



COMMUNITY LAW SERVICE

Northampton and County



ANNUAL REPORT 2008 - 2009

2008/9 has been another successful year for the Service with the further development of our 'one-stop' integrated service and the change of our name from Welfare Rights Advice Service to Community Law Service (Northampton and County) to better reflect the work that we do. The beginning of the year saw the introduction of a new Family Law Service adding to our specialist advice areas of Debt, Welfare Benefits, Housing and Immigration. The Service is now able to offer people the opportunity to have their often multiple problems dealt with without the need to go elsewhere.

A key strength of the Service is its partnership work. As the recession took hold during the year resulting in significantly higher levels of demand for advice we were able to respond more effectively thanks to additional funding and by refocusing some of our existing resources. Our partnership with Northampton County Court was further developed to establish a Bankruptcy Support Service and new duty 'drop in' sessions at our Northampton Advice Centre helped to prioritise urgent debt and housing cases. More resources were directed to deal with the 757 housing repossession cases at the County Courts which was a 35% rise on the previous year.

Successful tenders to the Legal Services Commission not only for Family Law but also for Debt, Welfare Benefits and Housing Legal Aid work saw more resources for advice in Northampton and also for other parts of the County. A new partnership established with Wellingborough Homes who provided funding for Welfare Benefits advice and consultancy was a welcome development as was their offer of use of their premises to deliver our Legal Aid services in Wellingborough..

We face an uncertain future as we move into a new 'contract culture' environment which will see us tendering for continuation of our existing Legal Aid services from October 2010 and for other funding from statutory funding bodies. Our achievements which are highlighted in this Report and the accompanying Case Studies report will stand us in good stead for success in obtaining the resources needed to continue to deliver a professional advice service for those most in need in our Community.

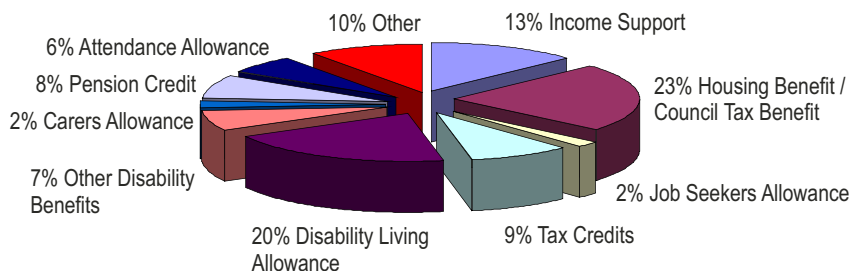
Julie Silver, Chief Executive

Key Achievements

14,079	people provided with advice (11912 new)
9,107	people provided with a full casework service (6740 new cases and 2367 ongoing)
4,843	people provided with a casework service under Legal Aid
4,972	people advised by telephone
£12,942,911	additional benefit income claimed
£38,780,040	debt managed
1,189	home visits
8,439	appointments (5488 new, 3013 repeat appointments)
1,160	people represented in County Court (757 in respect of Housing and 403 in respect of Debt)
97	people represented at Social Security Appeals
14	people represented at Immigration Appeals
600	people assisted with bankruptcy petitions

Benefit Advice Service Total Benefit Claimed

Total = £12,942,911



Debt Managed for Clients by Debt and Housing Advice Services

Total = £39,780,040

£33,980,738	Unsecured Debt
£4,088,451	Rent / Mortgage Arrears/ Secured debt
£295,559	Benefit Overpayments
£160,901	Water Debt
£197,106	Council Tax Arrears
£1,057,285	Other

Debt Advice Service



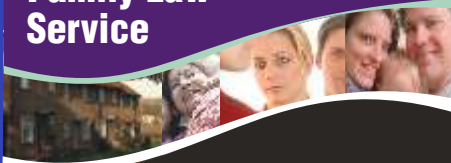
- £37,300,786 debt managed
- 2,367 new people provided with debt advice
- 2,687 people provided with a full casework service (611 under Legal Aid)
- 410 people provided with debt advice through the Telephone Advice Service
- 3127 appointments provided
- 50 home visits carried out
- 296 people provided with court representation
- 600 people assisted with Bankruptcy petitions

Welfare Rights Benefit Service



- £12,942,911 benefit claimed
- 7,942 new people provided with benefit advice
- 4,471 people provided with a full casework service (2648 under Legal Aid)
- 3,571 people provided with benefits advice through the Telephone Advice Service
- 3,582 appointments provided
- 931 home visits carried out
- 439 people assisted with dispute resolution
- 97 people represented at appeal tribunal

