

Amber Valley Impact Report

April - September 2021



People accessing the Citizens Advice Service	1,295
Client contacts (appointments and sessions carried out with clients)	4,059
Clients' problems tackled	10,089

Age of clients

<25 yrs	7%
25-29 yrs	9%
30-34 yrs	11%
35-39 yrs	8%
40-44 yrs	8%
45-49 yrs	9%
50-54 yrs	10%
55-59 yrs	11%
60-64 yrs	11%
65+	16%

Gender of clients

Female	63%
Male	37%

Ethnicity of clients

White	97%
Black, Asian, Mixed & Other	3%

Health of clients

Disabled or Long Term Health Condition	58%
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Benefits & Grants Secured	£1,978,890
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Debt Managed	£629,186
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Issues by type

Benefits & Tax Credits	3,476
Benefits Universal Credit	1,820
Consumer Goods & Services	160
Debt	2,006
Discrimination & Hate & GVA	26
Education	18
Employment	284
Financial Services & Capability	572
Health & Community Care	183
Housing	476
Immigration & Asylum	14
Legal	161
Other	131
Relationships & Family	358
Tax	33
Travel & Transport	54
Utilities & Communications	317
Grand Total	10,089

These past two quarters we...

	Assisted 266 clients make and manage a claim for PIP
	Dealt 1,820 with issues surrounding Universal Credit
	Gave employment advice on 55 issues on dismissal and redundancy
	Helped 41 clients with homelessness issues
	Dealt with 231 issues around fuel needs including customer complaints, tariffs and problems with supply

Case Study...

Sandra lives with her disabled mother. Sandra had been receiving disability living allowance (DLA) for many years and had been diagnosed with extreme anxiety, depression, autism, and fibromyalgia. She contacted Citizens Advice for help with completing her first personal independence payment (PIP) form.

Sandra explained that her mental health had led to self-harming and two attempts to commit suicide by overdose. Sandra had been shielding for months and felt concerned that she would not be able to leave the house when the lockdown ended. Before shielding, Sandra would only go out in her local area, and she could not cope with public transport. Sandra said that waiting at a bus stop made her feel very exposed and vulnerable and explained that her sister would drive her to her appointments with the mental health team.

Sandra advised that she stuck to a very strict daily routine and got anxious and upset with any changes to the routine, explaining that she avoids speaking to anyone she does not know and prefers to stay in her room if her mother has any family or friends visiting.

Sandra informed the adviser that she experiences constant pain from fibromyalgia and must sit and rest after daily household tasks due to extreme fatigue, explaining that she is often too exhausted to eat, and her mind is too active to allow her to sleep very much.

Our adviser helped Sandra to complete the PIP claim form providing full advice on what the next steps were in the claiming process, telephone assessments and the right to challenge a decision if they were unhappy with the level awarded or turned down.

About a month later, our adviser received a tearful telephone call from Sandra. She had received a letter with a telephone appointment for the health care assessment. She was also confused by the content of the letter. Our adviser talked through the assessment process, the descriptors and explained the letter putting Sandra at ease.

Sandra was worried about having to go to tribunal as a previous experience when she had initially been refused ESA had led to self-harming.

Sandra was not awarded PIP, but we helped to complete a mandatory reconsideration of the decision. A few days later Sandra received a letter stating that her ESA entitlement had been reduced as she was no longer entitled to the Severe Disability Premium.

The mandatory reconsideration was successful, and she was awarded PIP. However, the DWP informed that she was not entitled to the SDP as she was living with her mother. This was incorrect as Sandra's mother was also in receipt of a qualifying benefit.

Sandra contacted DWP herself with the support and guidance of our adviser and the SDP was awarded. Sandra contacted our adviser to thank them for their help and support over the six months it had taken saying that they wouldn't have been able to manage the process without our help.



Outcome:

PIP Standard rate daily living and mobility awarded £83.70 pw

Severe Disability Premium reinstated £67.30 pw

Total income gained: £7,852 pa

Case Study...

Georgie was referred to us by their Health Worker. Georgie is a single parent with a 3-year-old son who has recently moved to a new home to escape an abusive relationship. Georgie told us she had left her job due to health issues and whilst she was receiving some benefits, she was unsure if she was getting everything she was entitled to.

A benefit check showed Georgie to be receiving the correct entitlement to Universal Credit, however Georgie was not aware that she may be eligible for a council tax reduction. Georgie was provided with information as to how to apply for council tax reduction and we advised that her council tax liability should reduce to £1.56 per week, saving her £16.69 per week.

Georgie was also unaware she could claim Healthy Start vouchers at £4.25 per week until her son turned 4. Georgie was provided with the telephone number for the Healthy Start application line.

Georgie has a mental health condition for which she is receiving medical help. We identified that Georgie may be eligible to apply for PIP. Georgie was provided with information and the PIP helpline number. When the PIP claim form was received, we helped Georgie to complete this and the claim was successful.



Due to Georgie's health condition, she was also eligible for additional support through Universal Credit. Following our advice and guidance Georgie spoke with her work coach to discuss her claimant commitment to ensure she was in the correct work-related activity group.

Georgie has some non-priority debt and is finding it difficult to meet the minimum repayments each month. With Georgie's agreement we referred her to one of our specialist money advisers for help in managing her debts.

Georgie was also provided with information on the Warm Home Discount and STW Big Difference Scheme and how to apply. Georgie confirmed she was confident using both the telephone and internet and was comfortable applying to these schemes independently.

Financial outcomes:

Council Tax Reduction £16.69 pw

Healthy Start Vouchers £4.25 pw

PIP Daily living & mobility standard £83.70 pw

Total annual income increase: £5,441.28