

History of Our Charity, 1973-2023

Background - Citizens Advice bureaux in Surrey prior to 1973

In 1938 with the prospect of a world war looming the National Council of Social Services established a group to look at how the needs of the civilian population might be met during wartime. "Citizens Advice Bureaux should be established throughout the country, particularly in the large cities and industrial areas where social disorganisation may be acute."¹

On 4 September 1939, the day after war was declared against Germany, the first 200 bureaux were opened across the UK, including one in Leatherhead.

From the start, volunteers ran the service working from public buildings and private houses. Advisers dealt with problems relating to the loss of ration books, homelessness and evacuation. They also helped locate missing relatives and prisoners of war. Debt quickly became a key issue as incomes reduced due to military call-ups.

By 1942 the number of bureaux peaked at 1074 – one of these being the Dorking bureau which operated initially from a converted horse box, a photo of which is often used in CA publicity material



Mobile bureau, 1940s (Image: Getty images)

Another bureau established in 1942 and the nearest at the time to us in Esher was the 'Walton, Weybridge and Hersham Citizens Advice Bureau'. In 2014 the Walton bureau moved to the Elmbridge Community Hub on Walton High Street and in 2015 changed its name to Elmbridge West.²

During the 1950s, despite the success of Citizens Advice Bureaux, funding from the Ministry of Health was cut and by 1953 the number of bureaux had halved. The service continued thanks to the support of charitable trusts such as the Nuffield Foundation, Carnegie Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. In 1960 government funding was restored and in 1973 a development grant from the government was given to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB), to extend the network.

Commenting on the recruitment of advisers during the war, Margaret E. Brasnett, author of *The Story of the Citizens' Advice Bureaux, 1939-1964*, stated that

*'... selection of bureau workers was carefully done by regional officers and officers of the National Council of Social Service. Arrangements were made for new workers to visit neighbouring bureaux to gain some experience of the way others were handling this emergency work; and at each stage of the war brief training sessions were devised which gave CAB staff essential information needed to answer the tangled problems of harassed and often inarticulate people [and] the grievances of difficult and sometimes over-articulate customers.'*³

Early days of the Esher Bureau

In the spring of 1972 the chairman of Esher Urban District Council invited representatives of the community and local voluntary organisations to a meeting to consider whether a Citizens Advice Bureau should be established in Esher. Miss Phyllis Colebrooke, Area Advisory Officer of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, was invited to this meeting to give a presentation describing the work of C.A.B.

It was agreed that a Bureau should be established and that a steering committee, chaired by Mr Arthur Dean O.B.E., should be appointed to carry this out. The Council offered to provide finance and premises and, in the initial stages, secretarial services.

The steering committee met for the first time in June 1972 to organise a programme of training lectures for volunteers, preparation of premises, equipment and publicity.

A large number of local people volunteered to become advisers. In addition to instructional lectures training was supplemented by visits to the Leatherhead Citizens Advice Bureau.

By December 1972 offices had been allocated in the Council's premises in Esher Lodge (now demolished) in Old Church Path adjacent to Esher Library. The Bureau was to have had the use of three rooms on the ground floor; there was a small general office, one interview room and a Manager's office. Equipment was basic, and telephone calls would be passed through the Council switchboard.

With a grant of £1000 from the Council, **the Esher & District Citizens Advice Bureau opened its doors to the public on 7th May 1973**. It had only 40 enquiries in the first month, which must have seemed a slow start for the 28 advisers who had volunteered to staff it. However, the pace quickly increased: in the committee meeting in May 1974 on the first anniversary of the Esher Bureau the Hon. Organiser, Mr Pat Craig, reported that during their first year the Esher CAB had dealt with 1420 enquiries, with enquiries running at around 30-35 per week. A few months later in October 1974 at the first Annual General Meeting Mr Craig stated,

'Broadly speaking, enquiries fall into two general categories, namely requests for factual information, and for advice on personal problems. Of the latter, the greatest number is concerned with housing, matrimonial, and employment problems; but the field is very wide and tends to cover the whole range of human relations and activities.'

