

Citizens Advice in East Dorset and Purbeck



February 2024 Quarterly Newsletter

Service Update

We are consistently busy across all of our outreaches. We continued to achieve some very successful financial outcomes for our clients, one of whom was awarded backdated benefit in the region of £17,000. A great outcome for both the client and the volunteer who had worked with this client for some 18 months. Our wonderful team of advisers were recognised with an award from the Volunteer Centre Dorset as a thank you for their outstanding volunteering contribution. In addition to the work of our volunteers, one of our very busy Energy Team advisers won a National Energy Action Award for 'advocating for fuel poor households locally'.

Alternative Fuel Grants - if you are not connected to mains gas and use coal, oil, wood or gas bottles to heat your home, if you live in a park home, live in a house with multiple occupation (HMO), or are from the traveller community you may be entitled to financial support in terms of a supermarket voucher. Visit our website for more information about how to apply www.edpcitizensadvice.org.uk or call Dorset Adviceline on 0800 144 8848.

Advice Bus

Between October-December 2023, we saw 357 people on the bus and helped with 1186 issues. Main issues are benefits, charitable support, debt and housing. The income gained for the people we helped was £146,676.

Our Advice Bus continues to visit Colehill, Corfe Mullen, Swanage, Verwood, West Moors and Wool weekly. Fortnightly locations include Sixpenny Handley and Bovington and we're at Corfe Castle the third Friday of the month and at St Leonards once a month on a Wednesday morning. New locations include Lytchett Matravers on a Monday afternoon and starting on the 7th February, we will be at Sturminster Marshall, once a month on a Wednesday morning. Appointments are not required and our advisers are able to help with a range of issues and can refer to specialist advisers if required. Visit our website for the full bus timetable www.edpcitizensadvice.org.uk/get-advice/advice-bus

Dorset Energy Unit

The Energy Unit continues to be very busy. We increased the number of available appointments to try to keep up with demand and assisted 307 people during this quarter. We continued to deal with emergency calls backs for people about to go off supply and issued £1980 in emergency Pre-Payment Meter vouchers. We held two Fuel Poverty Awareness events in Dorset; one in Weymouth and one in Poole, where we spoke to over 200 people, offering energy saving tips and advice whilst giving away winter warmer kits to residents in need. We have also been running our free Frontline Worker Training sessions offering energy training to people who work with vulnerable people at risk of fuel poverty. Visit our website to register for our next course www.edpcitizensadvice.org.uk Our Energy Unit can be contacted on 01929 775500 or email energy@edpcitizensadvice.org.uk

Linda's Story*

Linda is a 67yr old woman with health conditions and lives with her disabled husband in a three-bedroom privately rented house. Linda has pre-payment meters for both gas and electricity.

Linda sought advice from Citizens Advice East Dorset & Purbeck after receiving an email from their energy supplier, stating that they owed over £3,400 for their energy use, which she disputed. The supplier had already set up a recovery rate of £4 per day.

Linda had tried to contact her supplier to get this resolved but had been unsuccessful even though Linda's supplier had admitted that the debt was down to errors caused by themselves.

Outcomes:

- The supplier had inputted the incorrect information onto Linda's gas meter, setting the unit rate cost incorrectly, which caused a debt on Linda's pre-payment meter.
- On contacting her supplier, we asked for the debt to be written off and for any repayments already made to be refunded to the client. This took an extended period of time to resolve and eventually her supplier duly wrote off the debt from the client's meters and refunded an amount of £194.10 on to the pre-payment meter.

Linda was over the moon and stated that if it was not for our help that they would still be paying off an energy debt.

*Client's name has been changed to protect identity.





4,971 people asked us for advice
with **19,096** issues

The top issues faced were:



8,073 charity support
& food bank issues



6,067 benefits
issues



1,842 utilities &
comms issues



578 housing
issues



777 debt issues



£749,787 income gained,
including Universal Credit,
other benefits and tax
credits

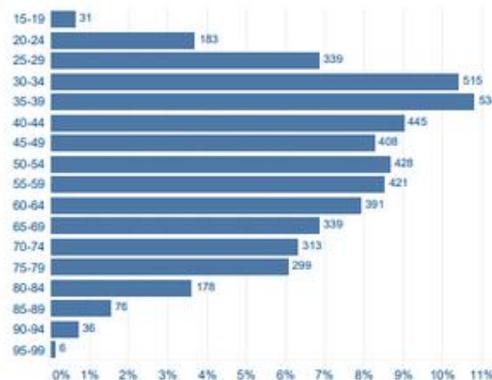


64% of all activity was by email
9% of all activity was face to face
18% of all activity was by phone
9% of all activity was 'other'



£1,067,366 income gained
through charitable grants
and food banks

Age



Clients were split
fairly evenly across
the age range with
57% age 20-54yrs

Clients say...

"I wanted to express how delighted I am with the service provided. The adviser was so professional and has helped me immensely with the electric and gas while being so friendly."

"Thanks for everything you have done for me this past year, you've managed to take a lot of pressure off of me sorting out my bankruptcy and the extra problems debtors have caused. Without your persistence I couldn't have coped, you're a really decent person and Citizens Advice are very fortunate to have you so I thank you once again."

"You've all been so wonderful and understanding. I am so grateful for all your hard work and kindness. I always felt relaxed when I visited you knowing you would be able to help. Thank you again."



Contact us

Website: www.edpcitizensadvice.org.uk

Dorset Adviceline: freephone 0800 144 8848, textphone 0800 144 8884, Mon-Fri 10-4pm



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