

**Citizens Advice: The Beginning of a Lifeline for those Experiencing Domestic Abuse**

**When we think of Citizens Advice, images of benefit and debt advice often spring to mind. Yet, for many, it's more than a source of support; it's the beginning of a lifeline.**

For many people affected by domestic abuse, the fear of retaliation or societal judgment keeps them silent, bearing the weight of trauma alone. But, for one such individual, Citizens Advice emerged as the lifeline that helped her take back control of her life.

**Lara’s Story of Silent Suffering**

Lara (name changed for privacy) had been enduring emotional and physical abuse from her partner for years. Like many in her situation, Lara believed she had no way out and feared the repercussions of seeking help. In addition, her partner had run up unmanageable debts in her name.

Initially, Lara approached Citizens Advice for financial advice. Yet, as she spoke with the advisor, she soon realised her predicament was about more than just money. What happened next was pivotal. Our advisers recognised the tell-tale signs of abuse. They heard Lara’s story and acknowledged her fears – they did not judge her. Recognising how difficult her circumstances were, our advisers promptly referred Lara to a specialist organisation dedicated to supporting survivors of domestic abuse.

With their help, Lara received tailored counselling, guidance about her legal options, and even assistance with finding safe housing. She was no longer alone, and the road to recovery began to unveil itself.

Citizens Advice advisers continued to support Lara. They guided her on how to gain financial independence, including advice on managing debts her partner had accumulated in her name, accessing welfare benefits, and setting up her own bank account.

Looking back, Lara expressed her only regret: “I wish I had sought advice sooner. I started to see a way out the moment I spoke with Citizens Advice.”

**Citizens Advice and Community Partners**

Lara's situation is not unique. Many women and men who experience domestic abuse are reluctant to speak out due to fear or a lack of information. Citizens Advice provides essential support, not only through advice but also by connecting with community organisations. Beyond merely giving advice, local Citizens Advice offices symbolise hope, empowerment, and a fresh start. They bridge the gap between those suffering in silence and the help they need. Lara's experience highlights the availability of help, emphasising that the challenging first step towards seeking advice can pave the way for a brighter and safer future.

If you or someone you know is in a similar situation, remember Lara's words and consider seeking advice sooner rather than later. It might just be the lifeline you're looking for.

We provide free, confidential, and impartial advice. See our national Citizens Advice website for online information <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/gender-violence/domestic-violence-and-abuse/>.

**IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN DIFFICULTIES, PLEASE CONTACT US AT YOUR LOCAL OFFICE**

CITIZENS ADVICE SOUTH WEST SURREY

**Adviceline contact by phone (free)**

**Tel 0808 278 7980** for those living in **Waverley**

**Te**l **0808 278 7888** for those living in **Guildford and Ash**

All offices and outreaches will be open as usual and you can use the **new website** [**www.casws.org.uk**](http://www.casws.org.uk) **to check opening times, use the on-line message (e-mail) enquiry form and get self-help.**

**South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Outreach Service: T: 01483 898884 (Monday-Friday 9am-4pm)**

**Email:** [**swr@swsda.org.uk**](mailto:swr@swsda.org.uk)

**www.swsda.org.uk**

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CITIZENS ADVICE MOLE VALLEY CONTACT DETAILS:

Both Dorking and Leatherhead Citizens Advice offices are currently open for drop-in on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings.

Open all week for telephone advice and pre-booked appointments.

Clients can either telephone our adviceline 0808 278 7930 or email leatherhead@camv.org.uk / dorking@camv.org.uk

Contact East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services on 01737 771350 or email: [support@esdas.org.uk](mailto:support@esdas.org.uk)

Surrey Domestic Abuse 9am-9pm Helpline – 01483 776822 In an emergency always dial 999

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CITIZENS ADVICE REIGATE AND BANSTEAD CONTACT DETAILS:

Phone Adviceline: 0808 278 7945 (free) to speak to an adviser (Monday –

Friday 9.00 – 16.00)

Email: Use an enquiry form at https://www.carbs.org.uk/get-advice/email-form/