



**citizens
advice
bureau**

**Bracknell & District Citizens
Advice Bureau (BDCAB)
Outreach Report (Extended
Services)
July 2008**

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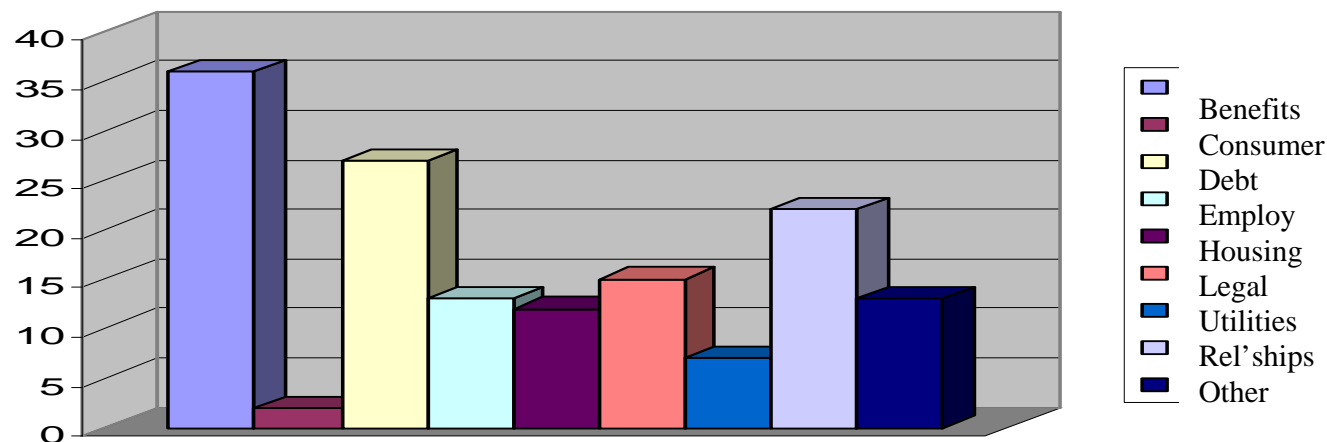
BDCAB, in partnership with BFBC's Extended Services Team, has been delivering outreach advice sessions in Wildridings since January 2007 and Great Hollands and North Ascot since February 2008.

Our outreach service provides a vital opportunity to reduce social exclusion in Bracknell by offering advice and information to people who may not normally be able to access our service at our town centre premises. High quality information and advice at the right time empowers people to make positive decisions about their lives – often affecting whole families and communities. Through our interventions, people are able to tackle their debts; to receive the benefits to which they are entitled; to prevent themselves becoming homeless and to improve the quality of their lives in a wide range of other ways.

- **Who did we see, where and with what issues?** (NB: issues shown are those most frequently presented and all statistics cover the period until 30th June 2008.)

Venue	No. of sessions	No of clients	With children under 5	With children 6 - 18	Client postcodes	1	2	3
N Ascot	5	6	1	2	SL5 8 GU47)	Ben	Rel	
WR	14	13	3	6	RG12 7 RG12)	Ben	Rel	Emp
Gt H	17	26	10	13	RG12 8 RG12 7	Debt	Ben	Rel

Overall breakdown of enquiry issues across the three outreaches



Case studies

Statistics are useful but they only take us so far. Here are some real life examples (anonymised) showing the experiences of some of the clients that have come to us at the three venues.

Homelessness Prevented

Amy, a single parent with one primary aged child renting from a housing association, came to us with £650 rent arrears. She received forms from the County court for a possession hearing in 4 weeks. Money problems had resulted in Amy becoming depressed and taking time off work. This problem has arisen partly because of Amy's confusion over housing benefit. We saw this client both at the outreach and in the bureau helping Amy prepare a financial statement and negotiating an acceptable payment with her landlord to avoid the repossession going ahead. Amy was also in council tax arrears and had a number of other debts which we started to help her take action on.

