

Ash Citizens Advice Bureau Annual Report 2015/2016

Throughout this year, Ash Citizens Advice Staff and Volunteers have worked tirelessly to provide Ash with help and assistance, dealing with some of the most complex problems and issues

Ash CAB is one of the 11 Surrey bureaux helping people in crisis to access financial help and/or furniture through the Local Assistance scheme. During 2016 they helped **78** people in crisis, more than double that in 2014-15. In 2015-16 Ash CAB helped 2,174 clients with 6,922 issues. Income gain ie through benefit take up etc was £658,944 and £214,986 debts were written off. Debt repayments re-scheduled amounted to £88,236.

The Ash Homelessness Prevention teams through their money advice, benefit take up and budgeting support helped to prevent 80 clients from losing their homes

There continues to be a strong relationship with the Officers at GBC and the Money Advice Team working to find the best outcomes and resolutions for vulnerable clients who can present with very complex cases.

Benefit gains this year including new awards for 64 **clients** amounted to: **£514,395** an **average of £8037 per client.**

The Independent Living Adviser post , funded through Guildford and Waverley Voluntary Grants Panel and SCC focuses on providing help and advice for the elderly, disabled and their Carers in our Community, including home visits.

Since the impact of Welfare Reform, the Bureau has seen more people on benefits and low income, struggle to afford food. The cause of this is usually benefit delays or people struggling on a low income, which leaves them in a desperate situation. The Bureau holds emergency food parcels for immediate relief supplied by the Farnham Food Bank. In the past year 115 food parcels to feed 140 Adults and 105 children have been given out.

In the past year the Surrey and Family Mediation service offers a regular mediation service in the Bureau on family issues, which have been well attended.

I am always amazed to discover the 37 volunteers, who contribute time to Ash Citizens Advice is calculated to be worth a value in excess of **£250,000 to Guildford Borough!** A staggering amount!

Ash CAB has a strong and committed Management Team, led by Vicky and her 2 Deputies, together with a dedicated and very active Trustee Board.

However during the latter part of November, we formally received Vicky's resignation! This was a shock to **everyone!** Vicky has been with Ash CAB for over 26 years, and will certainly be an extremely 'hard act' to follow! However the Trustee Board regrettably accepted Vicky's decision to retire, and are working hard to seek a suitable new Chief Officer. Vicky will be very sadly missed, but through her hard work and excellent 'people-skills' she has built an extremely strong team of staff and volunteers, who the Trustee Board sincerely hope will remain in post to give the new Chief Officer the same loyalty.

As the Ash Parish Council Representative, I am extremely proud to serve on the Trustee Board of Ash CAB, and would like to thank Vicky, our Manager, her 2 Deputy's, Julia & Karen, all Staff and Volunteers, together with all Members of the Trustee Board, for all their hard work and dedication to this worthwhile and wonderful service.

Patricia Scott (Mrs)
Ash Parish Council – Ash Wharf