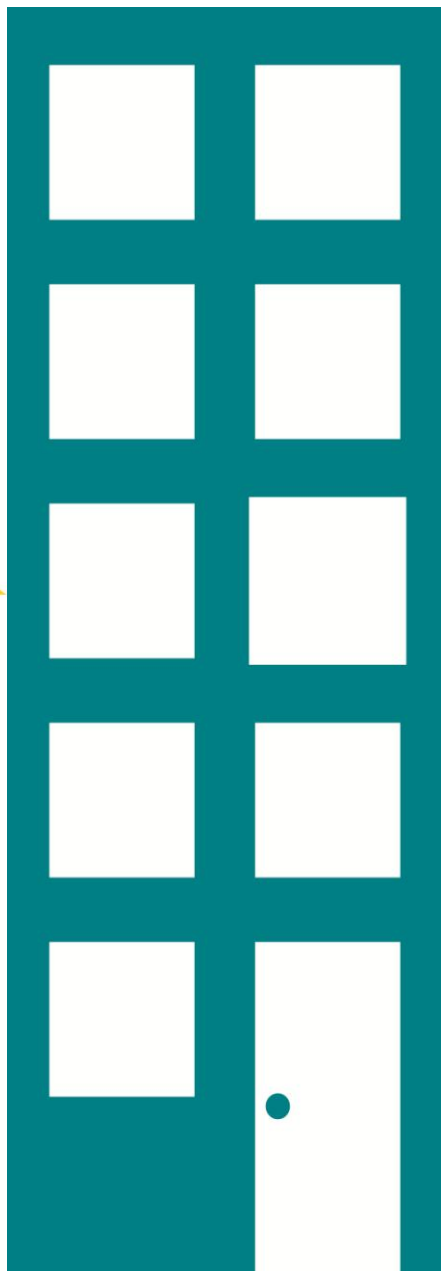
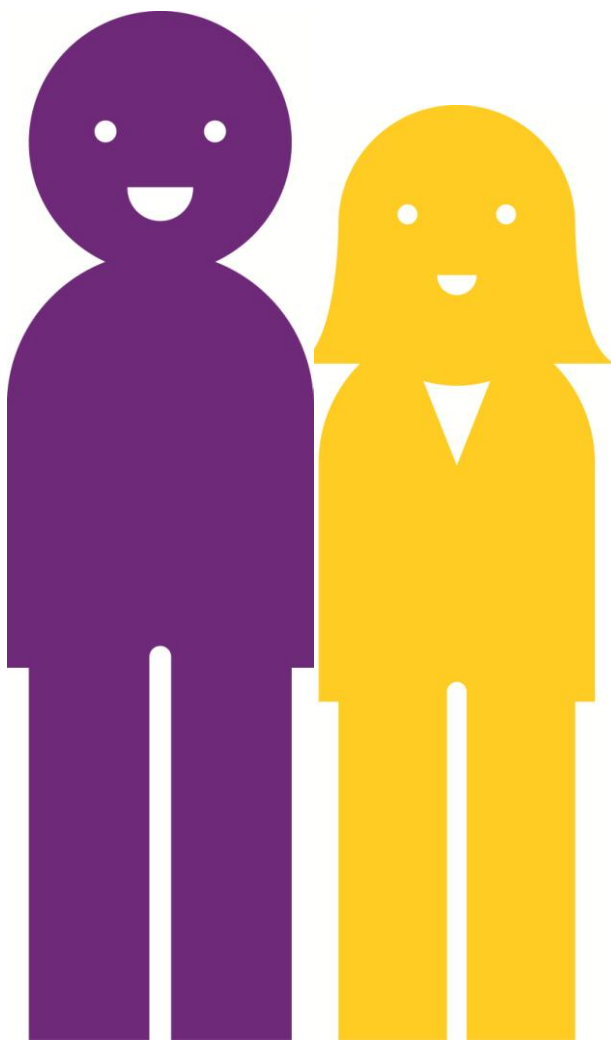


