

Bishops Waltham and the Meon Valley Annual Report 2010/11



The CAB helps people solve their problems by
providing information and advice
on almost any topic
and campaigning to change unfair laws and rules
In 2010/11 we helped over 1000 people
with more than 1300 problems

Bishops Waltham & the Meon Valley Citizens Advice Bureau
Well House
2 Brook Street
Bishops Waltham
SO32 1AX

Unincorporated Charity Registration No: 1044884

Tel: 01489 896376 Fax: 01489 890815
e-mail: bishopswaltham@cabnet.org.uk
web site: www.bishopswalthamcab.org.uk

OPENING HOURS

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday (Drop In & Telephone)
10 am till 2 pm
Thursday (Appointments only)
4pm till 7pm

Advice Surgery: Wickham Community Centre, Mill Lane, Wickham
Thursday (Drop In & Appointments)
10.30am till 1.30pm

Phoenix House Advice Desk
Quarterly by appointment (residents)

Home Visits by appointment

Aims of the Service

To provide the advice people need for the problems they face

To improve the policies and practices that effect peoples' lives

The Four Principles of the Service

INDEPENDENT, IMPARTIAL, CONFIDENTIAL, FREE

Together we can work on practical solutions to overcome problems with:

Housing
Benefits
Employment
Debt
Tax
Legal problems
Immigration and Nationality
Family and Relationships
Consumer Rights
Local Information



Citizens Advice
the charity for your community

Chairman's Report

"This has been a difficult year for Charities, including ourselves, and the future looks a very challenging one too. The Citizen's Advice Bureau was set up with a specific need in view and has worked faithfully over the years in line with our aims to meet the needs of an enormous number of vulnerable people." (Bishop John Dennis) While I have done some editing this statement by Bishop John is appropriate.

As said last year, we are in a time of severe financial constraints as we cannot spend money that we do not have. Advice given often, I am sure, to some of our clients. I would like to thank our sponsors and donors who are listed in our Annual Report for their continued and valued support.

We owe enormous thanks to our paid staff and above all the volunteers without whom the service could not exist. The public face of our organisation is the volunteers - the unpaid advisers who the clients meet. My special thanks to you, too many to mention by name, but your efforts are appreciated by the Trustees and Management and, above all by the clients. A huge thank you to Suzanne Gill and Lin Kelly for their careful management of the bureau; to Nick Dillow for his vigilant stewardship of our finances; to Steve Delmege for leading our fundraising efforts; without them we would not be in such a sound position. Thanks also to Steve for his representation of our thoughts to CitAH. I must also record our thanks to my fellow members of the working group that has spent long hours debating with the Winchester CAB with the aim of allowing a seamless coalescence of the efforts of our two bureaux.

By all accounts, this may well be the last report written by a Chairman of the Bishop's Waltham and Meon Valley CAB. Nonetheless we will rise again 'phoenix like' in the shape of the Winchester District CAB as a result of our close cooperation with the Winchester CAB. Our aim has been to preserve the service offered by the Bishop's Waltham bureau as a base for the volunteers who offer the valuable service to our clients in the Southern Parishes of Winchester District. Our clients have always been in the forefront of our minds as well as the value of our volunteer advisers. With the help of new ideas, technology, our advisers and good will, this symbiosis will succeed.

Frank R Pearson
Chairman

Manager's Report

Our trained volunteer advisers assist people with their problems, providing information, options, advice and signposting. We provide help on any topic, the most frequent being debt and money advice, benefits, employment and housing. All our services are free of charge, independent and confidential.

The past year has been another busy one, involving lots of change. Starting last April with a very successful audit, in which the Auditor said our advice service was "second to none". We were again very pleased with the results of our most recent satisfaction survey, where we asked our clients how happy they were about the services they had received. 100% of responders said they were "happy" or "very happy", with one creating their own "excellent" box and ticking that!

