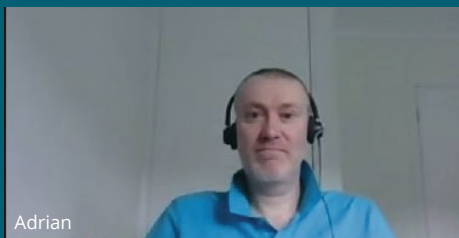




**An extraordinary year @**

**citizens  
advice**

**Rushmoor**



## Responding to new and changing needs

In common with so many others, these on screen rectangles have become the tool through which our different teams have responded together - rising to challenges we could never have imagined before March 2020. Our Change Management Team, pictured here, has responded to new community needs, managing the wholesale shift of our staff, volunteers and trustees to remote working - as well as reshaping in-person services. This review illustrates how our teams have, and will continue to, adapt and change to ensure the right help is there for all.

## 1. Chair's Review of the Year

I started my foreword to last year's review with the words "What a year it's been". That theme has extended throughout this year – another extraordinary year.

The Covid-19 pandemic has continued to cause significant changes to the way that Citizens Advice Rushmoor has supported its clients. Remote working, provision of the majority of services via phone and email, some return to office working (subject to stringent risk assessments and health and safety requirements), and meetings being conducted via Zoom and Teams.

The Trustee Board has conducted its own meetings via Zoom and has been able to operate very successfully using this platform. We recently held our first 'hybrid' meeting, with some trustees being in a meeting room and some online – another example of getting used to new technology.

During the year the commitment of staff, volunteers and trustees has been nothing short of amazing, with the service pulling out all the stops to meet its aim of being here for everyone.

Sustainability of our service, maintaining our funding levels and continuing to support our clients, particularly those who are marginalised or facing digital exclusion, will be even more challenging over the year ahead. I'm confident the service will rise to this challenge and I'm immensely proud to work with such a committed group of people.



1. Foreword
2. Trustee Board
3. Changing issues
4. Supporting people
5. Crisis in mental health
6. Pension Wise
7. New skills
8. Vulnerable clients
9. Community
10. Impact

## Current Trustees

Mr Andrew Levey, Chair  
Mrs Kay Goodchild, Treasurer  
Mr Gerald Baker  
Mr Joseph Bennett  
Rev Malcolm Cummins  
Mr Gary Ghale  
(from May 2021)  
Mr Jason Halliday  
Mrs Chelsea Knight  
(from November 2020)  
Cllr Calum Stewart  
Cllr Gaynor Austin  
(from August 2021)

## Trustees during the year

Mrs Donna Bone  
(to April 2020)  
Ms Danielle Lopes  
(to September 2020)  
Cllr Nadia Martin  
(to May 2021)  
Ms Marybeth Quaintmere  
(to May 2021)

2. The Trustee Board has worked together very effectively to support the service during the year.

We have held ten monthly full Board meetings, an annual trustee development day and regular meetings of our Executive, Audit and Risk, and Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committees.

