

GOSPORT CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU ANNUAL REPORT 2011



- Five day opening
- Wednesday evening session
- Enhanced telephone service

- Daily drop-in service
- Assessment interviews
- Practical help and advice

We provide the advice people need for the problems they face

Gosport CAB is a registered charity number: 1116994

A donation to Citizens' Advice is an investment in your community

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

MISSION STATEMENT

Gosport CAB is working towards alleviating poverty, injustice, deprivation, and inequality, which exists within the local community. This is achieved through an effective, accessible, and high quality service.

Gosport CAB is committed to creating an environment that offers equality of opportunity, and access to all its clients, staff, and volunteers

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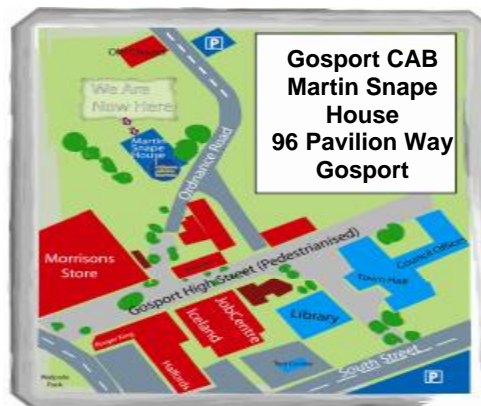
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HOW TO FIND US

The bureau is situated right in the centre of the town, with access from the eastern end of Wm Morrison's car park.

Outreach services are provided by

Hampshire Macmillan Citizens' Advice Service at Queen Alexandra Hospital, Cosham, Gosport War Memorial Hospital, and the Haslar Removal Centre.



REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2010 –2011

Gosport CAB operates in an uniquely challenging environment, made increasingly parlous by the current national economic climate of austerity.

The town has a number of areas ranked in the top 20 per cent most deprived in England.

Income, health, and educational inequalities contribute to the social exclusion experienced by many households. It is against this backdrop that the bureau has sought to maintain the improvements in the service delivery and client experience put in place the previous year.

The trustees have, together with the paid staff and volunteers, developed a demanding business plan designed to maintain the momentum towards greater access for clients who have previously found it difficult to use the bureau's services.

The bureau is rated by Citizen's Advice auditors as being in the top ten per cent for quality and consistency of advice. Its specialist housing and debt advice is one of its top success stories. Client satisfaction surveys give the bureau scores in excess of 95 per cent, confirming a resounding vote of confidence by Gosport residents in the value they place on the bureau's services.



Although Government short-term funding for the access initiative finally ran out in the spring of 2011, the bureau has maintained its drop in service on four mornings a week, with the afternoons reserved for in depth interviews by appointment. Wednesdays are devoted to specialist interviews, and an evening drop in session has been introduced to help facilitate access for clients in full time employment.

Despite a savage cut in funding by central Government, Gosport Borough Council was able to hold the bureau's annual 2011 grant at the level of the previous year. The bureau was therefore able to maintain the level of operational capability without restricting client access

The bureau was successful in obtaining a grant from Hampshire County Council to reduce client waiting times by adding an additional interview room, thus helping to reduce bottlenecks cause by lack of confidential interview facilities. The reception area was also refurbished to enhance the client experience by providing additional seating, and more space for receptionist staff.

The bureau has benefited from its partnership with Macmillan Cancer support. The trained cancer advice worker offers advice sessions from the bureau, the Gosport War Memorial and Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth. These have been particularly well-received, and meet the need to deal with the abnormally high cancer deaths in the local community due to structural deprivation.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Gosport CAB provides free, confidential, and impartial advice and help to those in need independent of any other organisation or agency.

The bureau offers a comprehensive advice and representation service which means you can ask us any question about your situation or concerns and we will do our best to offer you quality advice and the support you need.

If we can't help you we will find someone who can.

The bureau also employs a range of specialists who are professionals in in specific areas of financial or welfare law.

Should you need their support, we will refer you to the appropriate person once you have been seen by our general advice service.

.The general advice service is staffed by a team of professionally trained advisers, who work without payment. They regularly attend internal and regional training to ensure they are up to date with any changes in the law that could affect you.