While continuing to maintain the highest possible quality of service, we have introduced the "Gateway assessment" process, as required by our national body. Another development introduced this year, is our message taking and ring back service, where our reception staff answer the phone and take messages when all our advisers are busy. This ensures clients speak to a person on every occasion during opening hours. All clients have a ring back the same or following working day.

We have continued to offer help with the new Debt Relief Orders (DROs - a simplified version of bankruptcy), and are very grateful to our trained Intermediaries, as well as to Citizens Advice Hampshire and Hampshire County Council for supporting the work with funding.

We are still very active with our campaign work (social policy), most recently focussing on the impact the changes to Welfare Benefits have had on clients, and will have in the future. We keep in close contact with our local MP for these issues.

The forthcoming year will bring many more changes to the bureau, as we work with Winchester CAB to develop a district-wide service with reduced funding levels, while maintaining quality.

I would like to thank all Bureau staff and volunteers alike, for their unflagging help and commitment; and to our supporters - all of whom make the work we do possible. I'd especially like to thank Lin Kelly, Chris Stewart, Joyce Simmons, Lorna Neill, Lisa Fleck, David Street, Aely Emmett, Gwyn Halsall, Lynette Doolin, Sue Fitz-Gibbon, Steve & Chris Delmege, Frank Pearson, Jean Hammerton and Nick Dillow; also to everyone who provides financial support and donations, particularly Winchester City Council, our Parish Council funders, the Churches of Bishops Waltham and Upham; Bishops Waltham Rotary Club; Meon Valley Lions; Margaret Scriven, Christine Edwards, Keith Wickert and Dr Lucy Grafen.

Suzanne Gill
Bureau Manager

Training Report

The new modular training programme came into effect in April and we were pleased to be able to recruit two new trainee advisers, Jim Waters and Amy Lush. The initial training takes about 5 months and consists of time spent observing in the bureau, completing study packs and attendance at weekly tutorials at Winchester Bureau. As always we are grateful to Winchester Bureau for accommodating our trainees and to Fiona Brett and Lesley Rose their tutors.

All advisers keep up to date through training courses, in house training sessions, e-learning and bite-size computer programmes.

2011 sees another major change with the introduction of a new computer system called 'Petra'. My thanks go to all the advisers for their co-operation and hard work.

Lin Kelly
Guidance Tutor/Deputy Manager

Statistics for 2010/11

Total new enquires 1340

Total Contacts 4822

Comparison of New Enquiries by year

	Apr- Jun	Jul- Sep	Oct- Dec	Jan- Mar
2008-2009	375	355	351	475
2008-2009	421	466	381	457
2010-2011	283	330	301	426

