

Annual Report

2016 - 2017



Pennine West

Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Aims and Principles | 1 |
| Description of the service | 3 |
| Key achievements & activities during the year | 5 |
| Our Research and campaigns work | 6 |
| Thanks to funders, volunteers, trustees and staff | 7 |
| Acknowledgements | 8 |

Our Aims and Principles

Aims

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

The service aims:

- To provide the advice people need for the problems they face.
- To improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

Principles

Independence The service we provide is completely independent. We are therefore able to offer impartial advice to all clients and to take up any issue with the appropriate authority on behalf of individuals or groups.

Impartiality The service we provide is impartial. It's open to everybody, irrespective of ability, age, gender, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and social or economic status. Advice and help will be given on any subject without any preconceived attitude on the part of the bureau.

Free Our services are provided free to clients at the point of delivery.

Confidentiality We offer confidentiality to enquirers. Nothing learned by us from enquirers, including the fact of their visits, will be passed on to anyone outside the service without their express permission.

Our service

The Citizens Advice service helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing information and advice and by influencing policymakers. Citizens Advice Bureaux use evidence of their clients' problems to campaign for improvements in laws and services that affect everyone.

Every Citizens Advice Bureau is an independent registered charity. Without funding and volunteers Citizens Advice Pennine West (which is a group structure containing Citizens Advice Rochdale, Citizens Advice Oldham and Citizens Advice Trafford) could not continue to provide its services in Rochdale, Oldham and Trafford.

General Advice

Pennine West provides generalist outreach services which are open to the public at various locations and times in [Trafford](#), [Oldham](#) and [Rochdale](#)

Telephone advice (Adviceline) is available Monday to Friday 9 - 5

There is an up to date website for [Trafford](#), [Oldham](#) and [Rochdale](#)

Our general advice areas include consumer, money advice, welfare benefits, employment, housing, family and personal matters, taxes, immigration & nationality, health, education and discrimination related to any of these.

This is provided through open door, appointment sessions and adviceline as shown above.

Home visits:

These can be arranged by when disability/health issues restrict the client attending an office based appointment.

Specialist services:

We also provide specialist Housing, Debt and Benefits Advice (Health Team and Macmillan benefit advisors).

Debt casework is currently funded by the Money Advice Service Debt Advice Project (MAS DAP) contract and Irwell Valley Housing Association.

Benefits advice is currently funded by Macmillan/CCG/Early Help.

Housing advice is currently funded by the Legal Aid Agency.

The Health Team operate a weekly drop in service in the Integrated Care Centre. Trafford Advocates Project also provides support to vulnerable clients needing advice.

Personal Budgeting Scheme:

Assistance with Personal Budgeting Support is provided to Universal Credit claimants via appointments at Middleton and Heywood Job Centre Plus (JCP) offices. Access to the service is restricted to referrals made by JCP staff themselves

Referrals can be made to specialist services either directly or from any outreach setting.

Trafford Assist

A telephone helpline is operated to support Trafford clients access the [Trafford Assist](#) scheme by completing applications and referring for advice where appropriate. In addition, Pennine West manages a food bank based in Partington which distributes parcels to 5 Trafford Libraries for those who make a successful application.

Foodbank schemes

Trafford, Oldham & Rochdale operate foodbank schemes in partnership with the Trussell Trust. The service is accessed by calling Adviceline who refer to local Citizens Advice offices to issue an 'e-voucher' to be presented at the foodbank.

Some of our services may be restricted if they are designed and funded to help specific client groups.

Key Achievements and Activities



We've helped **15,066 people and their families** with **36,487** issues. The top 4 issues were Benefits and tax credits, Debt, Housing and Employment.



We've **increased household incomes** by **£6,450,330** bringing this money **back into our local economy**. We've also helped people to **write off £1,050,717 of debt** and re-schedule **£1,009,087** of debt, making re-paying debts more affordable.