'Many personal problems have a legal aspect, and to deal with these the Bureau is attended once a fortnight by a qualified representative from one of the several Firms of Solicitors, working on a rota system.'

Tax advice was provided by a Chartered Accountant who was on call to attend the Bureau one morning each week. Legal problems were dealt with a number of local legal firms who had agreed to send qualified representatives to attend the Bureau fortnightly. This was organised by Mid-Surrey Law Society who had a representative on the Bureau's management committee. Both the tax and legal advice services were provided free of charge.⁴ A local firm, Crisp & Co. continued to offer a weekly legal clinic on Wednesday evenings in the Bureau from 2007 until 2016 when it became increasingly difficult for a lawyer to attend the bureau in Esher and clients were seen instead at Crisp & Co's own offices. Citizens Advice Esher & District is no longer affiliated with a single law firm and legal enquiries are now directed towards a small

number of local law firms who offer a free initial consultation by phone or in their own offices.

What's in a name?

A brief word about how the charity refers to itself...

When the Bureau was established in 1973 it referred to itself as the 'Esher & District Citizens Advice Bureau'. In internal documents and AGM minutes this seems to have been frequently shortened to 'Esher Citizens Advice Bureau' – no doubt to save time and ink rather than being dismissive of the wider 'district'.

From 1992 when the Bureau was registered as a charity at Companies House it was officially titled the 'Esher & Molesey Citizens Advice Bureau'.

In 1996 the Bureau changed its name to 'Esher and District Citizens Advice Bureau'.

In 2015 the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux rebranded itself Citizens Advice, dropping 'bureau' from its name and requiring all branches to do the same.

As a result in 2015 the Esher Bureau became 'Citizens Advice Esher & District'.

Nowadays, in 2023, individual offices across the country refer to each other as LCAs (Local Citizens Advice) and do not use the word bureau.

Esher premises

The Esher Bureau was originally housed, in 1973, in the Council offices in Esher Lodge, Old Church Path⁵.



Esher Lodge in the 1930s

In 1975 the Bureau moved to the adjacent Esher Lodge Annexe⁶ shared with Council staff and Elmbridge Marriage Guidance (as it was then known).



Esher Lodge, showing part of the Portakabin behind. 1980. Image courtesy of Elmbridge Museum, Elmbridge Borough Council.

In 1988 Esher Council decided to centralise its offices, which involved the demolition of Esher Lodge Annexe. From 1989 to 1991 the Bureau along with Esher Marriage Guidance occupied a Portakabin⁷ behind the site of the Annexe.



Esher Lodge Portakabin in 1980. Image courtesy of Elmbridge Museum, Elmbridge Borough Council.

In December 1991 the Esher offices moved out of the Portakabin which was dismantled and transported to Germany. The Bureau was closed for only two days whilst it relocated to 3-5 Dawes Court, two tiny terraced cottages clad in white

weather boarding (now painted black), situated at the end of a cul-de-sac off Esher High Street. Esher CAB was on the ground floor and Relate was housed on the first floor. Both organisations shared the five interview rooms. This was always intended to be a short term move, the plan being to stay at Dawes Court for no more than three years.



3-5 Dawes Court, off Esher High Street (Images: Citizens Advice Esher & District)

Four years later, at the end of 1994, only slightly later than planned, Esher CAB moved to what was the Youth Centre in Harry Fletcher house, recently vacated by the Acorn Trust. The move took place in the brief period between Christmas 1994 and the New Year. The Bureau was usually open between Christmas and New Year but on this occasion was temporarily closed to allow time for the move.



Harry Fletcher House (Image: Citizens Advice Esher & District)

The Bureau shared the building with Relate (the new name for Elmbridge Marriage Guidance), signing a 25-year lease. Elmbridge Council provided a grant of £32,000 towards the estimated £90,000 refurbishment costs, supplemented by a substantial legacy from a local resident. These were much more suitable premises for both Esher CAB and Relate and comprised a reception/waiting area, four interview rooms, a large general office and an office for the Manager.



