

Annual Report 2019-20

For
everyone,
for 80
years



1939



2019

citizens
advice

Harrow

Chair's report

Last year - being the 80th anniversary of the establishment of Citizens Advice and the opening of offices in Harrow - was an important one for us. We were fortunate to be able to celebrate with our friends and colleagues in the beautiful surroundings of Harrow School. Lord Boateng generously gave of his time to join us and share his thoughts about our communities and their needs.

I would like to pay tribute to all those who have supported us over the years and in particular to recognise the commitment of our chief executive and her dedicated team of staff and volunteers who have worked so hard on behalf of Harrow residents throughout the year.

Our advice and information service seeks to be flexible enough to recognise changes in the needs of the borough and its residents. It became increasingly obvious at the beginning of 2020 that the world was facing a pandemic: in March all our services were required to close down from our offices in Harrow and everyone had to work from home. It continues to be an incredibly challenging and frightening time and it is astonishing that the staff and volunteers immediately managed to turn our regular service into a continuing phone, email and web-based one. Our financial situation, as with all

charities, is always difficult, so we appreciate the continued support and the contract for advice and information services from the London Borough of Harrow as well as the support from other charitable funding, donations and other contracts to deliver specific services to vulnerable groups or those needing specialised help.

Our membership of National Citizens Advice provides assurance that we can maintain and improve the quality of our service, and train and develop our staff and volunteers. It enables us to pass on our local experiences to inform national campaigns which improve the lives of all our citizens.

As always, I would like to thank our trustees for their support and commitment to Citizens Advice Harrow and for all the help they have given during the past year.

Frances Logan

Chair

Citizens Advice Harrow



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Celebrating the 80th anniversary at Harrow School

Chief executive's report

Given the events of recent months, last year feels like a long time ago. But as we all adapt to the implications of covid-19, it is still essential to reflect on the successes and lessons of the past.

We had our 80th anniversary in September. Harrow was the seventh office to open in the country, and by 1945 there were six offices in the borough looking after 83,000 enquiries.

We have maintained a long and proud history in the borough of helping people facing uncertainty. Last year we dealt with 21,862 problems and maximised

people's income by £1,483,028. None of this would have been possible without the continued support of our funders, volunteers, trustees and staff.

We are fast moving into a world shaped by the pandemic, which will be hard for all of us. Now more than ever we must pull together to ensure we can continue supporting Harrow residents.

Tajinder Nijjar
Chief Executive
Citizens Advice Harrow

Headline statistics in 2019/20



We saved £273,716 for NHS.



By keeping people in work we have saved the DWP £756,636.



The public value of improving clients' wellbeing was £10,046,313.

Treasurer's report

Although the financial year started well, unfortunately we lost donations from two of our long-term supporters, especially the Henry Smith Foundation. It has been with us for many years and we must say thank you for its funding over the period. The financial year ended badly with the onset of coronavirus, which resulted in the loss of two more significant funders. However, we were able to take on a number of new projects, particularly Help to Claim, Universal Credit, which enabled us to show a small surplus for the year.

Despite having to suspend face-to-face contact with clients from 23 March 2020,

demand for our service continued to be high. I would like to express my gratitude to Tajinder, all the staff and the volunteers for continuing to provide such a high level of service in these trying conditions. My thanks also go to our friends in the London Borough of Harrow for their continued support over the period.



David Wood
Treasurer
Citizens Advice Harrow



Case study one

The client is 84 and came with his wife for help about their housing situation. They were receiving state retirement pension (SRP) and pension credit (PC). His wife has a physical disability and is in receipt of attendance allowance (AA). They had been going through difficulties with their housing situation for about 10 years. They had to sell their family home to one of their sons because they were unable to pay the mortgage. The client was upset as the son had promised to house them but had not done so. They were therefore forced to approach the council for help but struggled to explain their situation because of a language barrier, so were offered no help. One of their sons offered them a temporary place in his privately-rented flat. The client and his wife had to stay in a room that was

extremely damp, with leaks coming from a damaged ceiling. They had to continue living there, even after the ceiling collapsed, and had to endure relationship problems with the family whilst there. They then saw an adviser at Harrow Citizens Advice who could explain their options in their own language, which made them feel more confident and empowered. The client began to understand his rights and gather enough evidence to apply for social housing. The outcome was successful: they were given a one-bedroom flat in sheltered accommodation with an introductory tenancy leading to a secure tenancy after a year. The clients visited Citizens Advice to thank us for our help and support. We are continuing to support them with housing benefit, council tax support and other issues.

