



## As the impact of the recession continues to bite, Ash Citizens Advice Bureau proved its worth as a vital front-line service for those in greatest need in our community.

The economic downturn has tested us throughout the past year but we have risen to the challenge by showing that we can do more - and all with a largely volunteer workforce.

### Unprecedented level of demand for advice

We responded by extending the opening times in our bureau by 5 hours a week. Over 500 people benefited during this extended service during 2010 – 11. We are continuing to offer these additional hours to our clients in spite of cuts in funding.

### New Initiatives

We appointed an Independent Living Adviser last October to provide a home visiting service for the housebound and an outreach at Japonica Court on Tuesday mornings.

We have recently started a monthly outreach service for Normandy residents at their Village Hall on the first Wednesday of the month, 2pm – 4pm.

**A valuable local resource** The breadth of experience makes the bureau service such a valuable local resource. Skilled advisers recognise that many people who contact the bureau have multiple problems that impact on each other – and we can help to tackle them all.

**Increasing the wealth of the Borough** We believe that investing in advice services not only saves money, but also attracts money into the Borough. By keeping people in their homes, identifying benefits, helping them with their finances and in many other ways, we ensure that the most vulnerable in the community get the help they deserve before reaching crisis point. Failure to provide prompt assistance from CAB would inevitably result in escalating costs to the Borough and County.

- Total number of new clients 2612 (a 12% increase on last year)
- Approximately £302,000 of Welfare benefits entitlement identified
- More than £2 million of debt written off. 57 bankruptcies and Debt Relief Orders completed.
- £160,000 charitable and other financial gains achieved for clients
- 52 households prevented from losing their homes
- Our benefit specialists provided feedback to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Universal Credit.
- 33% of our clients come from Ash Wharf ward which scores highly on the National Indices of Deprivation.

### The Big Society:

As the Government launches its Big Society plan, Ash CAB is a clear example of an organisation already active in its local Community with its volunteers contributing time worth an estimated value in excess of **£170,000**

### Helping influence policies and lobbying for change:

This is a key role for all CAB and the Ash bureau works with other bureau in West Surrey to join the nation-wide network to provide the evidence, collected from our clients, and helps to bring **about real positive change**.

### Prevention of Homelessness – a Case Study

Clients were under a Suspended Possession Order for rent arrears of £2500. Husband working, whilst wife at home harassed by creditors knocking on the door. She was paying them rather than paying the rent. CAB provided financial/budgeting advice, benefit checks and a variation order for the court.

**Outcome: eviction prevented and debt repayments negotiated.**



**41 local volunteers active in Ash Citizens Advice Bureau (including advisers, trainees, trustees, IT and admin workers).**

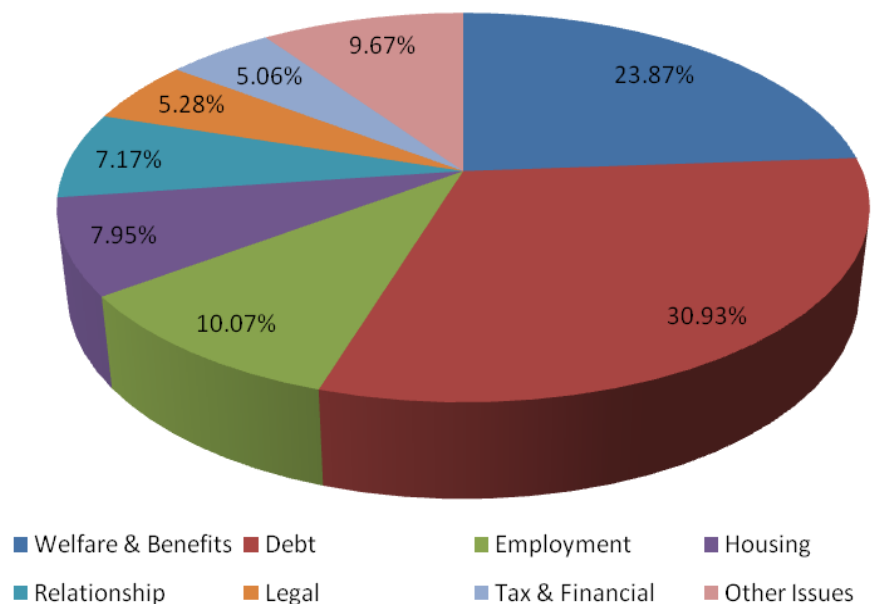
*“Thank you for giving me the opportunity to have the experience of working with such an inspiring group of people in an amazing organisation” (feedback from a volunteer on a student placement in 2010)*



**Tackling child poverty with partners in Surrey through the “Money Matters for Every Child Campaign”.**

## Breakdown of issues our advisers handled in 2010 - 2011

SUBJECT ISSUES	ISSUES
Welfare & Benefits	2,754
Debt	3,569
Employment	1,162
Housing	917
Relationship	827
Legal	609
Tax & Financial	584
Other Issues	1,116
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,538</b>



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