



Thame Citizens Advice

Report to Thame Town Council for year to December 2015

Overview

This report covers the period from January to December 2015.

It has been a difficult year for the bureau. We have been unfortunate to lose a number of experienced advisers through retirement or ill health. It takes up to six months to train a new adviser, and many years of practice are needed to gain a full body of knowledge. We also lost our training manager in early autumn which has interrupted our recruitment and induction programme. We have now recruited a new training manager and I am confident that we will be back to full strength by the middle of 2016.

We have been fortunate that our remaining staff have pulled together through trying times and there has been no noticeable impact on the service we provide to Thame clients. We can see people by appointment within a few days and immediately in an emergency. We have taken the difficult decision, however to cancel our outreach service in Chinnor Centre in order to make more efficient use of our adviser resources in the Thame office where they can be kept fully occupied.

We are experiencing a shift in the range of enquiry areas that we are dealing with. Some key points are:

- a) Benefits and tax credits still account for over 20% of enquiries but the ESA “crisis” of last year has disappeared. The volume introduction of Universal Credit (UC) has not yet occurred in our area and the soft launch of UC for new single applicants has been mainly trouble free.
- b) The trend in the reduction in numbers of new debt clients continues. The number of debt issues has now fallen from 2nd to 5th place in our ranking and comes marginally behind Housing, Employment and Relationships
- c) We have seen a rise in enquiries on Finance matters, driven partly by the introduction of new personal pension rules
- d) We have seen an increase in enquiries on legal matters, possibly as a result of the reduction of legal aid available in the local area

Performance data

a) Number of clients helped from Thame ward Jan – Dec 2015

521

b) Topic Areas (there may be more than 1 topic per client)

	2014	2015
Benefits and Tax credits	36%	22%
Housing	12%	12%
Debt	14%	10%
Relationships	9%	11%
Employment	8%	11%
Consumer	4%	6%
Legal	3%	8%
Finance	3%	5%
Health & community care	2%	2%
Tax	2%	2%
Travel	1%	2%
Other	5%	9%

Method of Contact

In person	Telephone
59%	41%

Problems solved at first point of contact

Yes	No
57%	43%

43% of clients required additional casework support

The following tables compare client profile information against the South Oxfordshire community profile.

Gender

	Male %	Female %
CAB	41.5	58.5
S. Oxon	49.2	50.8

Health and Disability

	Disabled/Long term health problem %	None %
CAB	26.9	73.1
S. Oxon	13.8	86.2

Thomas Fox, Bureau Director

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