



Citizens Advice in Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole

Advice Trends

April 2016 to March 2017



Over **26,800** people asked us for advice



with over **66,000** issues

40% of those seeking advice were disabled or had a long term health condition



23,895 benefit issues



10,279 debt issues



6,033 housing issues

Top FOUR top Benefit issues



5173 issues relating to Personal Independence Payment

3848 issues relating to Employment Support Allowance

2495 issues relating to Housing Benefit

1881 issues relating to Working and Child Tax Credits

848 issues of threatened homelessness



384 referrals for food banks



1487 issues relating to credit store and charge cards



OUTCOMES

£8,727,711 income gained benefits and tax credits



£2,345,558 debt written off



£175,490 repayments rescheduled



Citizens Advice helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice, and by influencing policymakers.

Locally, we are a **well-established network** of eight independent local Citizens Advice (LCAs) offices who deliver services from 11 main offices and over 35 outreaches (GPs, Children's Centres, libraries, etc.). Advice is independent, impartial, free and quality-assured. The eight LCAs collaborate through the consortium, Citizens Advice in Dorset.

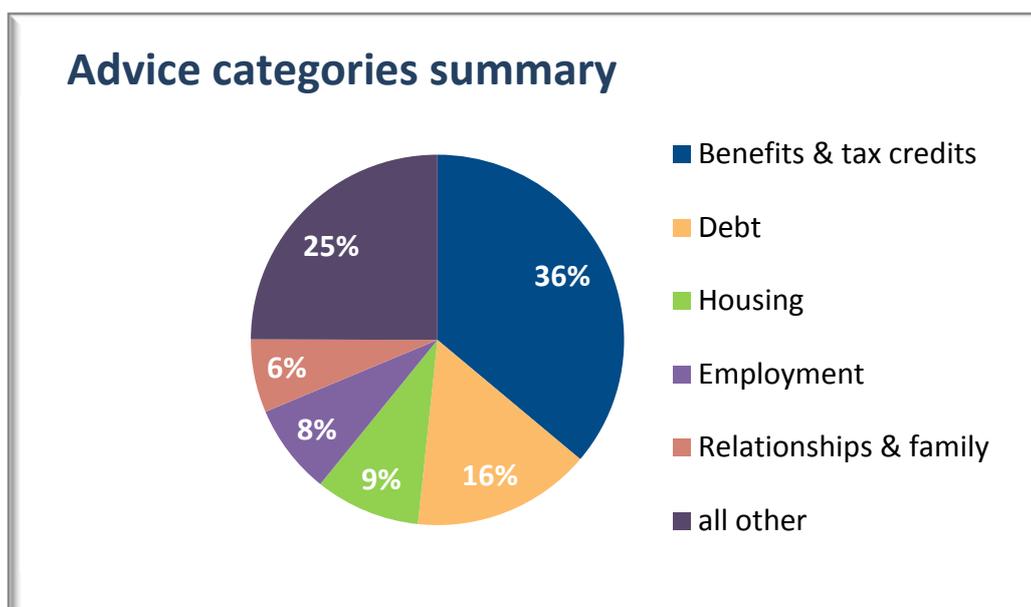
Advice is available in a range of ways:

- telephone access via Dorset Adviceline **0344 245 1291** (10 – 4 Mon – Fri)
- face to face advice at local offices and outreaches
- email access, via office websites and: <https://citizensadvisedorset.org.uk/get-advice/>

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Citizens Advice has a wealth of data which includes client profile data and advice related data. For each client the enquiry is recorded with a main issue code (e.g. Benefits) and then two further subsets are selected (e.g. Jobseekers Allowance – sanctions). This enables us to build up a very full picture of advice needs and trends.

In this period we dealt with 26,879 people who had 66,130 advice issues, broken down as follows:



When compared with the same 12 month period in 2015/16, **benefit** issues increased by 21% overall, with significant increases for Personal Independence Payment (82%) and Employment and Support Allowance (42%).

Debt issues showed a 6% decrease; the top 5 issues were:

- credit, store and charge card debts
- council tax arrears
- Water supply and sewerage debts
- Unsecured personal loans
- Debt Relief Orders

The top three issues for **housing** were private sector rented property, threatened homelessness and housing association properties. Overall housing issues increased by 10%.

Employment issues have increased by 8% and the main enquiries concern pay and entitlements, dismissal and terms and conditions.

Family and relationship issues increased by 13% and **legal** issues by 19%. Another area showing a significant increase was around additional and emergency support for people – applications for charitable support and foodbanks.

Due to running several projects helping people in fuel poverty we have seen this enquiry area increase by 72%. The main areas of advice covers: selling methods and switching suppliers and prices and tariffs.. In addition, many clients seeking help on these issues will also have had a ‘benefit check’ and been helped to maximise their income.

From our **client profile** data we know that 40% had a disability or long-term health issue; for almost 1 in 4 this was a mental health issue. 18% of clients were aged over 65.

We also interrogate our data to support our **research and campaigns** work. This has included:

- A report on the local impact of the benefit cap

We are currently looking at:

- The impact of moving to a digital age
- Preparing for the impact of the full roll-out of Universal Credit (from October 2017)

For further information please contact Caroline Buxton at caroline@caidorset.org.uk.