



Clients helped by
Citizens Advice Dorchester, Sherborne & Districts and
North Dorset*
April 2018 to March 2019

 **6,645** people asked us for advice  with **21,373** issues



9,571 benefit issues



2,572 debt issues



1,629 housing issues



43% of all activity was face to face advice



£4,503,945 income gained



£915,543 gained in debts written off

47% clients disabled or have long term condition, **26%** of whom had a mental health problem



111 volunteers with an estimated value of **£1,040,075**

*Provisional statistics for 2018-19

CITIZENS ADVICE DORCHESTER, SHERBORNE & DISTRICTS, AND NORTH DORSET SUMMARY IMPACT REPORT 2018-19

2018-19

2018-19 was a busy year for us with demand for our advice remaining very high, and client issues becoming more and more complex.

Our workforce of **33** paid staff and **111** volunteers continued to provide a high quality advice service which responded to the individual needs of our clients – from providing a single piece of information to in-depth, complicated and lengthy casework. Our audit from the national Citizens Advice office demonstrated the quality of our organisation with a **maximum 5 out of 5 for all 8 areas of work**.

We continued to respond to the rural nature of our geographical area by providing face to face advice in our three main offices in Dorchester, Sherborne and Gillingham, our outreaches in Blandford and Shaftesbury and in GP practices in Bere Regis, Cerne Abbas, Crossways, Puddletown, Maiden Newton and Sturminster Newton.

In addition, we provided telephone advice, Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm, as part of the Dorset Adviceline, manned by staff from our organisation and other local Citizens Advice across Dorset according to a rota system.

We are particularly proud of our projects (funded separately from our core service) which provided advice and support to very vulnerable clients, including people with cancer, people with MS, people with mental health problems (both inpatient and in the community) and provided specialist advice on specific subject areas such as welfare benefits and income maximisation, debt and employment.

2019-20 and beyond

On 1st April 2019, we merged with Citizens Advice Weymouth and Portland to form Citizens Advice Central Dorset, covering a geographical area of **1,733 km²** and serving a population of around **238,911** people (33,000 of which are served by Citizens Advice Bridport & District).

We face the challenge of balancing our resources to both meet the needs of a rural population with limited access to services with the significant needs arising from areas of social deprivation in our urban residents.

We look forward to **three new exciting projects** – supporting Syrian families in Dorset, supporting local Citizens Advice across the South West to identify and help people at risk of gambling-related harm and introducing a new way of working in Weymouth library, whilst continuing to manage the increasing demand for help with applying for Universal Credit and managing ongoing claims.