All advisers use the information and technical resources we have in the bureau so that the advice you are given is accurate, relevant, and tailored to your needs. The bureau provides a range of services to make sure you can get advice promptly and conveniently.

Gateway diagnostic sessions are designed to allow everyone to be seen promptly, without excessive waiting. Evening sessions are available for the convenience of clients who are unable to get into the bureau during working hours.

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If we can't help you we will find someone who can



Back Office:

Staff Research a client's problem

MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT

**Bureau Manager—Paul Simmonds (Part Time)
Part Time Advice Service & Office Managers—Lilah Lidgate and
Anita Muff**



Paul Simmonds



Lilah Lidgate



Anita Muff

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The Bureau management team thank Gosport Borough Council for their continued financial support. Their backing is essential to enable Gosport Citizens Advice Bureau to provide our professional high quality advice and assistance service to the community.

This past financial year has been another period of challenge and reward. Our Saturday opening sessions unfortunately, had to end when the additional central funding from Government, administered by the national Citizens' Advice service ran out of money.

However we have been able to open on a Wednesday evening from 4.30 to 7 pm as well as maintain our dedicated telephone advice service on that day from 10-2pm.

This extra drop in session and our enhanced telephone service have been very popular. It benefits people in full time employment by allowing them vital access to our services out of normal working hours. It also helps those who may not be able to travel to the Bureau for one reason or another by giving them the opportunity to receive our help in their own home.

The refurbishment during last winter of the reception area has created an open and more welcoming space for client's to wait and for receptionists to work.

In the waiting area we have been able to provide a kiosk which gives clients the opportunity to browse through the CAB's advice website 'www.adviceguide.org.uk' to find information for themselves, thus helping to reduce waiting times. In addition there is a separate quiet space for distressed clients who may require some privacy.

We are sincerely grateful to Hampshire County Council who provided the funding for this project.

Our volunteers continue to be the rock on which the bureau rests. Without their commitment and hard work Gosport CAB would not exist. We thank them all for their continued support and determination to deliver a first class service to the Gosport residents.

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TOP QUALITY ADVICE

Gosport Citizens' Advice Bureau is in the top 15 percent of national bureaux for quality of advice.

The bureau is audited every three years by officials from the national organisation, and has been awarded three outright passes in a row.

Advice session supervisors check that the help and advice given to clients is appropriate, timely, and accurate. They also screen it for social policy issues that may have to be brought to the notice of local or central government.

Clients coming to the bureau for advice, can be assured the advice they are given is right up to date. The bureau's information system is updated centrally, and all advisers receive ongoing training to keep them up to date with changes in the law.

CASEWORK

Hampshire Macmillan Citizens' Advice Service

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It has been an extremely busy year for the Hampshire Macmillan Citizens Advice Service. We are now an established and well known service with most hospital oncology departments and medical centres in Hampshire aware of the fantastic service we provide to all those affected by cancer. Many Hampshire patients who contact the main Macmillan telephone helpline are referred to our service; the Macmillan partnership with Boots this year also generates a lot of enquiries for our service.



**Jude Randall
Macmillan Case-
worker**

In our local area I have encountered over 2% increase in clients needing ongoing support to deal with debts. Clients who last year were able to cope with the additional costs of suffering cancer are this year seeking to maximise their income through benefit claims. More than £310,000 have been awarded to clients over the year through benefits, and the total financial outcomes for clients exceeded £556,000.

The team continues to work closely together, not by working from the same office but by making use of electronic and telephonic communications to optimise a professional support service. Our telephone advice line is very busy with clients being directed to the CAB Adviceguide website for information and guidance before a face to face appointment if necessary, depending on the client's issues and needs.

In our local area, I have strong ties with self funding support groups who are happy that our service is there to back up any help they offer clients or to support in ways they may not be able to. My ongoing outreaches at Queen Alexandra Hospital and War Memorial Hospital are now firmly established and welcomed support opportunities. Patients really appreciate the availability of "drop-in" appointments at the hospitals.