# Gosport Citizens Advice Bureau Annual Report 2014/15

the charity for  
your community



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# Using our Services



## Our aims and principles

*We aim to:*

- *Provide the advice people need for the problems they face*
- *Improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.*

*We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.*

## Drop in opening times

Monday	9:30am – 3:00pm
Tuesday	9:30am – 3:00pm
Wednesday	9:30am – 5:00pm Specialist appointments 5:00pm – 7:00pm (for those in employment)
Thursday	9:30am – 3:00pm
Friday	9:30am – 3:00pm

### Adviceline

**03444 111306**

Mon–Fri 9:00am – 5:00pm

Sat 9:00am – 1:00pm

### Website

**[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)**

**[www.gosportcab.org.uk](http://www.gosportcab.org.uk)**

## Would you like to volunteer for us?

All sorts of people volunteer with us & for many different reasons. They take on a range of essential roles from advice to IT & administration.

For more information about the roles we have to offer, please contact Kris Zaprawa on 02392 520112 or [trainer@gosportcab.cabnet.org.uk](mailto:trainer@gosportcab.cabnet.org.uk)

# Manager's Report

## *Anita Muff*

Our work over the year has focused on ensuring that the high qualities in our existing services are maintained and that the developments of new services to improve access to advice were implemented.

Our clients often have a range of complex and interrelated problems. This can be seen when you analyze the amount of clients helped versus the enquiries answered or contacts had with clients. It is critical that those who seek our help are provided with a high quality service; consistent with their needs and that the client is moved on by having had contact with us. We therefore hope to introduce a new advice framework that will enable the answering of questions quickly and efficiently for clients by the end of the next financial year.

We continued our work to reduce duplication and streamline resources within our own bureau. This concluded with the recruitment of a joint Chief Officer for Gosport and Fareham bureaux. The role has meant that the limited financial resources available would be concentrated on advice provision and in May 2015 this work was concluded and I was extremely pleased to accept the position of Chief Officer for both Fareham and Gosport Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Research and campaigns have been an essential twin aim and our work continued to make sure our client's voices were heard. We participated in several national campaigns on Twitter and Facebook whilst also targeting some practical support to those locally about key meters. We will continue this into the next year and hope to campaign about further issues by social media.

We could not however have achieved all that we have this year without of course our funders and most importantly, our staff and volunteers.

The commitment and dedication shown by everyone involved in achieving our aims and objectives to ensure that people received the advice they needed for the problems they faced; is truly remarkable and I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you for all the hard work and support the volunteers and staff have provided to our clients.

# Chair Report

## *Richard Mackay*

We are finding that clients have multiple and more complex problems which are taking longer to resolve. Often errors have been made or processes not followed on a timely and correct basis by the authorities and we have to help clients appeal against wrong decisions.

To meet this need, we have continued to recruit and train volunteers who not only give help to clients but gain personally from the skills they acquire resulting in a number gaining paid employment.

We are now able to offer the following services to local people:

- *A general advice service staffed by fully trained volunteers. We are very grateful for the time they devote to helping local people in need.*
- *A caseworker funded by Macmillan Cancer Support through Citizens Advice Hampshire who is dedicated to helping individuals and their families affected by cancer. Help is provided at hospitals, hospices, in people's homes and at other locations as well as at the bureau.*
- *A Money Advice Matters caseworker who assists clients at risk of homelessness and offers financial capability to such clients, funded by Gosport Borough Council.*
- *An Energy Best Deal caseworker, funded by grants obtained by Citizens Advice from energy suppliers, who informs domestic energy consumers with low incomes about how they could reduce their energy costs by changing tariff, payment method and / or supplier and taking up energy efficiency measures.*
- *A walk in Information, Advice and Signposting service under Healthwatch Hampshire, for non-clinical health and social care matters and support to clients who want to make a complaint about NHS funded services.*
- *Training and experience for young people and those who have not worked for some time to enable them to gain employment. The Lloyds TSB Foundation project ended its two year programme during the year and it has enabled 15 people to move into paid employment.*

