



June 2009

In this issue...New Appointments - Bureau Manager; Advice Service Manager & Debt Adviser, 2009/12 plans published, extended opening hours, Mental Health Outreach update & outcome of client satisfaction survey.

Farewell to Ann Flower welcome Nigel Dear.

After 8 years as bureau manager, **Ann Flower** retired in November 2008. A reception involving friends, colleagues, council staff and partner organisations was held to mark the occasion

Chris Grayling MP and **Shaun Jones, Chair** were on hand to thank Ann for the progress she has made at the bureau. The Trustee Board has recently appointed **Nigel Dear as Bureau Manager** with **John Harris** fulfilling the role of **Advice Service Manager**.



Chris Grayling MP with Ann Flower and Shaun Jones

Mental Health Outreach project update

Since 2003 we have received Lottery funding to support clients in the community who have mental health issues. We currently have **244 clients** with many reliant on our support in many aspects of their lives. **Over the last year our dedicated team:**

- Completed almost 2,000 client contacts including offering support at hospitals and representation at tribunals
- Made 1,540 contacts with 3rd parties
- Raised 748 new issues 40% benefit & 30% debt related
- Dealt with a £425,000 debt burden
- Obtained over £316,500 in client gains

Unfortunately, **this much needed service is currently under threat** as the Lottery funding will not be renewed in September 2009 and alternative funders have not been found.

New Trainee Advisers

To deliver extended opening hours and the enhancement of our telephone advice service it was identified that we needed to increase our level of supervisors, advisers and admin support

Within the last six months we have **recruited 17 new volunteer advisers and 3 new administrators.**



All new volunteers are provided with comprehensive training from **Steve Roebuck** (pictured left above) and the plan is to have them all playing a full part in the running of the bureau by the late autumn.

Plans for 2009/12

A new business and development plan covering the period 2009-12 was recently approved by the Trustee Board - this included commitments to:

- Provide more clients with **easier and faster** access to quality advice and information
- Investigate the setting up of **outreach offices** in other parts of the borough
- Introduce **gateway assessments (a triage system)**, drawing on the experience of pilots undertaken at other bureaux
- Explore the options available to increase interview rooms to **reduce client waiting times**
- Investigate the viability and feasibility of offering a full **e-mail advice service** to clients and a **self help service on the internet**
- Develop strategic relationships with key partners

The delivery of this plan will be reviewed quarterly.



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Visit our office – Old Town Hall, Epsom, KT18 5AG – Mon & Fri 10.00am – 2.30pm; Tue & Thu 10.00am-4pm – appointments 2.30–4pm; Wed 10.00am –3.30pm – appointments 12.30-3.30pm

Q1 2009 Client Satisfaction Survey

In Q1 2009, 128 drop in and 20 telephone clients completed our satisfaction survey. The responses were encouraging:

- 94% found the advice given useful or very useful
- 93% said they would use us again
- 92% felt the length of time they spent with an adviser met their needs
- 85% described the overall experience as good or excellent while **a significant number of respondents chose to write additional comment on the survey form complimenting the advisers on the quality of advice given and on their kind, thoughtful and patient approach**
- 76% found our opening hours convenient with a number saying they would welcome a 9am start or later closing
- The majority of clients preferred our drop-in service to an appointment service with over 70% willing to wait up to 40 minutes to see an adviser.
- 64% were not aware of our website so we will be looking to improve this level of awareness

The current recession

In November 2008 the Government announced a financial package for Citizens Advice Bureaux to extend their opening hours to support the increasing number of clients needing help following unemployment, mortgage arrears, rising debt problems etc.

We successfully bid for additional funding which will run until March 2010 and as a result we are now able to offer additional hours to include **client appointments on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons** - where possible clients with the more complex issues such as debt problems will be allocated afternoon appointments.

Our new hours are as follows:

Monday & Friday – 10.00am – 2.30pm

Tuesday & Thursday - 10.00am - 4.00pm (Appointments 2.30 - 4.00pm)

Wednesday - 10.00am - 3.30pm (Appointments 12.30 - 3.30pm)

New Debt Adviser

With an increasing number of clients facing pressure from their creditors, bank and mortgage lenders there has been an ever growing need to appoint a Specialist Debt Adviser. Funding from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and from our own resources enabled us in March 2009 to advertise for a part time (22.5hrs) Debt Adviser. In May we appointed **Tina Sledger** (pictured right) an existing CAB Adviser to the role.

In the coming months ahead Tina will be taking on clients with **complex debt problems** and will also be spending a significant amount of her time addressing different groups **within the local community** on ways to avoid getting into serious debt and on how to draw up a budget and prioritise debts.



Citizens advice policy update...we plan to take a pro-active role in community campaigning in 2009/10 and beyond, drawing on analysis of community and client profiles...further details will be covered in future newsletters



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