Front façade of Citizens Advice, Harry Fletcher House (Image: Citizens Advice Esher & District)

Esher CAB remained happily in Harry Fletcher House for the next 25 years marked only by two significant incidents.



(Image: Mike Jones Associates, Esher News & Mail)

The first, in 1996, shortly after moving in to the refurbished and sparkling premises, occurred when a car (an automatic Saab 900i) plunged over the edge of the path leading to the Bureau, smashing into the outside wall of the building and causing significant damage to one of the interview rooms. Thankfully the room had been vacated ten minutes before the accident and no one was injured (including the driver and her baby in the car). After swift action by the Council the building was made safe and the Bureau opened for business again the next day – albeit in different rooms!⁸



(Image: Citizens Advice Esher & District)

The second, and rather more prosaic, incident took place in 2004 when the offices were broken into and a number of computers were stolen. It seems that the 'can do' spirit typical of the Bureau volunteers came to the fore: the manager, Linda Wheatley, commented in the Annual Report that, 'In response to the break-in, our volunteer gardener 'stepped up' to act as our DIY expert. Following a Police report on the building, he undertook to obtain and install many new fixtures to the Bureau in order to improve our security.'

With the imminent expiry of its lease on Harry Fletcher House, in 2020 the office started to plan its next move, this time to the Civic Centre where it has been since 2022.



Elmbridge Civic Centre, Esher (Image: Citizens Advice Esher & District)

The current premises comprises a large office on the lower ground floor with workstations and computers for 12 staff and volunteers, and four interview rooms (also equipped with computers and telephones). There is a reception/triage room and waiting area in the foyer of the Civic Centre.

Outreach

Molesey

From the very early days, just three years after the establishment of the Esher Bureau, outreach services were begun. The first of these sub-offices (outreach) was opened in Molesey in 1976 operating two mornings a week from two rooms above Molesey Library. Long before any information was available in electronic form, this entailed

the two advisers on duty packing the information files into four stout carrier bags and transporting them to and from Molesey. It was initially planned to run the service in Molesey for one year but, having proved its benefit to the local community, four years later in 1980, Elmbridge Council financed the ongoing rent of the premises and the costs and storage space for an on-site reference system (no more straining carrier bags of files). The Molesey outreach proved so successful that in 1990 the Molesey Bureau moved to the Joseph Palmer Centre, opening from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. each Wednesday, and later from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. As with all the Bureau's outreach services the Molesey service was shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are plans to reopen in due course.

Cobham

In 1990 as the Molesey branch was becoming settled in the Joseph Palmer Centre, additional funding enabled the Bureau to provide a weekly outreach session at the Cobham Day Centre (complete with a microfiche information system), replacing the unstaffed information noticeboard in Cobham Day Centre.

Since reopening in October 2022 after the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were lifted, this site has been operating once per month. Following the recent recruitment of a salaried part-time Outreach Adviser, funded by Surrey County Council, there are plans to increase the frequency of this service in Cobham.

Horton Hospital

Another long-running and well used advice hub was the one set up for psychiatric patients in Horton Hospital, Epsom. Having been approached by the hospital with a request for the Bureau to provide a full-time adviser, Esher CAB recruited a full-time salaried 'Patient Welfare Adviser' in October 1988 to help psychiatric patients at the hospital. The Riverside Health Authority funded this service from 1988 until the hospital closed in 1995.

Claygate

An outreach service was opened in the Claygate Centre, Elm Road, Claygate in 1999. Owing to a gradual reduction in the number of clients making use of the Claygate outreach service the decision was taken to close the service in 2004. It was opened

again for a short while in Capelfield Surgery in 2017 but the lack of demand for the service and the surgery's need of the space led to its closure in 2019.

Thames Ditton

Despite a 2001 *Surrey Comet* newspaper article stating that the Bureau ran a Thames Ditton outreach service in The Ember Centre, Vera Fletcher Hall, in Thames Ditton, this was not an operation that came to fruition. An approach from one of the local councillors to explore the possibility of a Thames Ditton outreach had led to investigation into premises and the potential demand. However, nowhere suitable could be found and the project did not proceed.