Most of my clients are adults but this past year I have supported some younger people, the story of one I would like to share with you:...

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Case Study

Samuel was referred to me after radical surgery to his thyroid and lymph glands to remove cancer. I offered support and guidance to help him come to terms with the extensive scarring to his neck and chest, and the extreme fatigue and muscle weakness; these symptoms he found very difficult to come to terms with as a normally fit and energetic 17 year old. Samuel talked about his music studies; he plays piano and violin and also composes classical style pieces. Due to the operation he had problems playing his violin and admitted that the neck piece was broken but he had no chance to repair or replace it. I applied for a Macmillan grant and to his great delight he was awarded £450 to purchase a really good quality violin. I also successfully applied for charitable support to fund Samuels travel to and from college this year as he is, as yet, unable to manage the effort of his usual bicycle ride to college

Homelessness and Debt

The bureau has a proud record of tackling homelessness in Gosport.

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I was very pleased that Gosport Borough Council agreed to renew my contract this year as local authorities have had to absorb large cuts in funding and it was gratifying to feel that “I’m worth it”!

The government mortgage rescue scheme has been reduced but is still running and we are still saving family homes who would otherwise lose their homes to mortgage repossession. However I still get to save homes where rescue is not the appropriate option the old fashioned way.



Jane Beer
Housing & Money
Advice Specialist

Case Study

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Mrs Hind approached Gosport council as the Halifax had issued possession proceedings. Her husband had just left her and their young daughter and she discovered that he had not made any payment to the mortgage for nine months. She also discovered he had not been paying their council tax or water rates. She works in a low paid job and had minimal income. Her husband had dealt with all the bills and she had no idea how to deal with financial matters. She had tried to contact tax credits to let them know that her husband had left and to ask them to reassess her award. She failed her own security check and they refused to talk to her.

I was able to talk to our dedicated contacts at tax credits and arranged for her to go to Portsmouth on the morning of the hearing so she could confirm her identity and claim tax credits in her own right. I negotiated with her water companies who were very understanding. I helped her to make an application for council tax benefit and approached the Railway Benefit fund which paid the council tax arrears for her.

At court the Halifax asked for outright possession but the District Judge agreed with us and suspended the possession order on terms of mortgage plus £20 per month to repay the mortgage arrears over the remaining life of the loan. Finally we negotiated payments of £1.00 a month with her small number of unsecured creditors. When she received her backdated tax credits she was able to afford to carry out urgent repairs to her roof. She was delighted with the outcome and is confident that she will be able to manage her affairs in the future.

Haslar Immigration Removal Centre

- The bureau advises people locked up without trial under the provisions of the 1971 Immigration Act.

Case Study

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Richard escaped to the UK from Uganda with a 6 month visitor's visa. After 3 weeks in the UK, he went to Home Office Croydon and claimed asylum.

Richard was interviewed and detained. After 1 month he was released and provided with accommodation in North End. He was required to sign on every week at Southsea police station.

He confirmed that he walked every week from North End to Southsea and back without fail, even in severe winter weather. [Any failure to sign would be regarded as absconding.] Richard's asylum claim and appeal were refused.

He was detained at Haslar in June. In August he was given an imminent removal date. Richard recounted how he had been imprisoned, beaten and tortured in Uganda. He was certain that if he returned there he would be killed. Haslar's Dr and 3 others [including a psychiatrist] confirmed he had been tortured. If this was true, his detention was illegal.

Richard's Church family in Portsmouth and Haslar Visitors' Group were witnesses to his good character and supported his application to stay in the UK. His solicitor was working to stop the removal and his MP had become involved. Richard started a hunger strike as he decided he would rather die in the UK than return to be killed in Uganda. Richard's case was highlighted on the local 10 o'clock news. On the next visit to Haslar I enquired what had happened. All that was known was that he had been taken to Colnbrook Detention Centre [near Heathrow]. No-one knew if he actually had been removed or if his supporters had succeeded in stopping this, at least temporarily. A distressing case.

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**Paula Heald
Immigration
Adviser**

SOCIAL POLICY

The Bureau remains committed to campaigning for changes that will improve the lives of everyone in society.