# Our Core Service

## *How we've helped our clients*

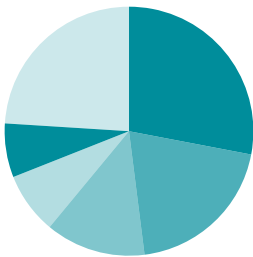
Gosport CAB has over 60 volunteers and 9 paid staff (including caseworkers) working hard to provide free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to the community.

Our open door 'drop in' service deals with a massive variety of issues ranging from debts and benefits to housing and employment. Our trained volunteer gateway assessors offer an initial

interview with clients to assess their needs and can provide fact sheets, leaflets and self help packs, or signpost them to other organisations.

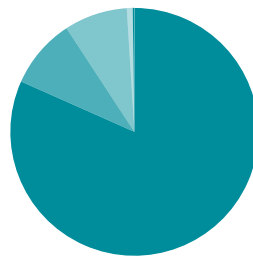
Clients may need to seek further advice and guidance from our volunteer advisors. They can also assist with writing letters, making phone calls and negotiating with third parties.

## Top Advice Enquiry Areas



- Benefits & Tax Credits 28%
- Debt 20%
- Housing 13%
- Relationships & Family 8%
- Employment 7%
- Other 24%

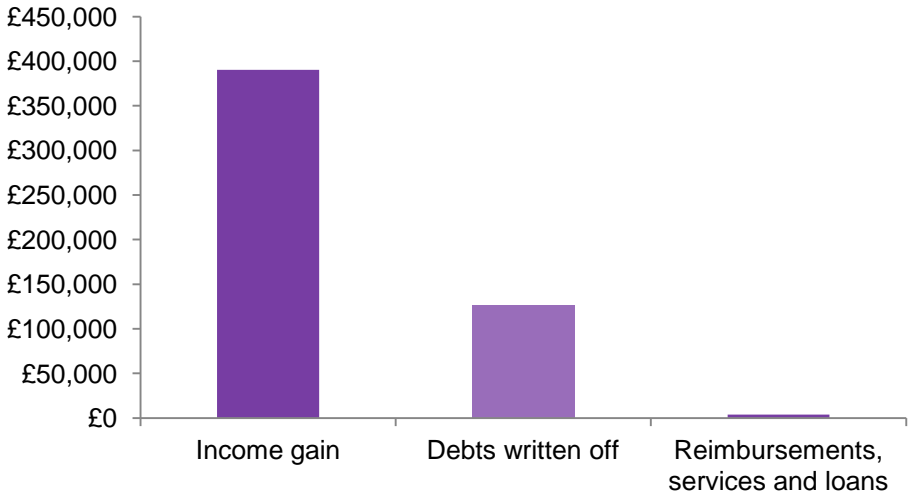
## Client Access



- Face to Face 82%
- Telephone 9%
- Adviceline 8%
- E-mail 1%
- Letter/Mail 0%
- Home Visit 0%

## Outcomes achieved by our Core Service

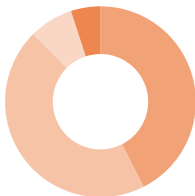
### Financial Outcomes



81% of clients asked had a problem that completely or significantly affected their lives. After seeing an advisor, this reduced to 51%. 92% of clients felt a lot or some more confident in dealing with their issue after seeing an advisor.

### Outcomes

Did the clients feel better equipped in dealing with future issues?



- A lot better 43%
- Slightly better 45%
- No better 8%
- NA 5%

Did the client's physical and mental wellbeing improve since seeking help from an advisor?