Maternity Rights

Naseem, a parent with one preschool age son, was pregnant and was doing a job share, working part time from home. Her job sharer wanted to cover no more than 2 weeks maternity leave. Naseem wanted to know what her legal maternity rights were before discussing maternity pay and time off with her company. Her offer letter said that she was self-employed, however after discussion and research we agreed that Naseem's status was probably an employee. We advised her of her rights whether self employed or employed. We confirmed with our employment specialist at the bureau that her status is probably an employee, although this could only be decided by an employment tribunal. We provided Naseem with various documents to support her discussion.

Child Maintenance Increase Needed

Barbara, a single parent with 2 children, has a maintenance agreement with Steve, her ex-husband, which should increase with his pay rises. Steve has not been increasing the payments and this is causing her financial hardship. Barbara wanted to know what her options were. We explained that the magistrate court can enforce the court order; that Barbara could also get the Child Support Agency involved. She could write to Steve saying that she has taken advice and is considering court action/CSA involvement. This may be enough to get Steve to increase the payments. Barbara could also get a solicitors letter proposing possible further action. If that doesn't work, we told Barbara that she could take him to court/get the CSA involved. We made an appointment for a free 15min appointment with the duty solicitor.

Action plan agreed to face multiple problems

Ingrid, a woman with severe anxiety attacks, had summoned up courage to attend one of the outreaches. She has multiple debt and benefits problems related to her ill health and inability to work on a regular basis. After putting her at ease, as far as possible, we came up with an action plan that will require many visits and she left saying saying that she felt "so much better already". Two days later she attended the bureau, having completed some forms and found the other information necessary to take the next steps in the plan.

Family need financial help for housing

George and Anna, a European couple with a 2 year old, live in one room in a house with shared facilities. George is on a low wage and his Anna is looking after the child. They wanted to know if they can get any initial or ongoing financial help to get a larger place. We explored with them their immigration status and finances and decided that they should be entitled to Local Housing Allowance and could ask for a budgeting loan to help with the initial costs. We directed them to the relevant organisations.

Client Satisfaction and impact

Once a year, we undertake a Client Satisfaction Survey where we ask clients what they think of our services. In 2007/8, this took place in October, so only the Wildridings clients were involved. Responses from clients who had used this outreach demonstrated 100% satisfaction with both the Community Outreach Adviser and with the information and advice provided.

The following quotes were received from clients over the period:

I could not afford to get to the Bracknell bureau - it's really good that you are coming out to the community.

I like being able to make an appointment. That helps me organise childcare.

It's brilliant that you are here. It started too late for us as we had to go into the bureau a few months ago, but I have put it into the school newsletter.

(On successfully fighting to get an application underway for benefits, a client was tearful with relief and said)
That's so fantastic, that's marvellous, I can't believe it. ”

Over the next 12 months, the bureau will undertake **outcomes monitoring**, which is a relatively new activity for CABs. In addition to providing statistics on outputs which show the number of people seen and with what issues, we will be able to demonstrate the impact that our advice and information has actually had for individuals, their families and communities. We will be conducting follow-up interviews and questionnaires based on samples, which will include clients from all of our outreaches.

Issues

The system of appointments is working well. This enables clients to plan their visit in the knowledge that they will be seen and at a specific time, rather than run the risk of joining a drop-in queue. The help of receptionists at each venue in taking with bookings and receiving clients on the day is much-appreciated by the bureau.

Publicity

Overall the outreaches are getting busier, helped by positive word-of-mouth promotion, but it will take time to establish them as fully-booked each week. We need to ensure that we have an on-going publicity campaign – and each venue has kindly offered to help by inserts in newsletters etc. We will be seeking to display posters in more community venues and local GP surgeries over the coming months to increase local awareness of the service.

Lists of the outreaches are displayed at the bureau and flyers are available there. The bureau will refer clients to the outreaches if it is more appropriate for them.

We have created a new display board for North Ascot, to be used at the coffee mornings. Publicity leaflets have been created for Great Hollands and handed out at the school. Clients report that they have attended because of the leaflets.

We have also purchased a high-visibility A-frame with our logo for use at all outreach venues.

Rhiannon Stocking-Williams, Chief Executive, B&DCAB