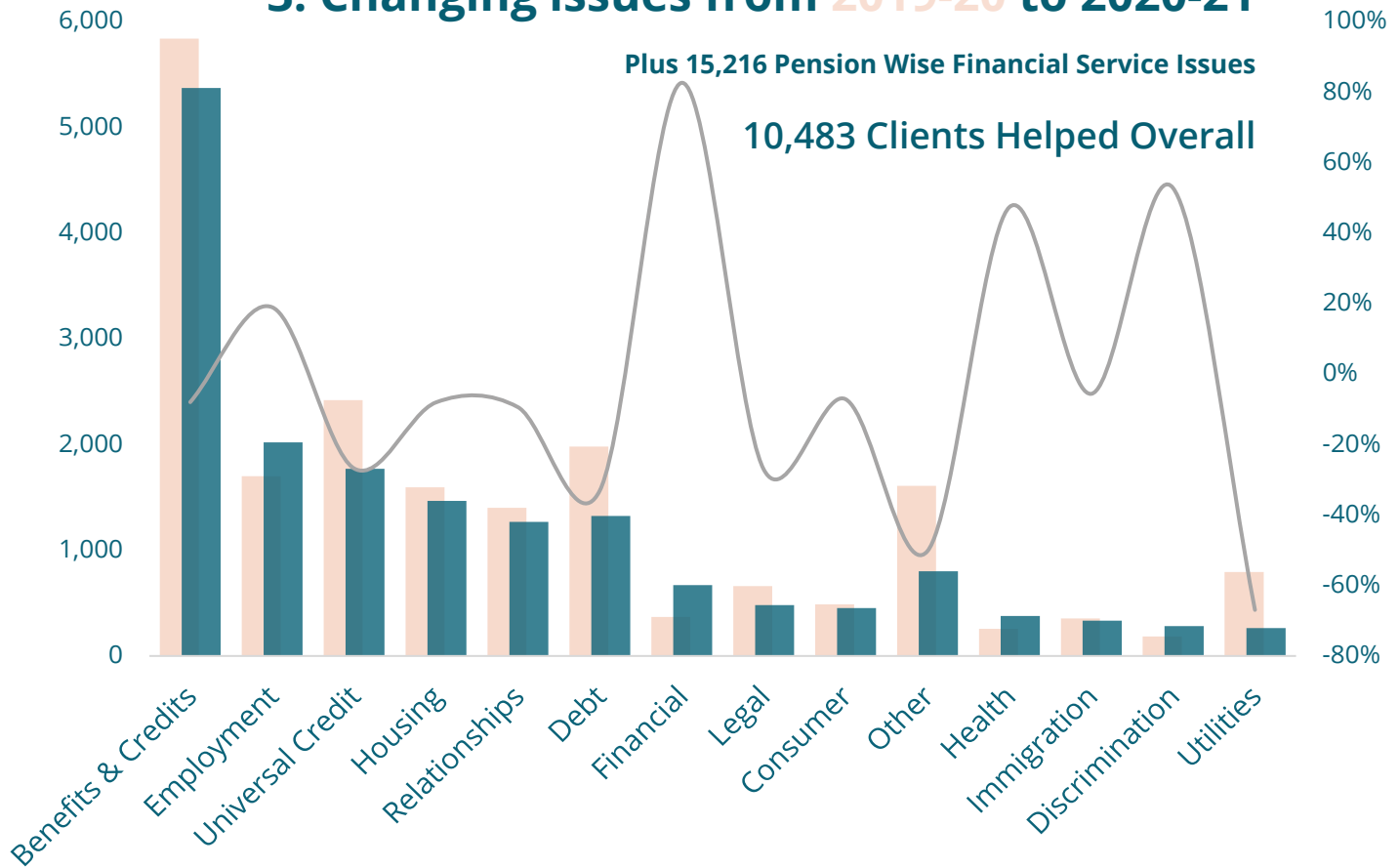
We have successfully joined with operational managers and teams to deliver our research and campaigns activity, participate in a fortnightly Covid Team meeting to manage the impacts of the pandemic and support the development of our future service model. The Chair and Chief Officer meet weekly and have established a very productive working relationship.

We use the Charity Governance Code to benchmark our activity, and during the year have focused on our own development, conducting a skills audit and undertaken mandatory and other training.

A particularly noteworthy achievement has been the work done with Alex and her team, which resulted in the highest standard in our internal quality assessment process.

*Andrew Levey* (Chair of Trustees)

### 3. Changing issues from 2019-20 to 2020-21



\*Grey line shows percentage change in each category.



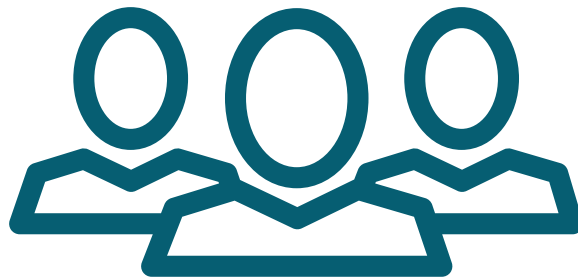
## 4. Supporting people

Supporting our volunteers during 2020/21 has never been more important. Losing the key benefits of meeting colleagues in the office was a major challenge for many, so maintaining daily and weekly opportunities to meet online, and share social as well as work related issues, was vital. Quiz nights and other social opportunities were also organised online.

The Learning and Development team has recruited an incredible 51 new volunteers during 2020/21, 38 of whom are still with us. We have swiftly adapted our training programme to remote delivery for a range of roles. We have sadly said goodbye to 23 volunteers who were with us before the pandemic, reflecting the impact on many. We have embedded a range of new communications channels such as Teams, Zoom and our new IP based phone system, to deliver consistent peer support and focused meetings, to maintain individual and group support, ensuring a continuing focus on high quality advice.

Building partnerships with local organisations, including emergency provision such as food parcels and energy help, has been a vital activity during the year for households in crisis. To improve accessibility for our most vulnerable local residents, we opened up a local number to replace our previous drop in service, and publicised this widely across the community through direct mail, postcards, posters and social media.

We combined this approach with opening up new referral routes for partners, to help those clients needing a supported route to access advice.