Whilst we try to help people day by day to deal with the problems that life throws at them, we also try to identify trends that are affecting more than just individual clients. By sending evidence of these cases to our central office we hope that Citizens Advice can use them to add to evidence from all the other Bureaux in the country to persuade the Government and other agencies to change unfair and unjust policies and practices.

This year, like most years, the majority of our electronic Bureau Evidence Forms we have submitted have been related to problems with benefits and debt. The advisers continue to be very keen to identify social policy issues when they arise and we all hope that the work we do will improve the lot of our clients in these difficult times.



**Judy Huppler
Social Policy
Co-ordinator**

WORKING WITH OUR MP

Sometimes a problem is revealed because of something that the Government is doing, or even not doing to protect the citizen.



Caroline Dinenage

The bureau works closely with Gosport's Member of Parliament, Caroline Dinenage where it becomes obvious that Parliament should be alerted to injustice or malpractice. Caroline may also refer people to the bureau where she believes it more appropriate to seek our help and advice.

If we believe central or local government is doing something that has caused your problem, or has made it worse, we will take action. In that case we will either:

- Find out more about the problem, check whether it affects other people and write an evidence report to alert the Government.
- Write a report to the national Citizens 'Advice organisation to tell the Government about it .
- Write to Borough Council officers and ask them to change their practice.
- Explain to you how best to complain
- Put you in touch with the MP, or a local newspaper

If you reveal a social policy problem to us, we will NEVER provide your name, contact details, or any other information that would make it possible to trace you without your express permission.

RECEPTION REFURBISHMENT

It's almost six years since the bureau located from its cramped location behind the town hall, to its new home at Martin Snape House. Because of all the coming and goings during that time the reception area was showing its age.

Thanks to a grant from Hampshire County Council facilitated by our President the Mayor of Gosport, Councilor Chris Carter, the bureau was not only able to give the reception a bright new makeover, but add another interview room.



Pictured with CAB President & Mayor of Gosport Councilor Chris Carter (R) at the formal opening ceremony is Paul Simmonds (back) the bureau manager, and Richard Thomson, chair of trustees.

Why Not Become A Volunteer?

Volunteering to join the team at Gosport CAB can be a challenging and rewarding experience. Every year people living in Gosport approach us looking for volunteering opportunities. For many people the best thing about volunteering for the CAB is getting to meet a wide range of people. Whether you want to volunteer as an adviser, receptionist, admin worker, or become a trustee, there is a real team spirit at Gosport CAB and we provide a supportive environment to make sure you get the most out of your time with us.

Gosport CAB is constantly on the look out for a wide range of volunteers from all backgrounds and disciplines. By volunteering you have a chance to make a real difference in our community.

For volunteer advisers, the bureau runs training programmes, where new recruits learn the ropes and receive professional tuition and support to enable them to become general advisers. There is scope to specialise in specific areas of welfare law, or to progress to session supervision.

By volunteering for the CAB you'll be putting your spare time to good use, enhancing your life skills, and improving many people's lives.

**If you would like to find out more about
volunteering, please contact Lilah Lidgate on
023 9252 0112**

- "I wish I'd volunteered 30 years ago! I've learned new skills, including computing. Volunteering with the CAB gets you involved with the real world."
- "I get a real feeling of satisfaction from making difference, especially for people less able to stand up for themselves".
- "It's great being able to help people in so many different ways, being able to learn and appreciate what they are experiencing, and there's a real co-operative spirit in the bureau."

"The best thing I ever did. It keeps me active and people appreciate what I can do for them"

Volunteer Receptionists

Our receptionists perform a key bureau role. Not only do they meet and greet clients and put them at their ease, they also act as a first point of call for client enquiries.



