

**Ash Citizens Advice Bureau Annual Report 2014/2015**

Ash CAB with other Surrey Bureaux has been implementing the Local Assistance Scheme for SCC and has helped over 70 clients to make applications when they are in crisis, usually due to late payments of benefits. Some are helped with money and others with furniture and white goods from the Surrey Re-use Network.

The 2 Bureau Money Advisers are constantly busy with many referrals from GBC Officers for Homeless Prevention, 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. A sad fact of life is that the Bureau still hands out approx. three food parcels for families and single people per week, due to an enormous number of reasons!

Ash CAB along with the other Surrey bureaux, has continued their Healthwatch programme, recently receiving funding for at least another 2 years. This provides an opportunity for Bureau clients to tell their stories about their experiences, good and bad, of using the Health service and Social Care Services. The evidence is then fed back anonymously by the Bureaux affording a Surrey-wide picture. This evidence is then used to try to improve services across Surrey.

The appointment system has proved to be very successful, especially for those Clients with a busy work life and life-style. The appointment system also enables the Advisers to research issues prior to the clients arrival, thereby saving everyone time. However, 'Drop in' Clients are still welcomed in the morning sessions.

Mediation is a relatively new Project, and has proved to be extremely useful to Bureau Clients, and appointments are quickly filled.

Following the success of last year, once again the Trustee Board was again invited to join the Staff and Volunteers from the Bureau at their Christmas lunch. This gives everyone connected with Ash CAB the chance to meet socially and enjoy a convivial meal, at the wonderful Waverley House.

Karen (Creeth) continues to provide much support as Deputy Manager, and also makes a valuable contribution to the lottery-funded, Guildford Advice Project, organising training events for advice agencies in the GBC area.

Another six new prospective Volunteer Advisers have been undergoing training since last October and they will be ready to see clients as soon as their Training is complete.

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

The Trustee Board have recently welcomed a new Trustee, Miss Alex Bliss who, I am certain, will add great depth and character and who will be proud to be able to support this much-needed and valued service in Ash.

Ash CAB has a robust Business Development Plan as a Charity, (many Ash residents do not realise Ash CAB is a Charity), nor that it has been in operation since 1979! As such, fundraising is vital, and with thanks to Marsha (Moseley) and Nigel (Manning) who organised and ran a wonderful, well-supported Quiz night in May, nearly £1000 was raised!

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, the Manager, her 2 Deputy's, Barbara & Karen, all other Staff and Volunteers, as well as other Members of the Trustee Board for all their hard work and dedication to this worthwhile and wonderful service.

Cllr Mrs Pat Scott  
Ash Parish Council Representative