

Press release 14/01/2021
For immediate release

What a difference a year makes

More than 300% increase in client calls in comparison to previous festive season

The days between Christmas and New Year are often quiet for Citizens Advice LeicesterShire (CitAL), but the 3 days at the end of 2020 saw a 317% increase in clients compared to the previous year.

Far fewer calls and emails are made to CitAL between Christmas Day and New Year's Day than at any other time of the year. However, this seasonal holiday saw a huge rise in problems that took precedence over any celebrations.

People contacted CitAL about all the issues we would expect - homelessness, debt, employment disputes, benefit applications, rent arrears and settled status applications. What is striking is that these problems were worrying Leicestershire residents so much that they chose not to wait until the New Year to start dealing with them. CitAL were delighted to have enough staff and volunteers available to keep lines of communication open for those that needed them.

Since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic, CitAL has continued to support residents with reliable, free advice on a huge range of issues. Although face-to-face appointments are not taking place at the moment, CitAL has ramped up its remote operation and is delivering all aspects of its advice service by phone and email.

'I have enjoyed the challenge of providing advice over the phone - very different and I miss my colleagues in the office, both for their expertise and social contact. However, it is good to know that we can continue helping people at a time when so many more people need some support.'

Penny, CitAL Volunteer

In a winter like no other, CitAL is proud and privileged to be there for everyone that needs support with solving their problems.

'Although the lack of family gatherings will have enabled more clients to have the time to contact us over the festive break, the enormity of the rise in client numbers demonstrates that people are feeling generally less secure and more confused than they were. We have trained and experienced people ready to take your phone calls and emails, and help you solve your problems. We can't make Covid 19 go away, but we can help you make changes for the better so you can have less to worry about in 2021.'

Richard Evans, Chief Executive Officer, Citizens Advice LeicesterShire

CitAL's free and impartial advice service is delivered by a combination of fully trained staff and volunteers - all currently working from home. Our volunteers are amazing and they make a huge



difference in the lives of both City and County residents. If you would like to train with us and join them, please see our website for more details <https://citizensadviceleicestershire.org/volunteer/>

'The level of service I received was well above my expectations - taking into account that I was not even sure whether the Citizen Advice Bureau would be able to offer any service during this coronavirus pandemic and if so, how it would work over the phone only appointments.'

Client, December 2020

- ends -

Editors Notes

Citizens Advice LeicesterShire is an independent local charity serving the communities of Leicester and Leicestershire (excluding Charnwood). During 2019 – 20, our trained advisers supported 16,478 local people to solve their problems.

We are continuing to provide advice and information by telephone and email during the coronavirus restrictions and will soon be able to offer video appointments. We're here for everyone.

Anyone needing advice can ring **0300 3301025 (City)** and **0300 3302111 (County)** between 9am and 4.30pm on weekdays. Non-urgent or out of hours enquiries can be made by email from our website. In addition to our generalist services, we also offer the following specialist advice:

Macmillan Welfare Benefits - 0300 456 8400

Citizens Advice and Macmillan Cancer Support are working together to provide welfare benefits advice to people affected by cancer.

Mesothelioma Advice - 0800 169 2409

Benefits advice and compensation support for people with asbestos cancer, delivered in partnership with Mesothelioma UK.

Money Advice - 0116 464 7239, moneyadvice@citizensadviceleicestershire.org

Specialised debt and money advice service for County residents, supported by The Money Advice Service.

Pension Wise - 0800 134 3944

Free and impartial government service for the over 50s about the different ways you can take money from your pension.

For any more information, please contact Su Strange (Communications Officer) at su.strange@citizensadviceleicestershire.org

Chief Executive Richard Evans

Serving Leicester City and the districts of Blaby, Harborough, Hinckley & Bosworth, Melton, North West Leicestershire and Oadby & Wigston.

Citizens Advice LeicesterShire is a local charity. Charity registration number 1135081. Company limited by guarantee. Registered number 07186736 England. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority FRN: 617648. Registered office: Clarence House, 46 Humberstone Gate, LE1 3PJ



For details of our complaints process please write to us or email contact@citizensadviceleicestershire.org