Princess Alice Hospice outreach

A monthly service was started at Princess Alice Hospice in 2006 to help patients and relatives with benefits issues and other concerns. This outreach ran for two years, closing in 2008 when the Hospice employed their own team to meet their patients' and relatives' needs.

Home visits

In addition to the outreach sites, Esher CAB offered a home visit service. This was set up in 1995 to offer help to housebound clients, with advisers visiting people in their homes. However, with the greater need for risk assessments and other bureaucratic hurdles such as DBS checks home visits became increasingly logistically difficult to operate and as a consequence this service was withdrawn in the late 2000s.

Food Banks

Whilst not strictly an outreach service, a salaried adviser, funded by the Trussell Trust, has from the beginning of 2023 been attending the Food Banks in Thames Ditton and West Molesey once per week, offering advice sessions to Food Bank users.

Training

Training in early days of the Esher Bureau was formed of a series of lectures presented at various venues such as Guildford YMCA and Ripley YMCA as well as

sites in Central London, supplemented by visits to Leatherhead CAB. As the stock of experienced advisers in Esher grew over time, seminars or tutorials could also begin to be held by these experienced hands in the Esher Bureau's offices with trainees reading reference material, attending in-house presentations using flip-charts and listening to mini lectures.

From 1994 onwards training was delivered by a salaried Guidance Tutor. There were no formal assessments or tests but trainee advisers would be required to conduct three client interviews with a supervisor present, popping out of the interviews at frequent intervals to discuss how the session was going. Upon the Supervisor's satisfaction of the trainee's competence they would then be allowed to fly solo.

Taking telephone calls from clients was considered a particular challenge and was therefore something that advisers were allowed to engage in only after passing the requirements for face-to-face sessions. For a long period each day's team of advisers would have one person taking all phone calls while the others concentrated on face-to-face consultations with enquirers.

Nowadays, in the 2020s, training is delivered through online training modules created by the National Association and assessed by online tests of comprehension and competence of each module, mock interviews and progression to live interviews with a supervisor in attendance. After a final assessment of their training record, the trainee graduates with a Certificate of Adviser Competence.

Online training may seem somewhat onerous, particularly when log-in details are lost or the internet connection is grindingly slow, but it does have some advantages over the training that would have been expected from volunteers in the 1940s: Margaret Brasnett in her *The Story of the Citizens' Advice Bureaux, 1939-1964* writes:

'The 1946 [national] conference passed a resolution asking that there should be a standard basic training scheme for all new workers. A variety of one-day schools, short residential courses, and group discussion were being developed in other areas. A national syllabus was eventually worked out as a guide for CAB organisers when arranging preliminary training for workers, or a refresher course for experienced workers. [The training comprised] a course of twelve lectures covering the aims, methods and techniques of the CAB service, and an outline of the principal social services – health, national insurance, pensions, welfare, employment and training, housing and town planning, child care, probation, legal aid, and so on... Everyone is expected to supplement this

with background reading, as well as continuing study of the information sent out regularly from headquarters in circulars, Citizens' Advice Notes, and special memoranda; and to take opportunities to make visits of observation to hospitals, courts, old people's homes, workshops for the disabled and the like, so as to get first-hand knowledge of procedures and conditions in various institutions which would be of help when giving advice on, for example, defending a court action of helping someone to make up her mind about going into a home.⁹

Technology

In the early days all the Bureau's business was paper-based, as was that of pretty much every other organisation in the days before computers. An article in the [Esher] *News and Mail* (August 3, 1983) discussed the use of reference files:

'These have to be up-dated every month with the aid of packets of information sent out to every bureau by the National Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux. The information is inserted into the filing system by adding new items and altering or replacing information already in the system. The process takes one person about five hours per month.'

It was not until 1984 that the Bureau took possession of its first electric typewriter. The 1984 AGM minutes report with some delight, *'The bureau has finally acquired an electric typewriter in August, free of charge...'* This was long before anyone had heard the idea of the 'paperless office' and the typewriter was not a tool to store information electronically or digitally but simply to speed up the process of bashing out inked copies of paper documents by the office administrator.