- A lot of improvement 38%
- Some improvement 38%
- No improvement 18%
- NA 8%

# Research & Campaigns

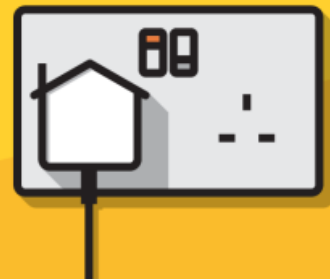
We are able to use clients' stories anonymously to campaign for policy change that could benefit the population as a whole. When an injustice occurs, it is recorded on our database of client evidence via a bureau evidence form and sent to the national policy team. They are then able to bring problem areas to the attention of those who are inadvertently causing them.

The link between the Gosport Borough Council housing benefit department and Gosport CAB that begun last year, has continued this year and we have been able to ward off some problems before they have become big issues such as delays in Housing Benefit decisions.

We have also been contacting local letting agents and reminding them of the new Code of Practice that they should be following regarding fees and deposits. We hope this will lead to both tenants and letting agents knowing exactly what their rights are. Visit [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/campaigns/current\\_campaigns/settled-and-safe-a-renters-right-campaign/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/campaigns/current_campaigns/settled-and-safe-a-renters-right-campaign/) for more information on the national campaign, Settled and Safe; A renter's right.

## #FAIRPREPAY

A campaign that we have collected evidence for is the Fair Play for Pre Pay. This concerned the issues & experiences clients had when using pre payment meters. Citizens Advice has had success already with this campaign & all 6 main energy suppliers are going to put their share of a £6million pay out into hardship funds which will help vulnerable energy customers.



## Number of Bureau Evidence Forms Created in Bureau



- Benefit & Tax Credits 39
- Housing 13
- Employment 10
- Debt 8
- Other 22



# Fundraising

## *Donations from the community*

Over the summer of 2014, Gosport CAB took part in a number of fetes and stalls to promote our service and raise some money. We also wrote to local business and organisations explaining the services we offer and asking for donations for Citizens Advice 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

Our donations in 2014/15 totalled to **£1,479.56**

We would like to say a big thank you to the following for their donations:

**Quay Lane Boat Yard**  
**Donnelly and Elliot**  
**Dimon Estate Agents**

**Gosport Ferry**  
**“Nit and Natter” (NANs)**  
**Alwarestoch Lodge**

## **Regular Givers**

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our regular supporters, especially **Mr Hill** whose donations of food really make a difference to our community.

We would also like to say a big thank you to the following for their “in-kind” help:

**Gosport Tescos**  
**Gosport Morrisons**  
**The Fruit Basket**  
**The Coop**  
**Orchard Creek Toys**

## **If you would like to donate...**

We are able to accept donations via cheque (written out to Gosport Citizens Advice Bureau), cash or by visiting our Virgin Money Just Giving page at:

<http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charities/GosportCitizensAdviceBureau>

# Projects

## *Gosport Advice & Information Network*

GAIN is a Big Lottery Funded Project which aims to improve the advice and information services received by Gosport residents. GAIN launched on Independence Day in July 2014 at the Explosion Museum - supported by both the Mayor and Gosport's MP Caroline Dineage.

During 2014-2015, the team worked hard to engage with local organisations who provide Information, Advice &/or Guidance (IAG). It has been great that many local organisations are now becoming GAIN partners by achieving the GAIN quality standard or GAIN supporters who promote GAIN to their service users.

In 2014, GAIN delivered two advice services surveys – the first was for young people at St Vincent College, followed by a local Advice & Information Services survey which was offered at 20 venues in Gosport. A comprehensive, independent Findings Report was subsequently produced and this has determined some of GAIN's priority actions during 2015.



Gosport Advice & Information Network



**LOTTERY FUNDED**



During 2014/15 the GAIN team expanded and recruited 20 volunteers into a variety of roles. It will continue to do so during 2015, as some GAIN volunteers successfully move into paid employment. By January 2015 GAIN's trained volunteer tutors began to deliver a series of free workshops across Gosport - 'Computers for Beginners' and 'Make your Money go Further'. Places on the GAIN workshops can be booked via the GAIN website or by contacting the GAIN office. GAIN engages with its local partners to help learners progress or by signposting to other local services once the learners have complete their workshops.

