



South Warwickshire

Newsletter January 2018

A message from Aidan Knox, Chief Executive Citizens Advice South Warwickshire



Welcome to the first newsletter from Citizens Advice South Warwickshire. We will be issuing four newsletters each year to keep you in touch with the work we are doing in the area. Now that we are a merged service combining the Warwick and Stratford districts, we serve a population of a quarter of a million people with free, confidential and expert advice for the problems they face.

But I don't want this to be a one way communication. There may be topics that I touch on that are of special interest to you and you would like to know more about. There may be ways of joining up our interests to help provide better services to local people. So please contact us at newsletter@casouthwarwickshire.org.uk; we'd be happy to hear from you.

We want to develop our services and make sure that we are continuing to deliver advice face to face, by telephone, via our website and out in the community. Our figures show such a big need for our advice. This is a tough time for many of our clients and also for many of our funders, so finally I would like to thank them for their continued support.



Citizens Advice work on Universal Credit

Here in South Warwickshire, advice on benefits remains the top reason that people need our help, and right at the top of the benefits issues is Universal Credit. Last year there were more than 2,000 enquiries on this benefit alone. It's a subject that Citizens Advice has campaigned on nationally as we've seen first hand that people have been forced into debt. The campaign has been successful and the Government has announced a £1.5bn package of support.

The next few months will see changes introduced, including an end to new live service claims and the removal of the initial 7 days waiting period. [Here are more details of the changes](#) with a timetable of when they will be introduced.

Can you help with our campaign work on improving public transport?



We find that many clients struggle to get into CA South Warwickshire offices because of difficulties with public transport. This can be to do with the lack of buses and community transport, or the cost. But it's not just getting to our offices. The lack of rural transport can affect so many aspects of people's lives, particularly for people with disabilities. In 2017 we carried out interviews with our service users and responded to a local government consultation with their concerns. We want to continue to campaign for better local transport options and would like to hear from any partner organisations who are interested in this - particularly if you have first hand evidence of how

people are experiencing difficulties.

Please contact Nola Weerwag, who is our Research and Campaigns worker on nola.weerwag@casouthwarwickshire.org.uk

Meet our volunteers

In South Warwickshire our volunteers far outnumber the paid staff and we are so grateful for their hard work and contribution to the service. There are always opportunities for new people to come and join us and if you would like to find out more about volunteering, [here are details of who to contact](#). In the meantime, here's a profile of one of our general advisors. Evan (Will) Williamson:



What motivates you to volunteer your time at Citizens Advice?

The feeling that I am doing something worthwhile and providing a valuable and professional service to the community.

What's your favourite thing about volunteering?

That I am not committed to do this, I do it because I want to and because I enjoy it.

What are the biggest challenges of volunteering?

Maintaining the level of expertise and keeping up with the hours I promised to do

What skills have you gained through volunteering here?

Improved listening skills and obviously my knowledge of the many and varied problems within the community and honing the skill which we employ to help our clients with their problems.

What was your background prior to volunteering here?

35 years in the Royal Navy, 6 years in the defence industry in QA management, 10 years in France and nearly 7 years as a case worker for SSAFA, the charity for the armed forces.

What is an average day volunteering here?

Seeing the clients, researching the sources of information to advise clients and having a good banter with my friends and colleagues in the office.

Workshops with our partners



At our annual meeting in November 2017, we brought together key organisations in South Warwickshire who represent the communities we live in, but serve different needs. We spent the morning in workshops concentrating on two main themes - **financial inclusion** and **health and wellbeing problems**. Our aim was to see how we could work together on these priorities. We would like to thank Dave Webb, Executive Director of

Stratford District Council, Chris Elliott, CEO of Warwick District Council and Phil Evans, Head of Community Services at Warwickshire County Council for opening the session. Here is a summary report ([click here](#)) on the workshops, looking at the common themes and concerns raised on the day.

Our Chief Executive, Aidan Knox, is keen to establish a reference group to see if working with our partners we can find better solutions to these issues. If you wish to be part of this Reference Group, please email: newsletter@casouthwarwickshire.org.uk to let us know.

What people say about us

"I never expected so much help"

"CAB have helped me tremendously "

"Absolutely brilliant, and just around the corner so I can walk to them to get help when needed "

"wonderful help and great to know you're there"

"thank you so much - this will change my life"

"anyone can find themselves vulnerable and in a seemingly uncontrollable downward spiral. Your work literally "saves lives"... Thank you for who you are and for all that you have done and continue to do..."



**I cannot
express my
gratitude
enough**

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