It was not long after the 1984 arrival of the office's typewriter that in 1987 the Bureau purchased its first computer, an Amstrad (the brand of computer that made Lord Alan Sugar a millionaire). This single computer was used only by the office administrator and the office would still have been largely paper-based. However it did mean that information could be organised more efficiently and filing systems could be coordinated with the system used by the Bureau's ruling body the NACAB.

In 1996 personal computers were introduced in Esher for advisers to type letters and for the completion of template documents. Also in this year the National Association issued its complete information system on CD-ROM. This meant that guidance was available by accessing information stored on CD-ROMs rather than in books and paper files – a much easier task for the advisers operating outreach services in the

community. By 1998 all advisers working in outreach centres were using the NACAB electronic information system (EIS) on two laptop computers. To the undoubted relief of those staffing the outreach centres, the increased use of computer systems had allowed the discontinuation of paper reference systems at Molesey and the microfiche system at Cobham.

This talk of computers in the late 1980s and 1990s might suggest that advisers were keeping electronic case records but, sadly for the advisers, this was not the case. Computers may have sped up the typing of letters and other office documents in the 80s and 90s but clients' case records were still being written longhand. The 'day book' that each day's enquiries were entered into had been replaced by individual case sheets by the early 1990s but it was not until 2004 when *CASE*, the National Association's electronic case management system was introduced to the Bureau that individual case sheet were typed by advisers on computers. The National Association replaced *CASE* with another electronic database and filing system, *Petra*, in 2012 and upgraded it again in 2017 to *Casebook*, the system we are still using in 2023.

The advance of technology not only changed how enquiries were processed in the office, but also how people approached the Bureau. The launch of Esher CA's website in 2000 enabled members of the public to find basic information about the help available at the Bureau, opening times and location of the Bureau and, in due course of time, to submit email enquiries through the website. In 2022, 46 percent of client interactions (enquiries, replies by advisers and so on) were dealt with by email compared with 9 percent face-to-face client meetings. COVID restrictions had been lifted by this stage but ongoing concerns about transmission of the virus would undoubtedly have been a factor in this disproportionate use of email and telephone in preference to meeting in person. In 2019, the year before the COVID pandemic swept across the world nearly a third of all client interactions were in person, with just over a quarter by email.

Throughout the periods of 'lockdown' and social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021 the Bureau continued to operate (although all outreach services were suspended) with advice being delivered remotely by email and telephone. As lockdown restrictions were lifted video consultations were trialled at the main office, with the adviser in one room and the client in an adjacent room to avoid face-to-face contact. All staff and volunteers quickly adapted to the

technology changes to work from home. The CEO and deputy CEO came into the office to co-ordinate the sessions, open post and resolve any technology problems.

It was testament to the commitment and determination of our staff and volunteers to adapt to new ways of working to deliver our advice service, that we did not close for a single day even as we transitioned to remote working. Over the two-year period from January 2020 to December 2021, 3614 individual clients were helped (1800 each year), with 13,145 issues involving 31,672 interactions with clients.

All of our volunteers remained with us throughout the pandemic; many reporting that it gave them a sense of purpose. Never throughout our 50-year history has their compassion and drive to help and achieve the best outcomes for our clients been in greater demand.

One casualty of the pandemic was our Wednesday evening advice session. As our clients also changed their working patterns the need for the evening session was not so apparent. Instead we opened on a Wednesday afternoon ensuring that Elmbridge residents are able to access advice throughout the working week. This remains the case today.

Enquiries in the early days

The way enquiries were categorised in the 1970s and 1980s was slightly different from the way they are recorded today, so direct comparisons of numbers are not possible. However, the principal issues remain sadly familiar: housing problems most frequently topped the list during this period, with relationship issues (categorised as 'marriage issues') also forming a significant percentage.

In the recession of the early 1980s unemployment reached 3 million and advisers began to see an increase in the number and complexity of problems related to debt, redundancy and unfair dismissal; to meet these a Specialist Debt Adviser was appointed, and NACAB provided training in debt counselling for general advisers.

