

## Summary

2015- 2016 was the first full year Citizens Advice changed the name Social Policy to Research and Campaigns. The change has enabled Citizens Advice Mole Valley (CAMV) to be able to decide which National or Local campaigns to be involved with, in order to most benefit the people of Mole Valley.

Citizens Advice Mole Valley also asked our volunteers and paid staff to concentrate more on Advice Issue Codes (AICs) so the Research and Campaigns team could identify key issues and potential problems more quickly than before and be able to act accordingly.

It was also recognised at a local level that although AICs were useful for statistical purposes Electronic Bureau Evidence Forms (EBEFs) actually provided the human side of those statistics and they do play an equally important role.

2015 was also the year of Citizens Advice Mole Valley's National QAA audit where Research and Campaigns work was scrutinised by an external auditor. Citizens Advice Mole Valley is pleased to report that this work was highly commended. One very positive aspect was that the Trustees recognise the importance of the work by funding a Deputy Manager to work one a day week solely on Research and Campaigns.

One of Citizens Advice Mole Valley's biggest achievements this year has been to successfully bid for a Citizens Advice initiative 'Campaigns in a Box' to help local Citizens Advice offices to undertake research and campaigns work on a number of high priority consumer related issues. The bid was directed at raising awareness about financial abuse with frontline organisations and businesses locally and to inform them about what to do if they identify or suspect incidences of financial abuse. Out of over 150 bid applications Citizens Advice Mole Valley was one of the 23 successful applicants.

## Staffing

The Research and Campaigns planning group members during the year were:

- Simon Fox – Trustee
- Deborah Jones – District Manager
- Paul Clark - Research and Campaigns Co-ordinator (Deputy Manager, Leatherhead office)
- Peggy McFadden – Research and Campaigns volunteer (Dorking office)

Members of the Research and Campaigns team meet annually where the Co-ordinator proposes an Action Plan for the coming year and reviews through a self assessment form the past year and reports to the meeting.

Day to day Research and Campaigns duties are conducted by Paul Clark, which includes monitoring any issue trends at our two local offices, promoting R&C to the

advisers by publishing 'Calls for Evidence' supplied by Citizens Advice and checking EBEFs from Leatherhead before sending them to Citizens Advice.

Paul Clark also attends local cluster group meetings as well as Citizen Advice Research and Campaigns meetings.

Peggy McFadden uploads Dorking's EBEFs on to Petra and conducts research work when required.

## Bureau Evidence Forms (BEF)

Bureau evidence forms are submitted electronically using PETRA to Citizens Advice Research and Campaigns Department by Citizens Advice Mole Valley R&C Staff.

During the period 01/04/15 to 31/03/16, 71 BEF were submitted using Petra. Whilst this is a significant reduction from previous years, it does evidence that advisers are focusing on new issues on both local and national levels and that they have understood the new directives from Citizens Advice given during last year.

The chart below shows Advice Issue Codes (AICs) relating to Petra BEF as submitted to Citizens Advice.

<b>AIC Part 1</b>	
<b>Benefits &amp; tax credits</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Debt</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Discrimination</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Employment</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Financial services &amp; capability</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Health &amp; community care</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Housing</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Immigration &amp; asylum</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Legal</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Travel &amp; transport</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Utilities &amp; communications</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Not recorded/not applicable</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>194</b>

As in previous years AICs on welfare benefits and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) provide the majority of AICs recorded.

Many of Citizens Advice Mole Valley's clients who had been in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) have had to reapply for Personal Independence Payments (PIP). This has caused a great deal of stress for some very vulnerable people within the local district, and this has been magnified when their PIP application has been turned down.

Citizens Advice Mole Valley's advisers have had to help these clients through a lengthy appeal process and have frequently had to apply to charitable organisations to try to assist the clients through this difficult period. In 2014 - 15 174 food bank vouchers were given out. During the same period in 2015 -16 this has risen to 262.

## **LARF (Local Action Report Form)**

As part of the Citizens Advice Membership Agreement, local Citizens Advice are expected to submit at least one Local Action Report Form per annum to highlight any R&S work done locally. This year Citizens Advice Mole Valley has submitted four reports.

1. Deborah Jones worked together with local churches to help set up a very much needed Food Bank in the Dorking area.
2. Mole Valley Citizens Advice responded to a HM Courts & Tribunals Service consultation document on the proposed closure of Reigate Magistrates' Court and Family Court
3. Deborah Jones and Paul Clark visited local CA Witness Services in Redhill where they gave a talk on the Citizens Advice service at a national and local level.
4. A meeting was held with Sir Paul Beresford, MP as part of the 'Talk about Abuse' campaign. This LARF was cited in Citizens Advices news round up in January 2016 about what local offices were doing around the country.

## **Local Research and Campaigns activity requested by Citizens Advice**

Citizens Advice runs many national campaigns concurrently. Citizens Advice Mole Valley has concentrated on the following:-

- 1) Talk about Abuse

CAMV chose to be involved in this campaign due to its uniqueness. It was not directed at the individual who may be being abused or even at the abuser but at the friends or family members who know someone who may be a victim of abuse.

CAMV wrote to local media about the campaign, Local Elected Councillors as well as our local Members of Parliament. Sir Paul Beresford MP met Deborah Jones and Paul Clark about the campaign.

## 2) Big Energy Savings Week

Once again CAMV got involved in the national campaign this year to encourage people to look at their energy bills and see if they can save money by switching providers. Posters were used to promote the campaign in all Citizens Advice Mole Valley's reception areas and interview rooms as well as booking a stall at local shopping centres in Leatherhead and in Dorking. A large number of bags, keys and leaflets had been requested to hand out on the stalls. Unfortunately Citizens Advice was not able to provide the number requested and resources ran out within the first 2 hours of being in the Leatherhead Swan Centre.

