local charities and organisations – and ensure our research, campaigning and advice work is as effective as it can be

We are looking for your help to widen our community engagement and will be seeking your views at our AGM and through surveys in our offices and on our website. We do hope that you will help us.



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Universal Credit continues to drive partnership work locally, with the DWP and Rushmoor Borough Council leading the way to achieve the right outcome for clients.

Working with the Vine and the Foodbank, prevention of crisis was why we shared hosting of “I Daniel Blake” at the West End Centre, raising awareness of the impact of benefit changes. The monthly “Problem Solving Group” has been a great opportunity for local partners to share solutions and practical experience to improve services for everyone.

Positive working relationships with mental health professionals are also crucial in getting the right support for vulnerable clients; whilst our Nepali language services are strengthened by great support from Gurkha Welfare Advice Centre and Rushmoor Borough Council.

A huge thank you to all who support our service in so many ways.

Energy / Debt case study:

Following a visit by bailiffs, Paula needed help with over £12,000 of debts. She was at risk of homelessness, and benefits was her only household income to support her 3 children.

Paula was helped to compare and switch energy suppliers, and apply for a grant to help with energy debts, as well as obtain winter fuel payment. Overall she was able to save £300 a year, as well as reduce her energy costs.

The household income was increased by £140 per week through additional benefits claimed, as well as a grant to help with rent arrears Paula has been supported to agree affordable repayments with her creditors, and to manage her overall money and budget, so that she is in more control for the future.

Universal Credit case study:

Anna’s severe physical and mental health issues prevent her working, but after claiming Universal Credit she felt obliged to sign a “claimant commitment” requiring her to:

- Spend 35 hours a week looking for work
- Take a job within a 90-minute travel time
- Be available to work 40 hours a week, on any day at any time.

Anna’s inability to comply led to a sanction, and she was without income for some weeks. Rent arrears, threatened eviction, a warrant to disconnect her electricity and dependency on foodbanks followed – all worsening Anna’s mental and physical health.

Following our interventions, benefits were reinstated, Anna’s housing costs are being paid direct to her landlord, and our successful applications to charities have cleared her main debts. Our challenge has also resulted in backdated benefit, clearing all arrears.



On average, volunteers gave **666** hours per week to supporting local people



The estimated value of our volunteers' contribution to our work was **£593,694**

Valuing our people has never been more important, as we continue to rise to challenges and new developments. We used our Team Development Day to refocus our priorities and how we work together, sharing the great range of skills - from specialist caseworkers, to skilled supervisors and reception staff, all combine to make sure we can respond to meet the needs of local people.

We continue to be impressed by the high quality of volunteers coming forward. Our student placements bring new perspectives and focus, whilst retired professionals and others bring a wealth of experience with them to benefit the community.

Recruiting, supporting and retaining over 100 volunteers is resource intensive, but very rewarding - not least for the clients who benefit from the service they provide. We know there will always be a turnover, particularly for some of our younger volunteers, but we are energised and encouraged by the enthusiasm they bring, and inspired by messages like the following from two who have recently moved on:

"I have learnt so much, but more than anything I will miss the inspiring conversations I have had ... I feel honoured to have met so many humble, hardworking people committed to helping others in their community"

"This year has been challenging for me, but no matter what happened, I always felt welcomed and supported with you all ... Truly inspiring, and I hope I am able to continue committing to helping my community wherever I may be, with the passion you all carry"

Volunteers

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Recognising Achievement



Sally Robinson - Volunteer of the Year



Championing Equality Award

Two awards for Rushmoor at our national Citizens Advice conference.

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Trustees

Mark Chatterton (Chair)

Brian Cottrell (Treasurer from February 2018)

Gerry Baker

Donna Bone

Anne Fillis

Janet Field

Charlie Fraser-Fleming (to November 2017)

Ricky Hanshew (to March 2018)

Barbara Hurst (Vice Chair)

John Kelly (Treasurer to February 2018)

Rudra Khadka (to November 2017)

Bill Miller (from September 2017)

