

# Making a difference

## Our impact in 2019



**citizens  
advice**

**Esher  
& District**

# We are Citizens Advice Esher & District

**Every year thousands of people across the Borough of Elmbridge come to us for help with solving their problems.**

We're here for everyone. People rely on us because we're independent and totally impartial. And our service is free to use.

We advise on a range of issues, from managing debts to housing problems and employment issues. We also provide highly specialist support to sick or disabled residents who need help to apply for complex benefits.

Our advice service is provided by a team of over 30 highly-trained volunteers supported by a small paid team who manage the charity. This keeps our costs to a minimum and ensures that we provide exceptional value for money to our funders.

In 2019 – the year when the national Citizens Advice service celebrated its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary – our work at Esher has been as varied as ever. From supporting local residents moving to Universal Credit to providing information on issues surrounding Brexit, we have helped people find their way through complicated processes and difficult situations they may never have faced before.

Looking forward, we are excited to be relocating to new premises in Elmbridge Civic Centre in 2020. We hope that this move to a modern office in the heart of Esher will enable us to grow our service and attract more volunteers to our team.

**“I am sleeping so much better and feel a lightness in my heart that I haven't felt in an extremely long time.”**

*A grateful client*

## Our impact in 2019

These are some of the highlights we achieved for the people who sought our help during the year:



**7,584 issues**

People sought our help with



**£583,000**

Direct income gained for clients



**£158,000**

Debts written off



**41 households**

Prevented from losing their home



**170 issues lobbied**

Over three examples a week of unfair policy or practice were brought to the attention of the authorities



**3 in 4 people**

Said our help made them less stressed or depressed



**3 in 5 people**

We advised said they found it easier to manage day-to-day

## How we help

We offer advice on the phone, via our website and face-to-face at our main office in Esher and at outreach centres in Cobham and Molesey.

Crucially, our drop-in service means that people don't need to wait weeks for an appointment for time-critical advice.

In 2019 we helped **2,078 people** with many different issues, including:

	<b>Benefits and tax credits:</b> 2646 issues
	<b>Housing:</b> 898 issues
	<b>Debt:</b> 826 issues
	<b>Relationships and family:</b> 572 issues
	<b>Employment:</b> 542 issues
	<b>Legal:</b> 454 issues

## More than advice

Sometimes people need education or support to prepare them for life's uncertainties and prevent problems developing in the future. We provide specialist services that help address these future needs. For example, our money advice volunteers can offer personal budgeting support to help people manage their finances better and avoid payment arrears. We also run free financial capability training at local schools, providing young students with valuable money management skills for life.

## Our wider value

It's impossible to put a financial value on everything we do – but where we can, we use a Treasury-approved model to demonstrate our financial impact. This shows that in 2019 we generated at least:



**£81,000 saving to Elmbridge Borough Council**  
In reduced cases of homelessness alone, we save the Borough the money they give us in grant funding



**£645,100 in savings to government and public services**  
By helping stop problems occurring or escalating, we reduce the pressure on public services such as health, housing or out-of-work benefits



**£3.2m in wider economic and social benefits**  
Solving problems improves lives – and this means better wellbeing, participation and productivity for the people we help

## Tackling the underlying causes

We have a unique insight into the challenges people face today. We use this evidence to show organisations – from local companies to the government – how they can make things better for everyone. This year our research work has focused on:

- how people claiming sickness and disability benefits are treated in Surrey
- the difficulties faced by homeless people in accessing bank accounts.

# All in a day's work

No two days are alike for our volunteers, but they can look something like this:

**09:30** *Arrive and check office diary for follow-ups from last advice session.*

**09:45** *Read through latest 'Need to Know' information. Book onto training session to update knowledge on employment law.*

**10:00** *Call local housing association on behalf of a client. Record details of call on case management system.*

**10:15** *Answer quick client question sent via office website:*

**"I am in dispute with my neighbour about a fence. How do I find out where our property boundaries are?"**

**10:30** *See first client of the day:*

**"I've made a claim for Universal Credit. I've no money, and I haven't had any electric for a week. What can I do?"**

*Discuss options with supervisor before advising client.*

**11:00** *Record last client interview on case system. Answer public advice line and update case notes.*

**11:50** *Another face-to-face client interview:*

**"How can I challenge an unfair parking ticket?"**

**12:30** *Arrange for another client to see specialist adviser for help completing complex Personal Independence Payment appeal. Complete evidence form to highlight example of unfair practice.*

**1:15** *Answer public advice line again.*

**2:00** *Further client interview:*

**"I owe Council tax and have several credit card debts. What can I do?"**

**3:30** *End of public advice session. Finish recording case notes.*

**4:30** *Add follow-ups to diary for next advice session. Check outreach rota for next week. Leave office.*

If this looks interesting, don't hesitate to speak to us about volunteering.

# Our volunteers

Our volunteers are essential. Whether working as advisers, specialists, support staff or trustees, their tireless efforts have been helping local people for over 46 years. We calculate that the **17,200 hours** they gave to the Elmbridge community last year was worth over **£400,000**. We thank them for their commitment during a challenging year – and for the enthusiasm they are showing as we plan our move into new premises in 2020.

**"It's so kind of you to spend so much time helping others."**

*A grateful client*

# Our funders

We are an independent charity. We are grateful that Elmbridge Borough Council provides two-thirds of the funding we need to cover our modest running costs – but we still need to raise one-third ourselves.

In 2019 we secured funds from a number of grant-making bodies, local organisations and individual donors to enable us to continue with our vital service in Elmbridge. We thank them all for their generous support.



**Citizens Advice Esher & District  
Harry Fletcher House  
High Street  
Esher KT10 0LB**

**01372 464770  
eshercab.org.uk**

