

Welcome to our Annual Review of Citizens Advice Corby & Kettering for 2019 - 2020

“Last year I said that I looked forward to the following years confident that CASCK would go forward helping those who need us. Well, who would have thought that 2020 would have brought us to the biggest pandemic in history which has affected almost everyone on the planet.

My confidence has been rewarded. Under the Leadership of Debbie, the whole team at CASCK has risen to the challenge which Covid 19 has brought and ensured that our clients have been served as always professionally, with empathy and above all with complete compassion which we are well versed in. This organisation is blessed with our employees and volunteers being so dedicated in their service of our clients and for that I wholeheartedly thank them. Even under the strain of Covid 19 we should rightly recognise the countless hours of work and expertise delivered so warmly by our staff and army of volunteers.

I would also take this opportunity once again to thank our Friends at Kettering Borough Council and Corby Borough Council without whose help and financial support we would struggle to continue.

My personal thanks also to our Board of Trustees who so admirably helped to steer the ship in the right direction during 2020.

Some of you have heard me say that 2021 will not only bring the continuous challenge of the virus but it will also bring a ‘tsunami’ of new clients who each have their own problems brought about by this virus and the Economic fallout that will inevitably ensue. I do know however that the staff and volunteers at CASCK are well prepared to help these new and existing clients in whatever way they can - and I look forward to our continued success”



(Paul Clarke attending our Volunteers' Week Celebration 2019)

- Paul Clarke, Chair of the Trustee Board

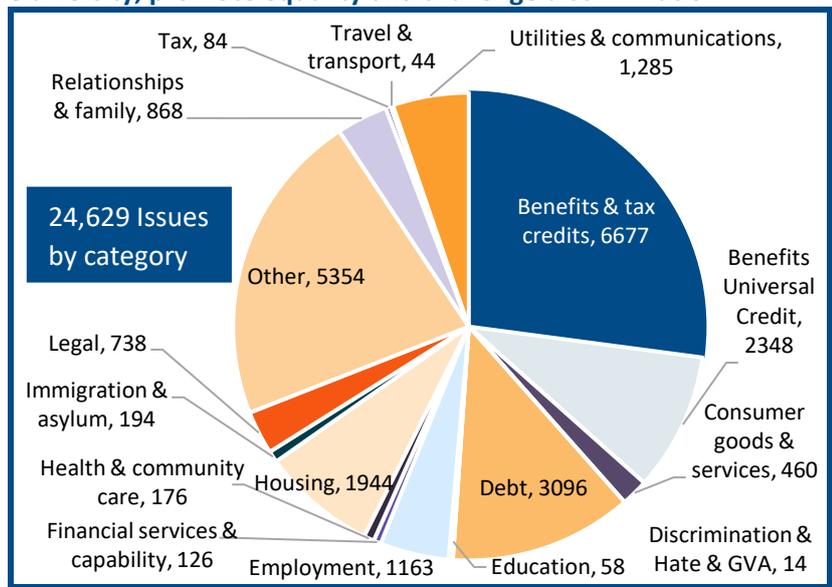
OUR AIMS

Citizens Advice Corby & Kettering provides **free, independent, impartial, confidential** advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. As an organisation we **value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination**.

OUR IMPACT

Between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, Citizens Advice Corby and Kettering helped clients deal with **24,629 issues**

This means that on average during our opening hours, **local citizens turned to us for help with an issue every 3 minutes.***



THANK YOU to our funders and partners for your continued support

Our Funders: • Corby Borough Council • Kettering Borough Council • Northamptonshire Community Foundation • Henry Smith Charity • Big Lottery Homestart Corby • Kettering Community Unit • Awards for All • European Social Fund • Citizens Advice • Big Local • CLS/Warm Homes Fund • Desborough Town Council



Our Partners: • Corby Borough Council • CBC Housing Options • Kettering Borough Council • KBC Housing Options • Homestart Corby/Kettering • Community Law Service Northampton & County (CLS) • Corby Voluntary & Community Services • Kettering Voluntary Network • JobCentre+ Corby • JobCentre+ Kettering • CENCA • Daventry Citizens Advice • Citizens Advice • Kingswood & Hazelwood Neighbourhood Centres • Kettering Community Unit Foodbank • Kettering Futures Partnership • Corby Foodbank

*24,629 issues recorded on Casebook between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020. Number of operating days during this period totals 244 days with opening hours 9am-2pm. Total operating hours is equal to 1220 hours. 24,629 issues / 1220 hours = 20.18 issues per hour = more than 1 issue every 3 minutes.

OUR WORK

We are a registered charity providing **free, independent, impartial, confidential** advice to everybody, regardless of race, religion, gender, disability or sexuality. We help our clients with issues that are important to them, from debt worries and benefit entitlements, to housing issues and energy advice.

Whoever you are, whatever the problem: We're here to help.