From January 2015 a sustained PR campaign via free magazines and local radio stations began to raise public awareness about GAIN, its free workshops and its helpful website. Local electronic weekly newspaper the Gosport Globe has been really supportive of GAIN running regular feature articles about GAIN and its partners.

GAIN's funding was due to finish in September 2015 but the project has been extended to December 2015 - by which time new funding bids will have been submitted in the hope of sustaining some of GAIN's key activities and potentially extending these to Fareham in 2016. GAIN's progress to date has been positively/proactively supported by the Big Lottery Fund.



**For more information:**

**Email [gain@gain-gosport.org.uk](mailto:gain@gain-gosport.org.uk)**

**Telephone: 02392 588035**

**Website: [www.gain-gosport.org.uk](http://www.gain-gosport.org.uk)**

The Service provides an advice service on non-medical matters for people with cancer, their families and carers. Working with other bureaux we are able to provide specialist caseworkers to advise clients who can contact us five days a week by phone or we can meet them in hospitals, hospices and other locations or where necessary visit them at home. We also receive many referrals from medical and caring staff.

In 2014/15 the Gosport caseworker helped 255 clients and obtained £646,508\* in financial benefits for them as well as helping with many other problems. In addition to helping with material needs our advice often helped to reduce stress thus improving health.

As well as helping individual clients we campaign to change policies that are unfair to clients or where poor administration causes suffering. In the past 12 months poor administration following changes in Personal Independence Payments (PIP) has been a major focus.

The main issue was that some claimants were waiting a year to get their claim decided. As a result of our intervention processing times for PIP have reduced from 8 – 12 months to 4 – 6 months. However this it is still far too long for people to wait when they are suffering the effects of cancer and urgently need the money to which they are entitled.

Brian was referred to the Citizens Advice Service after finding out he had terminal lung cancer. He was homeless, sleeping on friends' sofas & was in a bad way mentally.

Our caseworker helped Brian claim Employment Support Allowance, PIP & a Macmillan grant & apply for social housing. Due to his vulnerability within 3 weeks he had moved into a 1 bedroom flat provided by the local council & received all relevant benefits including Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction.

Brian then started palliative chemotherapy treatment & found the effects easier to cope with knowing that he had an income & a home of his own. His stress had been lifted & was feeling positive about his treatment. He was very pleased and grateful that he had been supported by us.

\*Macmillan financial year July 14 – July 15

As the local consumer champion for Gosport, we provide Gosport citizens with a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within the locality.

Over the last year, the number of clients who have visited the bureau with a health and social enquiry has increased significantly. With a stronger presence on social media as well as promotion at a number of community events, clients are becoming more aware that we are the first port of call.

We are able to assist clients with complaints, give information on care costs and signpost clients to the services they need. However, if we are unable to help the client with their complaint, we can refer clients to the Citizens Advice run NHS Advocacy service if their needs are complex or client is too vulnerable to help themselves.

More information on Healthwatch can be found at:

**[www.healthwatchhampshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhampshire.co.uk)**

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During 2013/14, Gosport CAB saw 169 clients with Health & Social Care issues. 31% of enquiries related to Residential and Community Care (including mental health) whilst 16% related to NHS costs and charges.

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## Fast Track

The Fast Track service was a homelessness prevention project funded by Gosport Borough Council, to support local clients who are in danger of losing their homes. In 2014-15, the project helped 179 clients with 1,013 issues.

Leanne\* had rent and council tax arrears as well as other non priority debts. She was finding it difficult to cope due to her learning difficulties and other mental health problems as well as her daughter's severe anxiety. The only income Leanne had was £64 to support herself and her daughter.