Main enquiries in 2019/20



10,303 Benefits & tax credits,
5,021 of which were universal
credit



2,965 Debt



2,313 Housing



1,007 Employment



981 Immigration & asylum



616 Relationship & family



564 Consumer goods



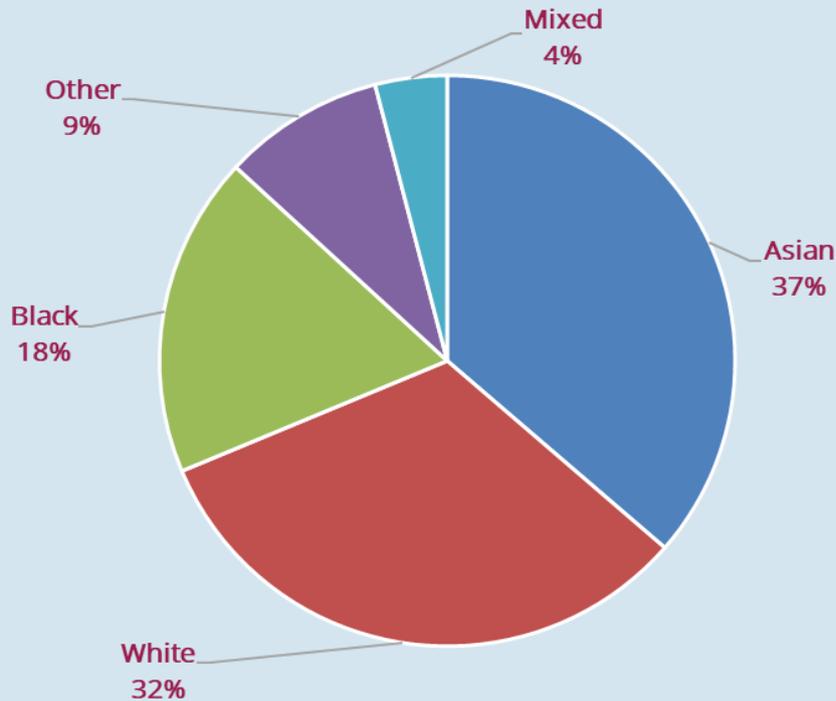
552 Utilities

And 2,561 other issues.

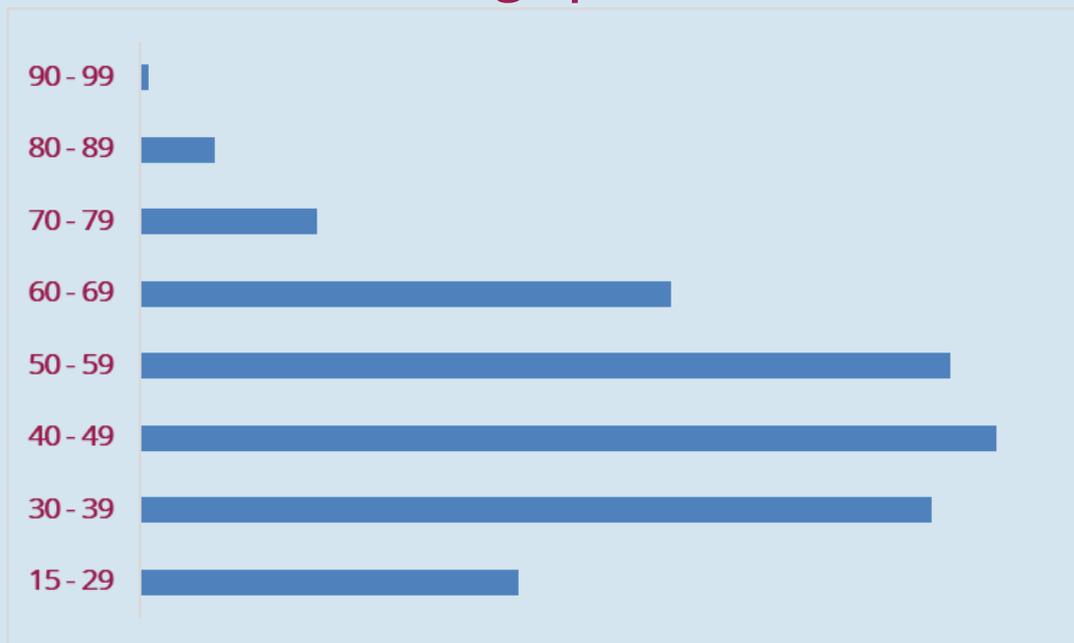


"Excellent service as always. People working there are really qualified and super friendly!"

Ethnicity profile



Age profile



Case study two

The client called on her daughter's behalf enquiring about her grandchildren taking over their mother's tenancy. The client's daughter lives with her four adult children in a housing association property. The daughter was suffering from stage 4 cancer and was worried about her children becoming homeless after she passed away, as they did not have a statutory right to take over the tenancy. The adviser

contacted the housing association and obtained advice from a housing solicitor. The housing association agreed that one of the adult children could take over the tenancy after the client's daughter passed away. They offered the tenancy on a discretionary basis to one of the grandchildren, which meant that all the children could continue to live there.



Case study three

The client contacted Citizens Advice Harrow because he needed support with benefit issues. The client is disabled, with mental and physical medical conditions, and lives with his friend and carer, as he needs full-time care. The client had been in receipt of disability living allowance (DLA), which included the care component, thus allowing his carer to claim carer's allowance (CA). The client had then been asked by the DWP to transfer to a claim for personal independence payment (PIP), which he did. However, he was only awarded the lower rate of the

mobility component for PIP, which meant that his carer would not be entitled to CA (which requires the care component award). The adviser helped the client by submitting a reconsideration request to the DWP: writing a letter which disputed the award. The decision was subsequently overturned and the client was awarded the lower rate of the PIP mobility component. This meant that his carer could continue to live with him and provide personal care in the familiar way that was essential to his wellbeing.



"I just want to say a big thank you for all the hard work you have done to help me!"

"Thanks for your help. My case has been closed and it's all because of you!"



80 years on...



As a new member of Citizens Advice Harrow, being present at the 80th anniversary of the organisation really put into perspective the invaluable work which has been carried out since the beginning of the second world war. The charity has always endeavoured to help the most vulnerable members of our community as well as lobbying key government departments to bring about substantive social changes. We hope that the organisation will have the necessary resources to continue carrying out its much needed work into the future.

Noemi Stepan-Sarkissian



Citizens Advice Harrow is the operating name of Harrow Citizens Advice Bureaux Service Ltd, a charity and company limited by guarantee.

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