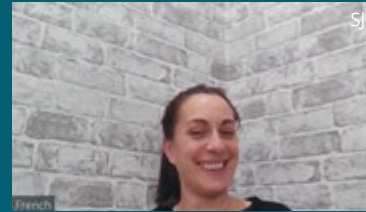




Sue



Jade



SJ

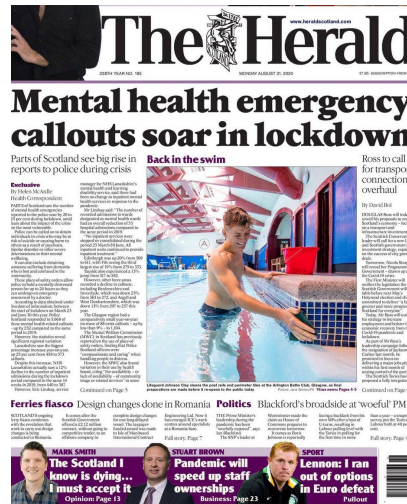


Carol



Maximiliano

## 5. Crisis in Mental Health





Reflecting national headline trends, the impact of the pandemic on clients' mental health has been evident in our mainstream as well as specialist services. Our Heathlands team has been able to put its established mental health expertise to excellent use to give tailored support to people with a mental health diagnosis.

During the year, we have been especially excited to be able to work with Frimley CCG to develop a new service as part of the integrated mental health provision (MHICs) to take referrals from practitioners at primary care level. This has proved immensely popular and beneficial, and demand for the service continues to grow.

Our work with the local Broadhurst Trust charity has enabled us to take forward a very exciting new Mental Health Community and Partnerships project, to link our work with other mental health support services to offer the right level of support to those who most need us.

Our focused "Help to Claim" project has significantly improved our capacity to help people with the complexities of a new Universal Credit claim; the expertise developed as a result of this has had a positive impact on our whole team.

Our work with The Brain Tumour Charity continues to go from strength to strength, with great recognition of the benefits of partnership working for people at a critical point in their diagnosis.

## Case Study:

Chris was referred because of the severe detrimental impact his insecure housing was having on his mental health. Our caseworker took a holistic approach to find the right options for him, making claims to additional benefits and managing his debts. She identified that the £4,000 Chris owed in historic rent arrears was limiting his housing options, so she took action to influence how this debt was treated, in the context of his wider mental health crisis. As a result, the local authority agreed to make the necessary changes to enable a housing association tenancy to be identified for Chris, with a manageable repayment plan in place for the arrears.

Chris experienced an immediate, significant improvement in his mental health, as a result of his changed housing situation; and expressed a renewed motivation to tackle his debt and benefit issues. Chris is continuing to receive support, but is well on the way to managing his situation independently, as he makes a fresh start.



## 6. Pension Wise Team

The scams and challenges of the pandemic have made the expert guidance provided by our Pension Wise service more important than ever.

The team has continued to thrive through significant changes, including the recent rebranding under the “Money Helper” service. As well as recruiting and training new team members remotely, the move to a remote service has been a big change from geographic locations across Hampshire, Surrey, West Sussex and Berkshire. “Although challenging to start with, we are now very comfortable with remote working” said Chris.

“The variety of calls we get makes the job really interesting; although we don’t miss the suitcases and carrier bags of papers we were sometimes presented with, but it can be a challenge working out exactly what type of scheme people are in, without physically seeing documentation” added Andy.



**Who** can Pension Wise help?  
If you are aged 50 or over, have a personal or workplace pension and want to make sense of your options.

**What** is a Pension Wise appointment? It is specialist pension guidance, and takes 45 to 60 minutes, over the phone or local to you.

**How** to book a phone appointment? Call us on: 0800 138 3944 or use our online booking form [www.moneyhelper.org.uk](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk)



## 7. Developing new skills to meet new needs

# KICKSTART SCHEME



**Money &  
Pensions  
Service**



**Hampshire**  
County Council

During the past year we have been able to continue to develop our service with new recruits joining us at different stages. Adapting our recruitment and training programme has brought new perspectives to the whole team. We were pleased to welcome new Kickstart trainees to the team, marking a major new development, which has provided real support to service delivery, as well as gaining new employability skills and perspectives for the trainees.

At the same time, new funding has enabled us to recruit and train a new Supervisor, a Money Advice Caseworker, and a Mental Health Caseworker. We have developed our “learning journal” approach to support remote working, interweaved with regular one to ones and online group sessions to develop people to the required level for delivery. All the trainees have gained by learning from each other, with continuing adjustments made to the programme to best meet needs.



Prativa, Aliza, Prajal & Bikram

## 8. Reaching the vulnerable in a challenging world



## Nepali Services and Partnerships

The opening up of our Nepali Adviceline during 2020/21 has been in direct response to the loss of our popular drop in service. The Adviceline has gone from strength to strength, enabling partnership and joint working to support infection control measures and vaccination roll out; and with joint working to distribute own language pandemic related information to households where there were identified concerns.