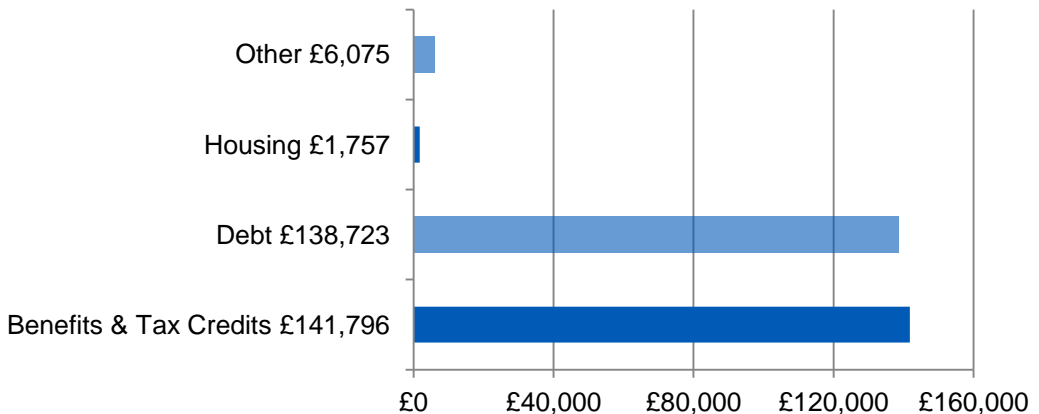
By working with their support worker, the client was eventually awarded ESA £93.26 a week and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) £76 a week. She also received a back payment of ESA and PIP totalling £3,851.98. With the back payments, her rent and council tax arrears were paid off reducing the risk of homelessness.

Our caseworker also worked tirelessly in making sure Leanne's Housing Benefit was calculated correctly to prevent any unnecessary overpayment. After a year she had full housing benefit reinstated and £490 paid in back payment. The majority of Leanne's other debts were then either paid off or affordable repayments set up by our caseworker.

The outcome resulted in Leanne's mental health improving and stress levels reduced. Leanne is now attending workshops to improve her reading and budgeting skills and works closely with Wheatsheaf and MIND to help her daughter too.

\*Name of client has been changed

## Outcomes



## Energy Project

Since 2008, Citizens Advice and energy regulator Ofgem have been involved in the Energy Best Deal (EBD) campaign. We have been providing advice on how to ensure consumers are not paying more than they need to for their energy and highlighting where consumers can get help if they are struggling to pay their bills.

### Energy Best Deal (EBD)

Between Sept 14 and April 15, Gosport CAB delivered 4 presentations to groups who could be at risk of fuel poverty such as The Macular Society and Partners in Pain. How to Switch and Getting Help with Energy Bills were the main topics covered as well as Being Energy Efficient.



### Energy Best Deal Extra (EBDx)

The funding during this period also allowed a qualified advisor to have face to face appointments with clients. Our advisor helped with matters relating to switching energy tariffs online, checking for grants to help for thermal efficiency and identifying and claiming benefits.

### Hitting the Cold Spots (HTCS)

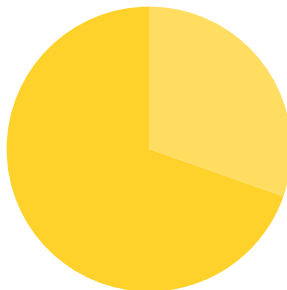
The HTCS fund was managed by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Community Foundation. Its aim was to ensure local people in the community did not struggle with the cost of winter and could survive the cold months with a reasonable level of comfort and dignity.

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In total we helped 7 clients from the HTCS fund totalling in £400 being given to those in need or without means to heat their home.

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### Income Gain



■ Income gain £1,685

■ Debts written off £3,859

## *Haslar*

After over 20 years as a secure Immigration Centre, Haslar closed suddenly and with little notice to either paid staff or volunteers early in 2015. The staff and volunteers have been told that Haslar is to be turned (back) into a prison. At the same time, the Verne at Portland is to be turned from a prison into an Immigration Centre.