## 3) Welfare Reform and Working People

It has been recognised that when Universal Credit (UC) is fully implemented many working families who rely on Working Tax Credit (WTC) could be up to £1000 p.a. worse off. Citizens Advice wanted to know what would be the impact of this on clients. Citizens Advice asked Citizens Advice Mole Valley as well as a number of other local offices around the country to question all clients who were in contact with the offices during January about if they worked and claimed WTC. Details for each client were recorded and Peggy McFadden, our volunteer R&C worker in Dorking telephoned all the clients to ask them these questions and record the answers which were returned directly to the Citizens Advices R&C team.

## **Local Social Policy activity, not requested by Citizens Advice**

HM Courts & Tribunals Service proposed the closure of the courts in Redhill and moving any cases to courts in Sutton and/or Guilford. Citizens Advice Mole Valley responded to the consultation highlighting the various difficulties that many residents most especially those without their own transport, would experience in travelling to Sutton.

Contact was made with both Godalming and Sutton Local Citizens Advice offices who operate the court desks in Guilford and Sutton courts to request that they consider responding to the consultation.

The proposed changes are likely to have significant impact on the capacity of both these courts, as well as those of the Citizens Advice Witness Services within Surrey.

Unfortunately but not surprisingly the Redhill court will be closing in early 2017. Citizens Advice Mole Valley will be monitoring the impact on local clients.

## **Workshops, conferences and training courses attended**

Citizens Advice Mole Valley has attended Research and Campaigns workshops at Citizens Advice Annual Conference as well as bi annual local Research and Campaigns forums where there is an opportunity to exchange good practice, compare enquiry trends and discuss what topics Citizens Advice should campaign on at a national level.

## **Liaison with other Agencies**

Ashted Rotary	Leatherhead Chamber of Commerce
Alfred James	Leatherhead Clubhouse
Beatitudes (Dorking)	Leatherhead Lions
BESOM (Dorking & Leatherhead)	Leatherhead Night Hostel
Bookham & Horsley Rotary	Leatherhead Rotary
Brighter Futures for GRT communities (SCC)	Leatherhead United Charities
Buckley Pharmacy Ashted	LINKS partnership
Carers Support Mole Valley	LINKS/SADAS
Christian Centre, Dorking	Mole Valley DC Benefits and Revenue Departments
Circle Housing Mole Valley	Mole Valley DC Housing Department
Community Mental Health Team	Newdigate church
Cowans	North Leatherhead Partnership
Department of Work and Pensions	Pitstop
Dorking Foodbank	Quality Solicitors Palmers
Dorking Nursery and Sure start centre	Quanticks
Dorking Rotary	RASASC
Dorking Rural Children's Centre and Play link Scheme	Respond
Dorking United Charities	RHW Solicitors
Downs	SESW
East Surrey Domestic Abuse Service	Social Services, Mole Valley
Epsom and Leatherhead Foodbank	Social Services, Surrey
Friends of Leatherhead Day Centre	St Faith's Family Centre
Hanne &Co	St George's Church, Ashted
Hedleys Solicitors	St Georges Church Ashted
Information & Advice forum (SCC)	St Nicolas Church Bookham
	St Peter's Church, Newdigate
	Surrey County Council – Local

Assistance Scheme  
Surrey Family Information Service  
(SCC)  
Tax Help for Older people  
The Besom  
The Hub  
The Lunch box  
The Meeting Room

The Pension Service  
Trading Standards and Consumer  
Direct  
Trinity School & Children's Centre  
TWM  
VAMS (Voluntary Action Mid Surrey)  
Wellers Hedley  
Woodville School

Citizens Advice Mole Valley recognises the importance of working with partners to the benefit of the people in Mole Valley. One of our most successful partnerships is working with the Leatherhead Lions Wenceslas Project. Citizens Advice Mole Valley works in partnership to identify those in need, to make applications to the fund and then facilitate the payment to the energy supplier on behalf of the client.

In the past two year, local people in need have benefitted to the tune of £14660.

## **Liaison with other local Citizens Advice Offices**

Research and Campaigns Cluster Group of local mid-Surrey CA – regular meetings

Paul Clark is also the Vice Chair of the newly formed Surrey Research and Campaigns Response team.

Liaison between R&C Coordinator, managers and members from neighbouring local CA

## **Media Communication**

The publicity and fundraising committee produce a quarterly newsletter to councillors and other partners where the work of the Citizens Advice Mole Valley including research and campaigns activities is highlighted. We are developing contacts with local free magazines and papers and some have taken short articles on topical issues.

A number of press releases have been sent to local media outlets.

We hope this year with the launch of our new website that we will have some social media presence through a Facebook and Twitter page.

## **Meetings Attended**

### **Local Elected Members of Parliament:-**

Deborah Jones – District Manager

Paul Clark – R&C Co-ordinator\ Deputy Manager

### **District Council Meeting with Local Elected Representatives:-**

Attended by Deborah Jones – District Manager

### **Meetings with local Councillors:-**

Attended by Deborah Jones – District Manager

Management Meetings

District Council Liaison Group

### **Surrey County Council:-**

Attended by Deborah Jones – District Manager

Information and Advice Forums

Deborah Jones is now representative for Surrey local CA Managers

Surrey Information Summit

Attended by Deborah Jones – District Manager

Brighter Futures for GRT communities

Deborah Jones is now representative for Surrey local CA Managers

## **Staff Meetings**

Research and Campaigns issues are highlighted and regularly discussed at Staff Meetings and morning briefings. One meeting each year is devoted to Social Policy.