**KEY FIGURES AT A GLANCE
FULL YEAR 2010-11
GOSPORT**



Number of clients interviewed:	3,732
Issues raised:	11, 220
Client satisfaction >	95 %
Volunteer hours:	6,023.5
Volunteer value to Gosport CAB: (excluding trustees)	£281,499
Completed mortgage rescues:	43
Value per Mortgage Rescue: (NAO statistics)	£93,000
Total Value of Mortgage Rescues:	£1.6 M

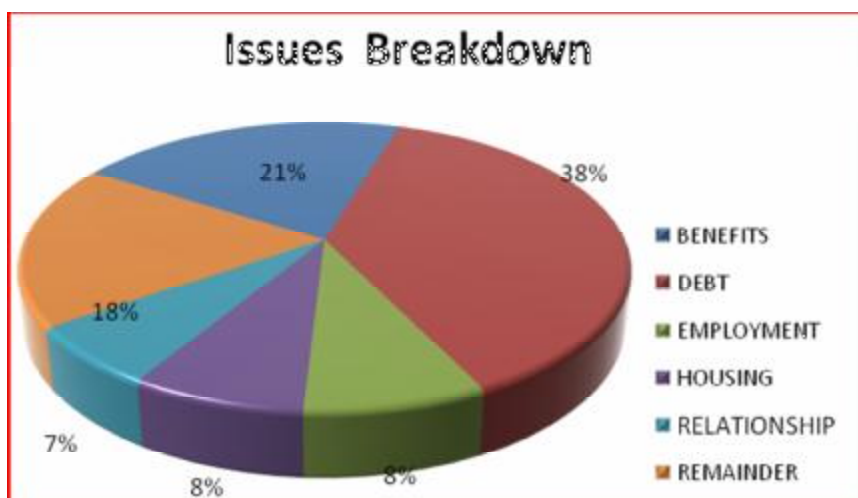


FACTS AND FIGURES

In order to ensure our services provide the sort of support that our clients require, we carefully monitor data on social trends in the Gosport area to look for trends that we may have to respond to.

Gosport Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) serves approximately 80,000 citizens of Gosport Borough (although of course the service is available to anyone, no matter where they live), one of the 2 most deprived areas in Hampshire (the other is Havant). The unemployment rate in Gosport is currently 7.0%, (6.6% a year ago) the average for the South East is 6.0% (6.3% a year ago). These bare statistics point to a slightly worsening picture for Gosport compared to last year in contrast to the slight improvement in the rest of the South East. But Gosport's headline unemployment rate belies the true story of how difficult it is to find work. There are nearly twice as many Job Seeker Allowance claimants for each vacancy in Gosport (6.5) compared to the rest of the South East (3.8). Whilst in these difficult times it is not unusual to find clients in work who have money problems, workless clients often present the most difficult cases. The breakdown of issues presented to the CAB advisers is shown in the following pie chart:-

Figure 1 – Breakdown of Issues



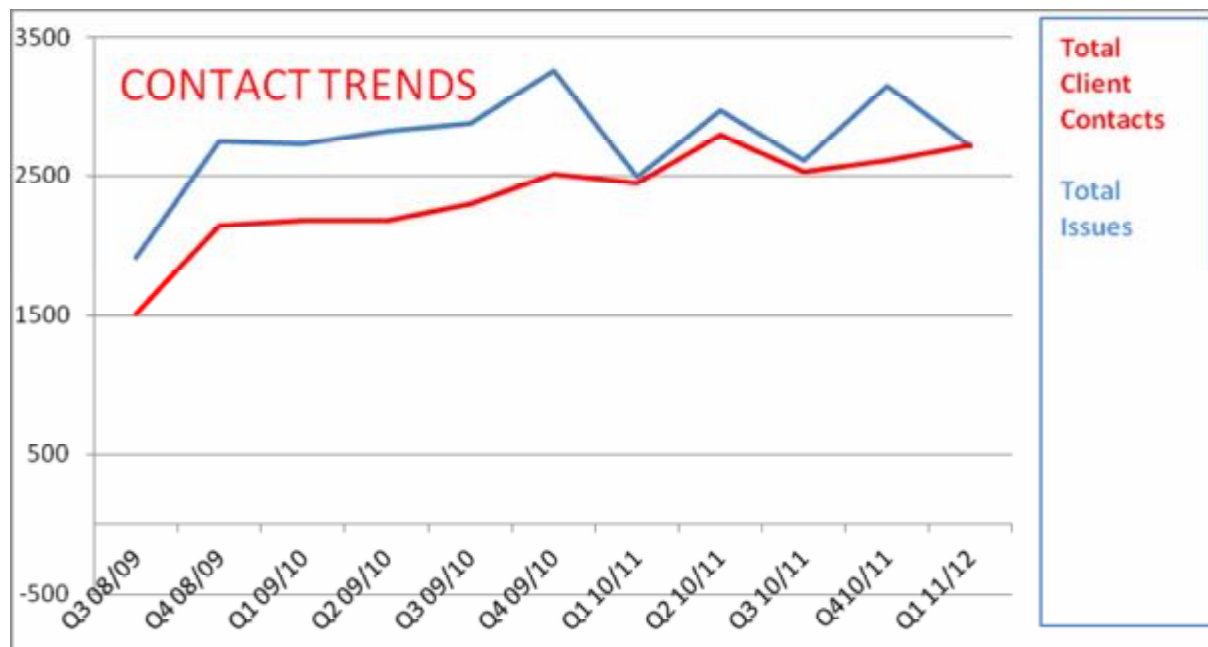
Debt and **Benefits** issues (at 38% and 21% of total issues respectively) dominate the work of the Bureau, as they did a year ago (when they were 39% and 19% respectively). Whether in work or not, those affected by money problems have a range of challenges to contend with; indebtedness, lack of funds, mortgage and rental problems often leading to the threat of eviction, stress induced poor health, relationship breakdown and even alcohol and substance misuse problems.