If Gosport was difficult for visitors to reach, the Verne will be nearly impossible. I believe there is one bus from Weymouth in winter and as many as two in the summer. The Verne has already been criticised for being a harsh regime so the omens are not good.

I personally worked for the CAB at Haslar since 2003, visiting detainees between 10-12am twice a month, and I was a visitor before that, so the closure will leave a gap in my life. I very much enjoyed working at Haslar and meeting people from far-flung parts of the world. Meanwhile the Home Office continues slowly on its own sweet way. For example, I read that it now considers that Eritrea is a safe country to which to return nationals even though there has been no regime changes for the better, it being referred to as the African equivalent of North Korea and being listed as unsafe by the UN.

I was always pleased when I was able to give the detainees some real help. This could involve contacting their solicitor (if they had one), drafting letters or explaining about bail and sureties. Sometimes, simply listening to and believing their story was sufficient. The hardest thing was trying to explain the reasons for the Home Office's decisions, or more likely, for its lack of action.

### *Paula Heald*

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During 2014/15, 49 clients were seen and assisted with 164 issues. Paula raised many individual issues to the local MP over the years to ask for support.

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# Stand up for Equality

If not us, who? If not now, when?

The overall aim of the Stand up for Equality strategy is for the Citizens Advice service to live our principles and challenge discrimination, promote equality and value diversity.

To deliver this aim we need to achieve change on two levels – in society and in our service. We have focused on 3 target areas of change, with progress in each helping to generate further change.

The target areas are:

## **One: Challenge discrimination through advice by:**

- Identifying discrimination and human rights issues.
- Providing the equality advice people need.
- Empowering clients to act.

## **Two: Promote equality through advocacy by:**

- Telling our diverse clients' stories.
- Ensuring those in authority do their job.
- Leading on and influencing key policy on equality.

## **Three: Value diversity through our roles of employer, volunteer agency and contractor by:**

- Providing visible and committed leadership.
- Developing a strategic approach to diversity management.
- Implementing equality competences.



# Value of Volunteering



## *Our volunteers*

Our volunteers are becoming more and more vital in delivering a much needed advice service to the local community. In 2014/15 we recruited over 20 new volunteers to our team.

We currently have 61\* volunteers at Gosport CAB not only giving advice but providing other vital roles such as IT, Research & Campaigns and admin. Without the team of

volunteers, we would not be able to provide the much needed service.

Of the 61 volunteers we have, 13 work as well as volunteer for us. 6 are currently in education and 2 are unemployed looking for work. The remaining are retired or unable to work due to other reasons such as illness or disability.

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Last year, our team of volunteers gave Gosport CAB over 500 hours of their time a week. This equated 13 full time employees with an annual worth of over £414,000. We had 7 paid staff offering support to these volunteers with their hours mirroring that of just 5 full time staff.

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## *Ashley*

I have been a volunteer Advisor at Gosport CAB since early 2012. Being a wheelchair user has not prevented me from fully engaging with the activities of the bureau; playing an active role in delivering the service we provide; nor pursuing the training opportunities available.

The staff and volunteers are always happy to assist me when needed and some specialist equipment has been provided to make things more accessible and user friendly.

When I moved to Gosport in 2011, I knew no one locally. Becoming a volunteer at CAB has been a great way to make new friends and get involved in the community in an extremely useful and rewarding way.

\*As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015

## Recruitment

We have been advertising for new volunteers in a number of ways this year. We had a sign up in the Gosport Ferry pontoon as well as a new vinyl sign hung outside the bureau. We have also attended a number of events to promote our services and recruit volunteers.

Volunteers can express an interest in helping at Gosport CAB online via our website, Do-It website or email and can also drop in or call the bureau. We ask all potential volunteers to attend an informal meet and greet and if they are still interested, an Open Day, where details of the roles we offer and training included is discussed.