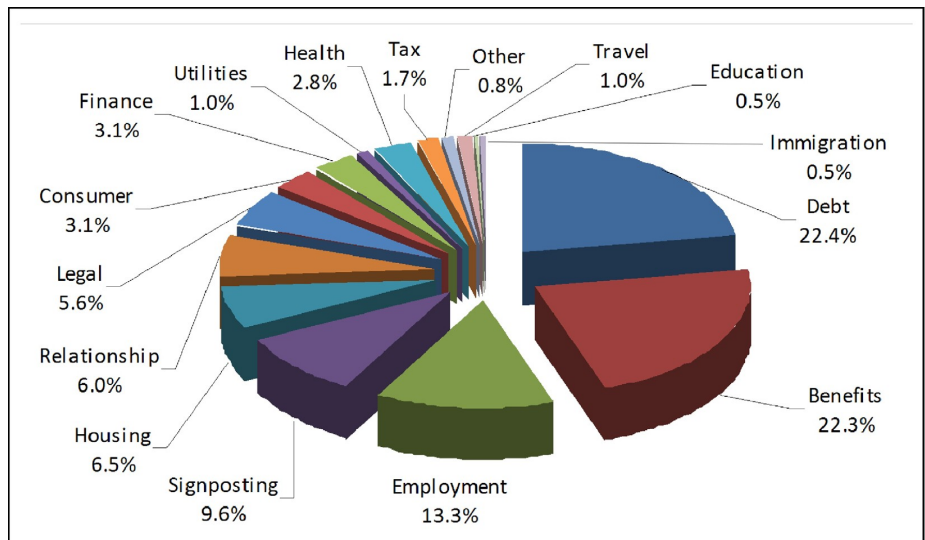
Comparison of Contacts by year

	Apr- Jun	Jul- Sep	Oct- Dec	Jan- Mar
2008-2009	1244	1167	1353	1603
2009-2010	1444	1573	1573	1526
2010-2011	1272	1158	1039	1353

Social Policy Issues 2010/11

Client Issues raised

Debt	1,999
Benefits	1,989
Employment	1,188
Signposting	855
Housing	576
Relationship	534
Legal	501
Consumer	278
Finance	277
Utilities	85
Health	247
Tax	155
Other	242
(inc. Travel, Education and Immigration)	



Social Policy

Social Policy, the campaign work carried out by Bureaux, is an equal aim with advising clients. If a client suffers an injustice which could affect the wider community, we report this to the national association. We also take up local campaigns. A long running local campaign to restore NHS dentistry to the Meon Valley was partially satisfied when a mobile surgery started operating in November 2010 in Bishops Waltham and Wickham on a weekly basis.

National issues that advisers have reported on include problems with the administration of benefits by DWP and local authorities, employment law affecting employees' rights when unfairly dismissed, housing, debt and consumer issues. We are beginning to see the results of the changes to benefits, particularly assessments of Employment and Support Allowance, and lower levels of Housing Benefit.

We were sad to say good-bye to Aely Emmett in December after 5 years as one of our social policy co-ordinators. Gill Atkins kindly volunteered to take her place.

**Gill Atkins and David Street,
Social Policy Co-ordinators and Advisers**

Trainee's Report

After 32 years in the Police Service, I retired in October 2000 and became a road accident claims investigator for four years, whilst also working as a part-time shop assistant and white van man. Having made a good living for many years pointing out the error of their ways to white van men, it was my turn to be on the lookout for the boys in blue. Just imagine the buzz for a young probationer constable to issue a ticket to some old sweat of a retired traffic cop, whilst explaining, very nicely of course, the error of his ways. Well that job came to an end and I thought that it was now high time to really retire and take things easy. So when I saw the ad in the parish magazine for CAB volunteers I couldn't believe my luck. What a doddle that would be. Pop into a little backwater office like Bishops Waltham once a week, chat to a few people and have a cup of tea or two and then go home. A piece of cake. Or so I thought. Little did I realise what I had let myself in for. Six months of book work; a mountain of learning journals on just about every subject you could imagine; one classroom session a week in Winchester and another day in the office at Bishops Waltham just trying to make sense of it all. But I have to say how proud I am to be a small part of such a tremendous organisation that spares no effort in helping people who are in difficulty with some or possibly several aspects of their lives. As I look around at my colleagues who have given many years of their time to the Bureau, I can only hope that I can emulate their dedication to such a worthwhile and worthy cause.

**Jim Watters
Trainee Adviser**

Outreach Report

The Outreach session at WICKHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE is now in its 10th year, since it started in October 2001.

It is run weekly every Thursday morning from 10.30am to 1.30pm, although we are often there later.

We have access to all our computer programs there and advisers can type up their cases.

The kind of enquiries dealt with is very similar to the main bureau, anything from relationship breakdown to employment, consumer or housing problems, and of course indebtedness and benefits.

We also run a quarterly outreach at **Droxford Alpha House/Phoenix Futures**, where we assist residents on rehabilitation for drugs/alcohol abuse. Usually their enquiries relate to when their rehab programme finishes, and are about housing issues and future employment, benefits and debt.

The **Home Visiting Service** is very important to those clients and potential clients who are unable to attend the bureau due to illness or frailty. Form filling for disability and other benefit forms are by far the most prevalent request.