BUREAU WORKLOAD

The increased work load of the bureau over the last few years (since December 2008) is clearly shown in the graph below where total client contacts (the red line) has risen steadily over the period.

All statistics quoted are taken from Nomis official labour market statistics. Percentages quoted are for those aged 16-64.

Figure 2 – Contact Trends



BUREAU PERFORMANCE

The Bureau has, of course, responded to this increased demand. In particular we have improved the waiting room facilities, added a fifth interview room to enable us to see more clients and we continue to develop the Gateway service enabling us to provide rapid support where it is appropriate.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Our services are financed mainly by Gosport Borough Council and we are committed to ensuring that we provide value for money as local authority funding is under unprecedented pressure. By using our resources more effectively the cost per issue for 2011 is £7.89 reduced from £8.35 at the end of last year, an improvement of approximately 5.5%, brought about by servicing an increased number of issues with largely unchanged resources.

Total Client Contacts are now measured more accurately by adding Initial, Repeat and Returning Contacts

Hampshire Macmillan Advice Service Statistics

The Hampshire Macmillan advice service monitors the service delivery from participating bureaux county wide. Separate statistics are recorded for the service by bureau caseworkers, and give an objective overview of the help and support provided by the charity to a particularly vulnerable segment of the community. The Gosport Macmillan advice service has a particularly good outcome profile and the statistics are a testimony to the hard work and dedication of the bureau case worker.

GOVERNANCE

The bureau is a charity overseen by a board of trustees. Trustees come from all walks of life, and are volunteers who give their time to ensure the bureau has sufficient money to carry out its work, and has the people and day to day resources to function adequately.

Charities are a small business, and the trustees also bring their business skills and experience to set the bureau's strategy and vision over the short and medium term.

Being a bureau trustee can be a stimulating and rewarding challenge, providing an opportunity to put individual experience and practical knowledge gained from many walks of life into practice.

The bureau is anxious that the trustee board represents a good cross section of people from the local community. Volunteers are particularly welcome from young people, and the ethnic minorities.

Whatever your background or age, if you would like to consider becoming a trustee of the Gosport bureau, please contact Mr. Richard Thomson, chair of trustees, for an informal discussion about the role and what experience and skills you can bring to the board.

GOSPORT CAB TRUSTEE BOARD

Richard Thomson BSc (econ) - Chair

Richard Mackay—Treasurer
Margaret Wilkinson
Maureen Hine
Chris Munns MBA
Stuart Wells
Richard Poupart
Jacquilyn Pick
Peter Ford

Ex Officio (Non voting)

The Mayor of Gosport (President)
Stella Byrne - Gosport Borough Council

Bureau Representatives (Non voting)

Paul Simmonds
Lilah Lidgate
Anita Muff
Enid Billington

Accountants

Wood Hicks & Co.