### Siobhan

I am doing an NVQ level 2 in business administration and needed a placement, so I thought that I would ask the Gosport Citizens Advice Bureau if I could volunteer there for it.

I chose the CAB as they have been a great help to me in the past with various different issues and this was in a way, my way of giving something back to say thank you.

Since volunteering with the CAB I have been offered lots of extra training in many things and I always know that there is help at hand if and when I need it.

[www.gosportcab.org.uk](http://www.gosportcab.org.uk)

<https://do-it.org/organisations/gosport-citizens-advice-bureau>

# The Year Ahead...

## *What's next for Gosport CAB*

### **Restructure**

In order to make best use of resources and enable yet more focus on development of the Charity, we have restructured the management of Gosport CAB and now share a Chief Officer with Fareham CAB.

After a competitive recruitment process Anita Muff, previously the manager of Gosport CAB, was appointed Joint Chief Officer for the 2 bureaux.

### **Rebranding**

Citizens Advice is currently rolling out its new brand and both Gosport and Fareham have decided to be early adopters. Citizens Advice has created a new brand to reflect our values and to ensure we are being straightforward, friendly and positive. The new logo is already in use as well as new posters and stationary. The admin team will also be attending a workshop in late August to offer their experiences so far and learn more about the new brand.

### **Webchat**

Towards the end of 2014-15 in conjunction with other bureau and supported by a grant from Citizens Advice, we implemented email and web chat advice. This will enable those who might not traditionally be able to access face to face services, because of other commitments or due to disabilities, receive the support they need, at a time suited to them.

### **Adviceline**

Hampshire Adviceline is staffed by 21 bureaux as a consortia. Recently we have welcomed Fareham bureau to the team which will help more Hampshire clients.

[citizensadvice.org.uk](http://citizensadvice.org.uk)

The Citizens Advice website has been rebranded to be more user friendly and allow access to webchat.

## Future projects

### Money Advice Matters

Gosport Borough Council (GBC) has continued to recognise the value of the service we provide and have maintained our core grant for the current year. By working with GBC we have also changed the focus of the specialised housing casework they funded under Fast Track. It is now focused on giving money advice to tenants at risk of homelessness at an earlier stage to avoid them falling into financial difficulty and preventing homelessness under the Money Advice Matters project.

### Energy Best Deal Extra

We have managed to gain funding from Ofgem to enable an Energy Best Deal Extra caseworker to continue seeing clients on a low income and at risk of being energy poor until October 2015.



### Pensionwise

As part of the national Pension Wise service funded via Citizens Advice we support the giving of face to face

guidance on pensions to people approaching retirement who have defined contribution funds. It is the starting point in helping people take control of their finances for retirement and enabling people to understand their options so they can make an informed choice.



### Advice for the Future

As part of the national campaign, Gosport CAB is continuing to support Advice for the Future. We want free advice to continue as it

matter to the people we help and to society. To sign the pledge, please visit [https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/campaigns/current\\_campaigns/recent-campaigns/advice-for-the-future/advice-for-the-future-pledge/](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/campaigns/current_campaigns/recent-campaigns/advice-for-the-future/advice-for-the-future-pledge/)



# Contact Us

Gosport Citizens Advice Bureau

Martin Snape House

96 Pavilion Way

Gosport

Hampshire

PO12 1GE



**GOSPORT**  
Borough Council

**Telephone (admin only):** 02392 520112

**Adviceline:** 03444 111306

**Email:** [admin@gosportcab.cabnet.org.uk](mailto:admin@gosportcab.cabnet.org.uk)

[www.gosportcab.org.uk](http://www.gosportcab.org.uk)

[www.citizensadvice.rg.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.rg.uk)

[www.gain-gosport.org.uk](http://www.gain-gosport.org.uk)



Gosport Advice & Information Network



LOTTERY FUNDED



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[twitter.com/GosportCAB](https://twitter.com/GosportCAB)

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