



South Warwickshire

Newsletter April 2019

Welcome from Jeremy Vanes, Chief Executive Officer



We are already a quarter of the way through 2019 - set to be a memorable year for many reasons - and the Citizens Advice service in South Warwickshire is doing its best to help people receive the advice they need today. On April 1st a new UK scheme opened which enables European Union nationals to apply to continue to live and work in the UK after Brexit. Depending on the final outcome of Brexit negotiations other advice needs may also arise - particularly in terms of living, trading, travelling, studying and working in the UK and Europe. Citizens Advice will have new advice ready, whenever or whatever changes occur.

This newsletter also has details of two new initiatives we have started in South Warwickshire to ensure that we are delivering on our promise to provide free, expert and confidential advice to those in need.

Firstly, across England we started the “Help to Claim” service to support people making new claims for Universal Credit on April 1st. In South Warwickshire we’ve been very busy training extra volunteers and staff ready for this ambitious service. Secondly, we highlight a new financial inclusion outreach service for residents of Lillington ward, Leamington Spa.

I cannot praise our staff and volunteers enough as I always seem to be expecting more from them. So I’m pleased to report that they are going to be supported by the exciting [Thrive at Work](#) programme. This is a new initiative from West Midlands Combined Authority to encourage employers to take an active role in supporting those who work for them, with developments in both better physical and improved mental health. I’ll report back in the future about how we are trying to improve our workplace and practices.



New starters at Citizens Advice in Stratford

Newcomers to the Stratford office are Jemma Konuralp and her guide dog Fable. Jemma, who is a property lawyer, joins the advice session supervisory team. Jemma grew up in Stratford, but studied and then worked away in London for 21 years. The need for a less stressful and more dog-friendly life for her, her husband and daughters brought her back to the town. While in London she volunteered at the Disability Law Service and got to appreciate how important advice services can be.

“What to me can seem to be a simple problem, can be a huge and worrying issue to someone else. I like being able to help and Citizens Advice is accessible for people.” Jemma, who is visually impaired, said her dad had always encourage her to do anything she wanted. “In lots of ways

I’m trying to be like my Dad for other people - not everyone fits the “normal” system. If I can instill confidence in people to deal with problems, that makes me happy”. Her dog Fable is a flatcoat, long-haired retriever, probably one of the last of the breed to be used as a guide dog. “I’ve had her for two and a half years and she is a genius. But she’s also a bit of a diva. Happily, she always steps up when needed”.



Help to Claim Universal Credit support

The fastest growing advice need for Citizens Advice is the Universal Credit (UC) benefit. Universal Credit helps people on a low income or not in work to meet living costs. It will increasingly combine six other benefits, including Housing Benefit and Working Tax Credit, into a single monthly payment for those in the “full service” areas. From April 1st Citizens Advice across the country are offering a new service called “Help to Claim” specifically to new claimants of UC. This additional Citizens Advice help is, as ever, free and confidential. Responsibility for delivery and payment of UC remains solely with the Department for Work and Pensions.

So how are we helping claimants in South Warwickshire? We now offer people practical support to submit their claim. Under the current system we know that some clients can take up to a week to do this - causing further delays to their payments. We hope to help many people reduce that wait time. We are offering this help by phone or face to face or by webchat. Some of our advisors will be based in Job Centres on hand to help. Much of Stratford upon Avon and District is already in the third year of rollout of UC, but Warwick and Leamington have only more recently started. We will be keeping our services flexible - ready to respond to the level of

support needed. The new National number for Help to Claim is **0800 144 8 444** and for more information, please see our [recent press release](#).

New help for Lillington residents



Thanks to funding from the Warwickshire County Council Local Welfare Scheme, we now have a new advisor who will be helping residents in Lillington. This is part of the “Back on Track - Money Advice in your Community” scheme, and is one of a group of linked projects to be overseen by the Warwickshire Financial Inclusion Partnership in 2019-20. Rebecca Hart is offering community outreach services and home visits to help clients with all aspects of their finances. This includes budgeting support, maximising income and advice on reducing bills and other costs. Rebecca has qualifications in financial inclusion and will be able help with general advice. To make an appointment to contact Rebecca, please call 07990 0703281 or use this [referral form](#).

New service to help those affected by MS



Starting in May, CASW will be offering a specialist service to people with Multiple Sclerosis who live in Warwick, Leamington and Kenilworth. Karin Gray from the MS Society who is funding the project said that people with MS can find it difficult to access services. “There is a need for advice services which can be flexible and responsive. People with MS might have to negotiate changes to their benefits or have to transfer from one system to another. So being able to get the full range advice services at home or an easy to access location will take a huge amount of worry and stress off their shoulders”. To find out how to access this new service, please look at [our website](#).

Help for Alcester people in need of advice

From March this year we restarted advice sessions in Alcester. Our outreach advisor, Hazel (pictured on the right, together with Mark Cargill, County Councillor for Alcester and Vanessa Lowe Town Clerk), will be available to meet people on the first and third Thursdays of the month at Globe House for a year. Thanks to funds from a host of community groups in the Alcester area we raised enough money to continue to



deliver support twice a month for a year until March 2020. We worked hard to bring the advice service back to the people of Alcester, which was welcome news to Alcester Town Council, Stratford District Council and Warwickshire County Council.

Nina Knapman, Trustee at CASW said: “Our outreach services are so important because we can’t always assume that people can travel to our offices in Stratford or find all the solutions they need with our website information. Face-to-face contact can help people who are getting overwhelmed by problems of debt, benefits claims or housing issues”. “We are grateful for the funding from so many groups so that our outreach work can get to those in need “.



Do you have any suggestions or comments on this newsletter? Or, do you want to sign up/unsubscribe from this mailing list? We would love to hear from you, email us at newsletter@casouthwarwickshire.org.uk

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