

Ash Citizens Advice Bureau Annual Report 2015/2016

Ash CAB with other Surrey Bureaux continue to operate the Local Assistance Scheme for Surrey County Council, although the take-up across Surrey has gone down slightly, as clients can now make their application on-line.

The 2 Bureau Money Advisers are constantly busy with many referrals from GBC Officers for Homeless Prevention, which is a heavy workload offering money and benefits advice, together with case work and help with budgeting. The Independent Living Adviser (Sally De-Merist), a post funded by the Voluntary Grants Panel of GBC, also visits people at home, of all ages, who are unable to get into the Bureau, helping to maximise benefits and sometimes taking cases to tribunals.

Although it is incredible, it is still a fact that Ash Bureau still hands out approx. three food parcels per week, mainly due to late Benefit payments etc.

The Healthwatch programme continues to work well to provide statistics anonymously which are fed back with other Bureaux to Healthwatch Surrey, giving evidence affording a Surrey-wide picture of using the Health and Social Care services. Andrew and Barbara also attend regular Healthwatch Champions meetings.

The Mediation Project has now become a permanent addition to the Ash CAB service and is now being offered as a weekly presence by the Surrey and Family Mediation Service.

A Webchat service has been offered by CitA, and Ash has taken part in the pilot for this service.

During this year, the Bureau Staff have welcomed Julia Butler as a Deputy Manager and Training Supervisor. She has fitted into the Team extremely well and together with Karen, provided excellent support to Vicky Payne (the Bureau Manager). Both Deputies work well together, both bringing different strengths to the Team.

Earlier this year the Bureau had an Organisational Audit. Both membership of Citizens Advice and the award of the Advice Quality Standard were confirmed. Several areas of strength were noted throughout the site visit and the auditor commented as follows:

- An organisational commitment to achieving quality and consistency in all areas, service sustainability and long term improvements for people's lives
- Trustee board and management team is actively engaged, accessible and visible to the team. It has an improvement agenda and actively encourages constructive feedback and comment.
- Teamwork and the sharing of good practice
- The organisation has a strong reputation with key stakeholders and a collaborative approach

The Staff and Volunteers from the Bureau again welcomed the Members of the Trustee Board to join them at their Christmas lunch. This gives everyone an opportunity to meet and enjoy getting together informally.

Ash CAB have a strong and committed Management Team, many very experienced and loyal Advisors and Volunteers, plus a very active Trustee Board, of which I am proud to be the Vice-Chair.

As the Ash Parish Council representative on the Trustee Board of Ash CAB, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Vicky, the Manager, her 2 Deputy's, Julia & Karen, all Staff and Volunteers, and Members of the Trustee Board for all their hard work and dedication.

Cllr Mrs Pat Scott
(Ash Parish Council Representative)