In 1982, mirroring of the issues being dealt with by Citizens Advice Bureaux throughout the country when it was first set up during the Second World War, an article in the *News and Mail* (June 23, 1982) reported the help being given by Esher CAB to families of armed forces personnel in the Falklands War. The Bureau advised on 'how to get mail to the Task Force quickly and cheaply, and [advising] service families who have had to cancel holidays because of call-up.'¹⁰

Client issues then and now

The 1974 AGM minutes report that the most frequent subjects of enquiries were, in order of frequency:

1. Landlord and Tenant problems;
2. Local and national information;
3. Marriage problems;
4. Health and medical matters;
5. Employment;
6. Consumer problems.

The *Key Statistics* analysis document from December 2022 shows the issues most frequently dealt with were, again in order of frequency:

1. Benefits and Tax Credits;
2. Housing;
3. Debt;
4. Charitable support and Food Banks;
5. Legal;
6. Relationships and Family matters.

Organisational structure

When the Bureau was established in 1973 it was overseen by a Management Committee chaired by Mr A.V.T. Dean O.B.E.. The Management Committee comprised representatives of local business and organisations such as the St. John Ambulance Association, the Mid-Surrey Law Society, The Townswomens' Guild and Esher Urban Council.

Overseen by the Management Committee, the day-to-day running of the Bureau was managed by volunteers with the titles of 'Honorary Organiser' and 'Deputy Honorary Organiser'.

With regard to how the two managerial entities worked together, the Honorary Organiser in 1974, Lady Chadwick stated,

'Esher CAB, very properly, had two parents. Mother, she explained, was its Management Committee. Like most mothers with difficult children she lost her head from time to time, but, unlike other mothers, when she had a new head there was

nothing to stop her carrying the first one underneath her arm, and so she hoped that the Bureau would continue to benefit from Mr. Dean's experience and support. Father was the National Association of CABs who registered Esher CAB's birth, supervised its education, and took it to task if it did not come up to standard.'

In 1978 the Honorary and Deputy Hon. Organiser roles became salaried positions. The equivalent positions today are those of the Chief Executive and Deputy.

On 1 June 1992 the Bureau became a Charitable Company registered at Companies House.¹¹ Whilst this would have had little effect on the day to day running of the Bureau, as a result of this change in business structure the Management Committee was replaced by a Board of Trustees. The Bureau was registered under the name, 'The Esher & Molesey Citizens Advice Bureau'. The memorandum of Association states that,

'The Bureau is established for the promotion of any charitable purposes for the benefit of the community in the area of Esher, Molesey, Claygate, Oxshott & Cobham, by the advancement of education, the protection of health and the relief of poverty, sickness and distress.'

In April 2000 the Community Legal Service (CLS) came into being and had a direct impact on Esher CAB. The CLS is a network of organisations that provide information and advice about people's rights and who are inspected or 'quality assured' on their expertise. The CLS was launched as an initiative to improve access to justice, particularly for people who are deemed to be most in need of help. All Citizens Advice bureaux were required to participate in the CLS scheme, to meet their requirements and to be audited by them. Esher CAB was the first non-franchised Bureau in the South East to receive a Quality Mark after audit by the CLS in July 2000.

Volunteers

Throughout our 50-year history volunteers have been at the heart of our charity. We would not have been able to have achieved all that we have without them. From the 29 volunteers who started it all off in 1973 to the 29 we have today and the hundreds who have volunteered in between, we owe a huge debt. Their dedication, selflessness and empathy are humbling and we are truly grateful to them. Thank you.

Miscellanea

Honorary Organisers/Managers / Chief Executives

- 1972 Mr R.J.C. 'Pat' Craig [job title, 'Honorary Organiser']
- 1974 Lady A. Chadwick
- 1976 Lady J. Scotter
- 1978 Mrs Joanne Blackmore
- 1984 Mary Teasdale [job title from 1987, 'Manager']
- 1992 Alan White
- 1994 Peter Ridout
- 1996 David Evans
- 2002 Linda Wheatley
- 2020 Elaine Bissell [job title, Chief Executive]

Staff numbers:

- 1973: No paid staff, 26 volunteer advisers, 3 occasional advisers
- 2023: 11 trustees, 9 paid staff, 26 volunteer advisers, 1 volunteer financial accountant, 2 R&C volunteers

Bureau name:

- 1973 Esher Citizens Advice Bureau
- 1992 registered at Companies' House as 'Esher & Molesey Citizens Advice Bureau'
- 1996 registered name changed to 'Esher & District Citizens Advice Bureau'
- 2015 rebranded 'Citizens Advice Esher & District'

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose...