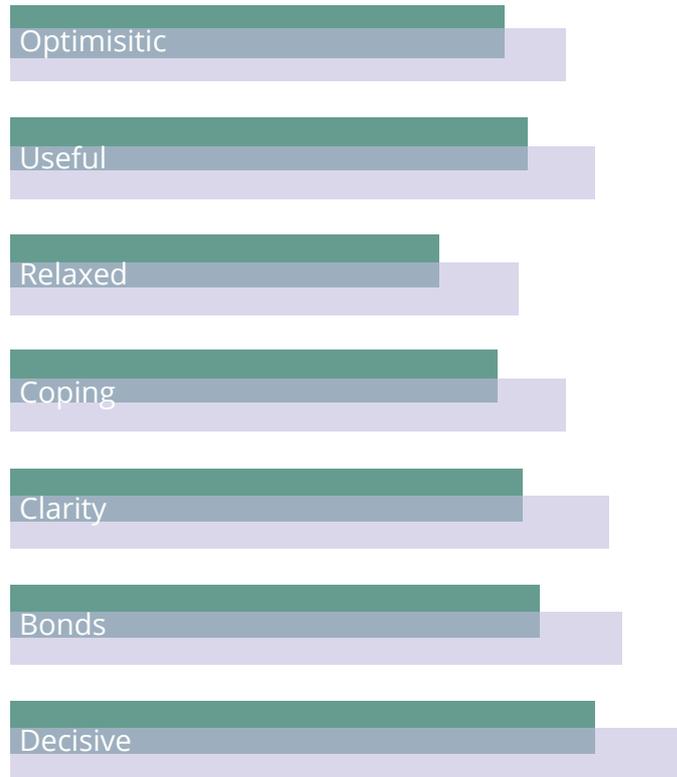
Richard Robinson

Frank Rust

8 Advice trends

The continuing impact of welfare benefits changes, particularly on Employment Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payments, dominates all of our work. The complexity of the decision making process and the impact on clients makes this an extremely challenging area of work.

The growth of Pension Wise demand during 2017/18 has been a challenge to keep pace with; appointments are filled as soon as they are released, with bookings made 2 months ahead. Expansion during the year will continue in 2018/19, to meet the identified need across our delivery area of West Sussex, Hampshire and some of Surrey and Berkshire.



*Comparing wellbeing indicators **before** and **after** advice - results of over 200 surveys of clients using Citizens Advice across Hampshire demonstrate the positive improvement our advice work has on different aspects of health and wellbeing*

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Our Research and Campaigns work continues to put the spotlight on the issues that create the biggest challenges for our clients. The local Foodbank supported us in allowing our analysis of their data alongside our own; this helped us produce a report that details the causes and stories behind the crucial support they provide.

Our evidence also helped contribute to positive change at the Aldershot Centre for Health carpark, directly addressing client concerns and hardship.

Our report on the transition from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payments makes clear the disproportionate impact on vulnerable clients that results from the harsh, complex and lengthy processes involved. The report recommends urgent improvements - not least to also mitigate the consequent demand on local health and social care services.

Our refocused Research and Campaigns team will continue to bring energy, ideas and planned activity during the coming year.

Research & campaigns

10 Our value to society in 2017/18

In 2017/18, for every £1 invested in Citizens Advice Rushmoor by our local authority we generated at least:



£2.37

in fiscal benefits
Savings to government
Reduction in health service demand, local authority homeless services, and out of work benefits for our clients and volunteers.

£18.68

in public value
Wider economic and social benefits
Improvements in participation and productivity for clients and volunteers.

£12.81

in benefits to individuals
Value to our clients
Income gained through benefits gained, debts written off and consumer problems resolved.

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879 clients gain a new award or an increase to their benefit worth a total of **£5,307,010**, an average of **£6,035** per client



563 clients with debt issues 75% of which were resolved including **£1,104,226** written off, an average of **£11,370** per client



474 clients successfully claim one-off awards or other outcomes, worth **£657,500**, an average of **£2,430** each



£3,360,939 of improvement in health, well-being, participation and productivity for the **7959** clients we helped in 2017-18



£454,953 in savings to our local authority and local housing providers by preventing evictions & homelessness



£456,398 total savings to the NHS, and **£536,586** saving to the Department for Work and Pensions by keeping people in work

We would like to thank:

Rushmoor Borough Council

Pension Wise

Surrey Heath and NE Hants and Farnham CCGs

Broadhurst Trust

The Brain Tumour Charity

Prospect Estate Big Local

Citizens Advice Hampshire

The Royal British Legion

LIBOR

Who enabled us to deliver:

Our core, volunteer led service available to all Rushmoor residents – drop in, face to face, phone and email

Pension guidance sessions across Hampshire, Surrey, Berkshire and West Sussex

Specialist casework services for clients with severe and enduring mental health conditions, in-patient and CMHRS

Outreach services and support for clients with mild to moderate mental health conditions

Benefits surgery delivered by telephone to beneficiaries of the charity

Financial inclusion service for residents in PEBL area

Face to face advice and information as part of wider “health watchdog” service

Own language domestic abuse service for Nepali residents

Reaching out to target support for Foreign and Commonwealth serving families

RUSHMOOR
BOROUGH COUNCIL



NHS

**Surrey Heath
Clinical Commissioning Group**

NHS

**North East Hampshire and Farnham
Clinical Commissioning Group**



healthwatch
Hampshire



We would also like to thank all of the local solicitors who regularly volunteer their time and expertise free of charge to help our clients.

This service is ever more important as legal aid funding has virtually disappeared.

**Free, confidential advice.
Whoever you are.**

**We help people find a way forward with their
problems and campaign on big issues when
their voices need to be heard.**

**We value diversity, champion equality and
challenge discrimination and harassment.**

We're here for everyone.



citizensadvicerrushmoor.org.uk

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