We've helped **132 people and their families** to stay in their homes - **preventing** them from becoming **homeless**.



We've **trained and developed 87 volunteers** who use their knowledge, skills and work experience to help others in our local communities, and for some, to move into employment.



Just as importantly, because of our hard work we've made a **positive difference** to the **health, wellbeing** and general **happiness** of the people who come to our service.

Our Research and Campaigns

The Citizens Advice service helps people on all levels.

Individual problems are dealt with through face-to-face advice, on the telephone, by email and via www.adviceguide.org.uk. We also campaign locally and nationally for improvements to services and the law.

We use the evidence we collect from helping our clients to make a difference for people who may never come to a Citizens Advice service by communicating our evidence for change to policymakers in government and the wider public and private sector. A visit to a Citizens Advice service for one person could lead to a change in policy or law that will positively affect the lives of many more.

In 2016-17 our work focused on highlighting the difficulties people faced in being transferred from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and recommending improvements.

From 2013 DLA gradually began to be replaced by PIP whereby existing DLA recipients are reassessed to see if they are eligible for PIP. As the eligibility thresholds are generally higher for PIP than DLA there is a significant risk of losing entitlement; indeed, according to the DWP, 25% of existing claimants were not expected to qualify for PIP.

In April 2016 Local Citizens Advice (LCA) across England reported a 36% increase in PIP related enquiries on the previous year and so we combined our efforts with other Citizens Advice across Greater Manchester to establish our clients' experiences and the impact of the re-assessment process in our region, sharing our findings and recommendations for improvements with all Greater Manchester MPs and with local newspapers so as to influence change. Locally, Councillor Richard Farnell, Leader of Rochdale Council publically quoted our findings and recommendations for change. We continue to press this issue.

Thank you!



To all our volunteers, trustees, staff, funders and partners

We have 66 dedicated volunteers 11 trustees and 50 employees – who all work diligently to provide our services and support the many people who turn to us for help.

The time and energy our volunteers gift is invaluable and on behalf of the organisation we would like to say a huge thank you to all our workforce and to our funders and partners – we could not provide the services we do without them.

Every penny, role and hour contributed makes a real difference in changing lives for the better. Thank you.

Acknowledgements

Citizens Advice Pennine West would like to thank all individuals and organisations who have kindly supported our service.

Action Together Oldham and Tameside
Age UK Oldham
Age UK Trafford
Chadderton District Partnership
Clinical Commissioning Group
Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) Rochdale
Early Help Oldham
Failsworth and Hollinwood District Partnership
Fathom Learning
First Choice Homes Oldham
Irwell Valley Housing Association
LMCP Carelink
Macmillan Cancer Support
Oldham District Partnership
Oldham Libraries
Oldham Multiple Sclerosis Society
Oldham Stroke Association
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Rochdale and District Mind
Rochdale Multiple Sclerosis Society
Tameside, Rochdale and Oldham Mind

Thrive Trafford

Trafford Centre for Independent Living

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council

Trafford Housing Trust

Accountants

Hobday-Stevens

Morris Gregory

Human Resource Management

Direct Law and Personnel

Free, confidential advice. Whoever you are.

We help people overcome their problems and campaign on big issues when their voices need to be heard.

We value diversity, champion equality, and challenge discrimination and harassment.

We're here for everyone.



penninewestcitizensadvice.org.uk

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Citizens Advice Oldham is an operating name of Oldham Metropolitan Citizens Advice Bureaux Limited. Registered charity number 519868. Registered office: 1-2 Ascroft Court, Peter Street, Oldham, OL1 1HP.

Citizens Advice Rochdale is an operating name of Rochdale & District Citizens Advice Bureau. Registered charity number 701212. Registered office: 104-106 Drake Street, Rochdale, OL16 1PQ.

Citizens Advice Trafford Registered charity number 1102003. Registered office: 1 Waterside Plaza, Sale, M33 7BS.