ANOTHER DAY IN THE BUREAU (From, Annual Report 1981-82)

- I would like to visit my husband in hospital but cannot drive as I have an arthritic hip and there is no public transport. Can anyone help?
- My employer has dismissed me without notice. I have been with the company for 9 months and have had no complaint about my work. What are my rights?
- We cannot support our student son through the summer vacation and he cannot find a job. Is he entitled to benefit of any kind?
- The plumber I employed to install central heating has left without completing the work although I have paid him in full. What can I do?
- The dog next door is left outside when neighbours go to work. It barks all day and the noise is making me ill. What can I do about it?
- I want to start a small business using one of the rooms in my house as an office. Are there any regulations against it?
- My landlord has told me to leave. He won't accept the rent I offer him and has cut off my supply of gas and electricity. Is there a law against this?
- A Book Club keeps sending books I haven't ordered and I cannot afford the postage to send them back. Must they be returned?
- My husband and I, with our baby, live in one room in my parent's house. We are quarrelling most of the time and I am hitting the baby though I know I shouldn't. Please help me.
- I have a good bed and a refrigerator I would like to give away. Do you know anyone who would take them?
- Can you help me to fill in my Income Tax Return? I am a pensioner, my eyesight is poor and I don't understand it.

... AND HOW DO WE HELP? (From, Annual Report 1998)

- The client's gas boiler (under a year old) kept breaking down. After many visits by technicians over 3 months who indicated that nothing was wrong, the Bureau made 2 phone calls to the manufacturers who then provided a new boiler.
- The prosecution in an alleged housing benefit fraud case claimed the public loss was nearly £12,000. Calculations provided by the Bureau to the defence forced the court to accept that a payment of only £2600 would clear the liability.
- Bureau advice to a nightshift employee who worked '1 hour short' as the clocks went forward forced an employer to remove a formal disciplinary warning.
- A Housing Association was pursuing a client for rent after he had left because he had not given the required notice, until the Bureau indicated that any action by the Association would lead to a counterclaim for failure to properly repair the house.

Acknowledgements

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Researched and compiled by

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- ¹ History of the Citizens Advice Service (2023). *Citizens Advice*, [Internet] <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/about-us1/history-of-the-citizens-advice-service/> [accessed February 2023]
 - ² Our History (2023). *Citizens Advice Elmbridge West*, [Internet] <https://www.caew.org.uk/history/> [accessed February 2023]
 - ³ Brasnett, Margaret E. (1964), *The Story of the Citizens' Advice Bureaux, 1939-1964*. The National Council of Social Service: London. P.50-51
 - ⁴ From article by Mr Craig (Hon. Organiser) in *Christchurch, Esher Newsletter*, September 1973
 - ⁵ Photograph of Esher Lodge from *American Architect and Building News*, November 3, 1915
 - ⁶ Photograph of Esher Lodge, accession no: 10.1981/2, Courtesy of Elmbridge Museum, Elmbridge Borough Council.
 - ⁷ Photograph of Esher Lodge Portakabin, accession no: 10.1981/3, Courtesy of Elmbridge Museum, Elmbridge Borough Council.
 - ⁸ Photograph from newspaper article by Elaine Cole, *Esher News and Mail*, 1996 (Picture credit: Mike Jones Associates)
 - ⁹ Brasnett, Margaret E., op. cit., p.51-52.
 - ¹⁰ [Esher] *News and Mail*, Wednesday, June 23, 1982
 - ¹¹ Memorandum and Articles of Association of The Esher & Molesey Citizens Advice Bureau, 1st June 1992