During the year we have worked together with local partners in health, social care and the community to find ways of Overcoming Barriers to services, focusing on those excluded because of language, literacy and digital skills.

Monthly meetings have been well attended with high levels of participation, learning from each other to develop new ways of working. This has included setting up new access routes via the “Viber” app (popular with the Nepali community) and through directly bookable appointments as an alternative to a referral.

We are pleased to have been able to further develop our Domestic Abuse service through the Police and Crime Commissioner funding, building capacity to reach more people, as well as improve awareness and understanding within the Nepali community through own language services. This has been in direct response to government data evidencing increased levels of domestic abuse during the pandemic; also driving us to continue our training for all our team on domestic abuse.

Our delivery of our Hate Crime project in 2020/21 has been especially successful, involving the local Police as well as engagement with wider community groups and individuals. We are now delighted to be delivering the BAME part of our Hampshire “Reaching People Together” project, training community leaders and individuals in “Advice First Aid”.

A small but important partnership with Frimley CCG also enabled us to produce a Nepali language video explaining to people how to access own language interpretation on the NHS 111 service. This has been very well received, and widely distributed across the NHS, with potential to adapt for other languages too, improving the overall ability to reach vulnerable communities to help with vaccine, infection control and other impacts of the pandemic.

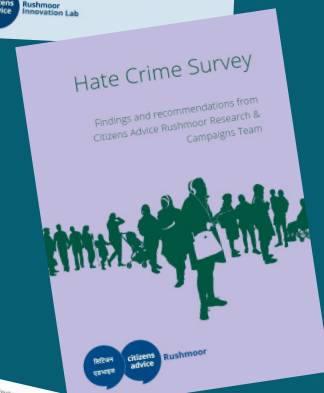


## Case Study:

*After being married in Nepal, X came to the UK on spousal visa. After seeing the evidence of the physical, sexual and emotional abuse by their spouse, the GP referred X to our service.*

*Our Nepali speaking Domestic Abuse worker helped X to overcome the shame and fear about disclosing what had happened, with sensitivity and understanding of how the community may respond. We were also able to reassure X that the threats made about their immigration status being in danger were unfounded, and that the police would be supportive and take action when the abuse was reported – contrary to what the spouse had said.*

*Our Nepali speaking domestic abuse worker supported X to manage the risks of their situation, and undertake safety planning. In addition, X was helped to apply for a non-molestation order to prevent direct or indirect contact from their spouse. X was also helped to gain indefinite leave to remain as a domestic abuse victim, and is now safe to live in the UK free from fear and shame.*



# 9. Community, research & campaigns

Our team has reshaped to respond to community issues in real time. Our hate crime work has included making videos to build awareness of impact and harm, with a well attended live stream. Working with the Police has helped to reinforce the message that hate crime is taken seriously.

Unscrupulous scammers have taken advantage of people's isolation and fear, and our new "Rushmoor Against Scams" Facebook page enables immediate alerts and information sharing, as a key tool for prevention.

Overcoming Barriers to advice has been a top priority for us, working with partners to research and identify ways to reach people facing language, literacy and digital barriers.

We have been glad act as an additional conduit for much needed food and emergency help, and are continuing to work with Rushmoor Borough Council's Deprivation Working Group to address identified areas of deprivation locally.



Sue, Maximiliano, Hazel & Jade

# 10. Our Impact in 2020/21

921 clients gain a new benefit award or an increase worth a total of **£6,547,082**

543 clients with debt issues 79% of which were resolved including **£1,228,834** written off

**£574,563** savings to the NHS and to the DWP by keeping people in work equals **£1,417,488**

**£2,535,377**  
in fiscal benefit to government

**£8,799,549**  
in direct benefits to our clients

**£26,837,819**  
in value to society as a whole

As we look to the future, we are working on a new, reshaped service model that will build on all we have learned; and offer a resilient response to meet client needs. Focusing the model itself, as well as the people and complex needs that surround that, the team is continuing to innovate, learn and share with each other in a way that is inspiring and forward looking.

We would like to thank all our funders but in particular those who have worked most closely with us to address local challenges, including:

*Rushmoor Borough Council*

*Gurkha Welfare Advice Centre*

*Greater Rushmoor Nepalese Community*

*Rushmoor Voluntary Services*

**RUSHMOOR**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



**Frimley**

Clinical Commissioning Group



In partnership with  
**THE NATIONAL LOTTERY  
COMMUNITY FUND**

**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](https://citizensadvicerrushmoor.org.uk)**

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