Our Staff

Manager: Paul Simmonds

Advice Service & Office Managers: Lilah Lidgate, Anita Muff

Fast Track Money Adviser: Jane Beer

Hampshire CAB Macmillan Worker: Judith Randall

Guidance Tutors:

Marian Asher and Carrie Elgie

Social Policy Co-ordinator: Judy Huppler

Advice Session Supervisors:

Valerie Bidewell, John Pitts, Marian Asher, Pamela McCullen, Lilah Lidgate, Anita Muff .

Volunteer Administration:

Valerie Hammond, Roshan Taylor and Elaine Goodwin*

Receptionists:

Jean Huppler, Marion Lance, John Bagley*, Lesley Lygoe, Elaine Kear, Chrissie Elliott Sarah Newall, and Vicky Goodsell

Paid Clerical worker:

Susan Wilsun

Volunteer Advisers

Jan Almond, Emma Anderton, Marian Asher, Marion Aspland, Ian Backhouse, Tracy Barker-Munn,* Tricia Barrett (tr), Valerie Bidewell, Karen Billingham (tr)*, Enid Billington, Linda Boddy, Cindy Bonney*, Sue Buchan, Gary Cooper, Jim Cummins, Tiare Elgie (tr), Tracy Etiemble (tr)*, Chris Entwistle (tr), Valerie Ford,* Sandra Grant, Margaret Hay, Paula Heald, Amanda Huckins (tr)*, Judy Huppler, Gareth Lidgate (tr), Eddie Luigi*, Julieann Nicholl (tr), Gavin Kearn, Pamela McCullen, Paul Marsh (tr), Kate Munns, John Pitts, Judith Randall, Bill Reid (tr)*, Rob Roberts (tr)*, Sid Roser (tr)*, Wendy Scott, June Searle*(tr), Hannah Shrives (tr)*, Sarah Shrives (tr)*, Sue Simister (tr), Jacquie Smart (tr), Debbie South*, Rachel Stone, Malcolm Swire, Roshan Taylor (tr) *Code: * left 2009/10 (tr) Trainee*



Staff assemble for a regular meeting

HOW TO CONTACT US

Martin Snape House
 96 Pavillion Way
 St George's Barracks, Gosport
 Tel: Advice: 08444 772232
 Tel: 023 9252 0112 (Appointments)
 Fax: 023 92 604 600
 Email: gosportcab@lineone.net

Monday	9:30 am to 5 pm
Tuesday	9:30 am to 7 pm
Wednesday	9:30 am to 7 pm
Thursday	9:30 am to 5 pm
Friday	9:30 am to 5 pm



OUR SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

Gosport Borough Council, McMillan Trust, Gosport Voluntary Action, Waitrose plc, Southern Co-operative, Morrison's Supermarkets, ASDA, Gosport Ferry Company Ltd., Stewart Energy, Gosport & Fareham Civil Service Sports Club, Streamline Taxis, John Lane Insurance Darcy Management, Dimon's Estate Agents, Donnelly & Elliott, Solicitors, The Angelsey Hotel. David Cooke, Maureen Hine, Chrurcher & Chrurcher Solicitors, Alverstoke Parish Centre,

Gosport CAB/Macmillan Cancer Support, Tel: 0844 847 7727. Appointments: Alternate Wednesdays Queen Alexandra Hospital/bureau. Home Visits Tuesday & Thursday

**WE ARE
 MACMILLAN.
 CANCER SUPPORT**

We are grateful to Gosport Borough Council for its continuing support which accounts for the core part of our running costs; to Gosport Borough Council's Housing department who provide the funding for our specialist worker; and to Citizens Advice who have funded the extension of our opening hours. Special thanks also to our independent examiner, Geoff Hicks, the Gosport Solicitors and Accountants who give their time freely for the Bureau, to the Haslar Removal Centre and all other agencies, organisations and individuals who have assisted us in our work.