DEBT

We advise on managing money, negotiating with creditors, and choosing debt management options.

In 2019 – 2020 the amount of debt we helped our clients to manage totals:

£1,990,867.46

BENEFITS

We advise people on how to claim benefits to which they may be entitled.

We also assist clients with appeals and mandatory reconsiderations.

HOUSING

We advise clients on issues including:

- Eviction • Private Tenancies
- Social Housing Tenancies
 - Possession Orders
- Property Repairs • Homelessness

In 2019-2020 Citizens Advice Corby & Kettering generated an estimated income for our clients totaling: £4,125,534.22

EMPLOYMENT

We advise employees and employers on issues including:

- Unfair Dismissal
- Employment Rights
- Discrimination • Bullying

OTHER

We provide information on how to access specialist help and give advice to clients on a wide range of issues including:

- Disputed tax • Energy • Immigration • Consumer
- Legal • Education

We also issue vouchers for local Foodbanks.

RELATIONSHIPS

We give information on how to access legal help and give advice on practical solutions in response to issues such as:

- Neighbour disputes • Domestic violence
- School problems • Family breakups

Comments from our clients

"Fantastic help, wonderfully professional in every way."

"The adviser was extremely knowledgeable and understanding, couldn't recommend more highly, thank you."

"Your service was excellent, problem was sorted!"



Cllr. Tom Beattie

"Corby Borough Council would like to thank and congratulate the Citizens Advice Services in continuing to provide extremely valuable assistance to Corby's community in light of Corona and the additional pressures they faced.

The CAS has helped residents through a number of difficult situations ranging from debt relief, tribunal issues and everyday concerns. We are extremely pleased to work closely with CAS and hope to continue this relationship in order to provide Corby residents with extensive, confidential and impartial advice that they need".

- Councillor Tom Beattie,
Leader of Corby Borough Council

"With the changes that are happening in North Northamptonshire it is important that we continue to work ever closer with the CAB.

I wish you all the successes in the next year."



Cllr. Russell Roberts

- Councillor Russell Roberts
Leader of Kettering Borough Council

NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS' WEEK



Nothing stops us from celebrating our hard-working volunteers, we held our annual Volunteers' Week celebration via videocall on

3rd June 2020



This year, Volunteers week fell during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic, and this meant that we had to find a way to safely celebrate the efforts of our Volunteers from a distance.

A Virtual Coffee and Cake celebration was held over Zoom on Wednesday 3rd June at 12:30pm. All Volunteers, Trustees and Staff were gifted with home-made scones, jam, biscuits, a 'warm hug in a jar' candle and a card to express our gratitude for their continued support in the unprecedented times we were facing.

How much do our volunteers mean to us?

Over the past year, our team of valued and skilled volunteers have donated

£142,510

worth of time and effort to help us to help the local communities we serve.

Our volunteers represent the diverse communities we live in and reflect a wide range of different backgrounds, ages and experiences.



VOLUNTEER TESTIMONIAL

A couple of years back I decided to take voluntary redundancy after working 21 years for a large local distribution company. During this time, I had enjoyed working in commercial business roles. However, with repeated re-organisations and the need to reapply for your own role happening with increased regularity I decided it was time for a change. I also had two young children and wanted a better work life balance.

I planned to try some new things, one of which was to gain experience working for a more community focused organisation. As a local support provider Citizens Advice was top of mind. CA had helped me out in the past when my then bank was threatening me with court over an unpaid student overdraft. My partner Tracy had also previously volunteered at Citizens Advice. Tracy messaged Clare at CA Corby to see if there were any volunteer vacancies and I soon had an application form to complete. I then had an interview with Vinny and Michelle. This was largely an open informal discussion around what Citizens Advice does, and the rewards and challenges of the volunteer roles. I left feeling very impressed with their straight-talking honesty and looking forward to my start date.

I began volunteering at the Corby office and all the team made me feel welcome. I completed the induction training and started shadowing gateway assessor and specialist advisor sessions. Katie and Ruth were great mentors and I quickly expanded my awareness of the multiple issues clients seek CA help for. After a couple of months, I was ready to conduct my own gateway assessments, and soon began to enjoy the feeling of helping clients on their CA support journey.

In March, almost a year after joining, things frustratingly came to a sudden halt with lockdown. Unfortunately, I was unable to work from home with two young children. Thankfully, I maintained contact with the CA team and was then able to join the Covid-safe working group set up in the summer to plan our safe return to the office. This proved a great opportunity to get back involved again, and also get to know some of the wider Corby & Kettering team. I am now very much looking forward to recommencing my 2nd year with Citizens Advice (in the "new normal"!) and further developing my skills and responsibilities within the organisation.