Advisers usually attend home visits in pairs, and we cover quite a large geographical area in the southern parishes of Winchester, from Durley/Curdrige in the west to Denmead and Hambledon in the east, West Meon and Warnford in the north, and Boarhunt and Southwick in the south.

May I take this opportunity to thank all our advisers on the outreach rotas for their tireless and sterling work on behalf of clients. It is very much appreciated.

Joyce Simmons
Outreach Co-ordinator.

Money Advice and Debt

During the past 6 months we have successfully completed a number of DROs—Debt Relief Orders. Clients with total debts of less than £15000, and no more than £50 per month left after normal household expenditure, can apply. The fee is £90 and must be paid on the day of the application. It is a time consuming process which includes stringent checks to ensure the client meets the qualifying conditions and has included all debts as they cannot be added later. The fee is forfeited if information provided by the client is incorrect or found to be false. Bankruptcy is less of an option - perhaps it is as a result of the £600 fees. How can people in debt find that amount of money when they do not have it to make payments to their creditors!

Chris Stewart
Money Advice Co-ordinator

BISHOPS WALTHAM & MEON VALLEY CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU 2010/11

Staff

Suzanne Gill	- Bureau Manager	Lin Kelly	- Deputy/Guidance Tutor
Chris Stewart	- Debt/IT Co-ordinator	Joyce Simmons	- Outreach Co-ordinator
Lisa Fleck	- Admin Support		

Advisers

Judith Abbott-Kempster	Gill Atkins	Janie Blott+
Colin Carter	Chris Delmege	Lynette Doolin
Ian Dyson	Mary Eckersall+	Aely Emmett+
Sue Fitz-Gibbon	Lisa Fleck	Wendy Flynn
Gwyn Halsall	Kathleen Hales	Libby Midgely
Lorna Neill	Brenda Robinson	Margaret Scriven
David Street	Pearl Willbourn	

Trainee Advisers

Amy Lush*
Gill Warner+
Jim Watters*

Chee Price
Malcolm Wearn+

Reception/Admin

Cheryl Adams+
Sue Barringer
Janet Chant
Nilda Clark
Edna Dear
Christine Edwards
Jean Lovegrove*

Management Committee

Frank Pearson	- Chair	Jean Hammerton	- Vice Chair
Nick Dillow	- Hon Treasurer	Michael McCredie	- Hon Solicitor
Colin Carter*		Steve Delmege	
Averil Leesmith		Gill Stainer*	
Wendi Wyn-Roberts		Georgina Busher	- BW Care Group
Peter Mason	- Hampshire CC	Angela Clear*	
Suzanne Gill	- Bureau Manager	Lin Kelly	- Deputy Manager
Ian Dyson	- Adviser Rep	Gwyn Halsall	- Adviser Rep

* indicates personnel who have joined during the year + those who have left

Our sincere thanks go to all individuals and organisations who have helped the Bureau during the past year. Special thanks go to:

Winchester City Council; Hampshire County Council; Parish Councils of: Corhampton & Meonstoke, Curdridge, Denmead, Droxford, Durley, Hambledon, Shedfield, Southwick & Widley, Swanmore, Upham, Whiteley & Wickham; Bishops Waltham and Upham Churches; St Peter's Church PCC; Fareham & Winchester CABs; Milton Keynes Employment Law Unit; Oxfordshire Welfare Rights; CitAH; the staff of Citizens Advice; Shelter; Bishops Waltham Rotary Club; Meon Valley Lions; Dr Lucy Grafen; Mr Keith Wickert; Cllr Tony Coates; Chris & Steve Delmege; Averil & Ian Leesmith; Gary Humphrey; Gill Atkins; Margaret Scriven; Christine Edwards; clients and members of the public for their kind donations; members of the Management Committee; all our fantastic Bureau volunteers and staff for all their hard work and dedication.





www.bishopswalthamcab.org.uk
www.adviceguide.org.uk