– Mike Burns, Volunteer

We would like to give sincere thanks to everyone, both volunteers and paid staff who work at our Corby and Kettering Offices. They provide a first-class service to the residents of Corby and Kettering Boroughs and the surrounding villages:

Adrian, Alex, Amy, Anca, Anne, Babs, Bruce, Caroline, Charlotte, Christopher, Clare, David, Debbie, Dorota, Fiona, Gareth, Gary, Jane, John, Joy, Katherine, Karen, Katie, Keeley, Lee, Lesley B, Lesley T, Liam, Liz, Lorraine, Lynn, Margaret, Michelle, Pattie, Paul C, Paul T, Pete, Rachael, Ruth, Sally, Sukhy, Tracey, Trish, Vinny.

RESEARCH & CAMPAIGNS

Nationally, Citizens Advice see two million people every year, and have a closer understanding of the problems that people experience than any other organisation. Your local charity, Citizens Advice Corby & Kettering know which policies are working and spot emerging issues early, in order to influence policy makers and services to bring about change that will positively impact the lives of people both locally and nationally. This work is fundamental in the pursuit of the services' aim to improve the policies and practices that affect peoples' lives.

LOCAL RESEARCH & CAMPAIGNS

Citizens Advice Corby & Kettering have identified an ongoing issue with Anti-social behaviour, this is affecting many tenants from many different Housing Sectors. Anti-social behaviour is made up from neighbour disputes, domestic abuse, threats of violence which have led to actual violence and criminal damage, whereby the tenant feels they are not being supported by their Housing Landlord – We are currently collecting evidence for this issue from our clients, in order to help individuals effectively.

We continue to work closely with our partners to ensure accessibility to all services for those clients suffering with mental health issues and understand and overcome those barriers that prevent services' being accessed.

NATIONAL RESEARCH & CAMPAIGNS: Evidence used nationally by Citizens Advice for Research & Campaigns Apr 19-Mar 20

Benefits:

- Making Ends Meet: Since April 2016, the impact of the benefits freeze on people in debt, showed that from April to August 2019, 40% of people we helped with debt who claim income-related benefits had a negative budget.
- Universal Credit: Why are claims being closed? - Was this because of something the client did/ didn't do? Or poor administration from the DWP?
- Universal Credit - No Recourse to Public Funds: When one member of a couple has no-recourse to public funds (NRPF) Citizens Advice (and CPAG) guidance states Universal Credit claimants should make a single claim but make a clear disclosure that they have a partner who has NRPF. However, we are aware that the DWP/JCP are advising claimants to make a joint claim for UC.

Scams:

- Universal Credit claim scam - Scammers are allegedly offering people cheap loans, then taking the individual's ID and personal and financial details in order to claim benefits.

Domestic Abuse:

- Domestic abuse and access to post or use of an address.

Utilities:

- Bills and statements - Sometimes essential service providers charge for receiving paper bills, some offer discounts for paperless billing and some don't offer paper bills and statements.
- Low compensation amount offered by energy suppliers - for poor customer service by energy suppliers.

SERVICE AVAILABILITY



Corby & Kettering

Opening Times & Contact Details

KETTERING OFFICE

Opening Hours	Monday - Friday 9:00am - 2:00pm
Address	Municipal Offices, Bowling Green Road, Kettering, NN15 7QX
Telephone	01536 482281
Email	volunteerdevelopment@casck.co.uk

CORBY OFFICE

Opening Hours	Monday-Wednesday 9:00am - 2:00pm (Specialist appointments available Thursdays and Fridays)
Address	The Corby Cube, Parklands Gateway, George Street, Corby, NN17 1QG
Telephone	01536 265501
Email	volunteerdevelopment@casck.co.uk

NATIONAL ADVICE LINE

Telephone	03444 111 444
Available	Monday – Friday 10:00am – 3:00pm

LOCAL WEBSITE

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/corby-kettering

STATEMENT FROM THE CHIEF OFFICER



Another busy year for CASCK in which our primary objective remains to support and enable people to move forward in a positive way. Our holistic approach ensures that all issues are identified and by working together with our clients, we find the best possible solutions to the problems they are facing. Partnership

working is also key to resolving the often complicated and difficult situations our clients present to us.

Our positive impacts and outcomes for our clients can only be achieved with a culture of 'can do' that we are proud to have through the experienced, passionate and dedicated team of Volunteers and Paid Staff. So, a personal thank you from me for all of their hard work which enables us to change people's lives for the better every single day. Last but not least, a huge thank you to our Funders for their support and to our Partners who work with us to deliver the joined up interventions that are so important in making a real difference to the lives of our clients.

- Debbie Egan, Chief Officer

OUTREACHES

We also usually work in several outreach locations, making our services accessible to a wider number of clients. Due to Covid-19 this is suspended.

Outreach Locations: • Rothwell Library • Desborough Library • Burton Latimer Library • Kingswood & Hazelwood Neighbourhood Centres