Family Law Service



- 234 people provided with family law casework service
- 221 new people provided with family law casework service
- 340 appointments to provide family law advice
- 47% of people assisted had dependent children

Our
**“One Stop”
 Integrated Service
 2008 / 09**

Immigration Law Service



- 354 new people provided with a casework service
- 175 people provided with an Asylum casework service
- 456 people provided with an Immigration casework service
- 721 appointments provided at the Northampton Advice Centre
- 14 people provided with representation at Immigration Appeal Tribunals

Housing Advice Service



- 836 new people provided with housing advice
- 1,096 people provided with a full casework service
- 601 people were assisted under Legal Aid
- 495 people assisted by the Court Help Desk Housing Duty Possession Scheme
- 804 appointments to provide housing advice
- 757 people represented in the County Courts
- £2,239,150 debt managed

Training and Consultancy Services

Training and Consultancy were provided to

- Daventry District Homes
- Wellingborough Homes
- Wellingborough Council
- Central England People First
- Northampton Alzheimers Society
- Northampton Fibro Myalgia Support Group
- Children with Autism Support Group
- Northamptonshire Carers
- NBC Independent Living Services



The People We Helped

Where They Lived

6,740 new people received a casework service

4,256 Northampton
 453 South Northants
 542 East Northants
 342 Borough of Kettering
 240 Borough of Corby
 179 Daventry District
 728 Borough of Wellingborough

4,972 people received telephone advice:

3,719 Northampton
 1,253 Countywide

Their Ethnic Origin

75% White British
 9% Black or Black British
 4% Asian or Asian British
 6% White other (including EU nationals)
 6% Other

Their Housing Tenure

30% Local Authority Tenants
 24% Homeowners
 17% Private Rented Tenants
 14% Housing Association Tenants
 15% Other

Their Age and Gender

Age: 11% under 25
 54% 25-30
 35% 50+

Gender: 57% female 43% male

Disability

44% of people assisted considered themselves to have a physical or mental impairment with long term effect on their ability to perform day to day activities

Our Funders:

Legal Services Commission
 Northampton Borough Council
 Northamptonshire County Council
 East Northamptonshire Council
 South Northamptonshire Council
 Anglian Water Trust Fund
 Northamptonshire Teaching Primary Care Trust
 Northamptonshire Carers
 Rockingham Forest Housing Association
 Northampton Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy Budget (CASPAR)
 Wellingborough Homes
 Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS)

Partners and Venues:

Northampton:

- Bellinge Community House
- Blackthorn Good Neighbours
- Northamptonshire Carers
- Delapre Medical Centre
- Doddridge Centre (St James)
- Emmanuel Church (Weston Favell)
- Gateway Resource Centre (Northampton Bangladeshi Community Centre)
- Spring Lane Children's Centre
- St Lukes House (Spring Boroughs)
- Alliston Gardens Community Centre
- Greenview Surgery (Kingsley)
- Kings Heath Health Care Centre
- Leicester Terrace Health Care Centre
- Maple Access Practice (Town Centre)
- Northampton County Court
- Spring Boroughs Community Café
- Woodview Medical Centre (Thorplands)
- NBC Independent Living Services*

Countywide:

- South Northants Volunteer Bureau (Venues at Brackley and Towcester)
- Corby Borough Welfare Rights and Citizens Advice Bureau
- Daventry Citizens Advice Bureau
- The Welland Centre (St Mary's Hospital Kettering)
- Kettering County Court
- Kettering Citizens Advice Bureau
- The Redcliffe (Wellingborough)
- Nene Valley Citizens Advice Bureau (Wellingborough)
- The Rushden Centre (own premises)
- Wellingborough County Court
- Kettering Borough Council
- Wellingborough Homes
- South Northants Council*
- Rockingham Forest Housing Association*

*Partner only

Where Our Funding Was Invested

Total £1,316,380

Northampton	£852,958
East Northamptonshire	£ 94,800
South Northamptonshire	£60,494
Wellingborough and District	£129,038
Corby	£57,110
Kettering and District	£70,550
Daventry and District	£51,430

What our Clients said about us

'You gave me really good advice and sorted out my problems and got them to agree what I could afford to pay'

Client seen by Debt Advice Service

'I was scared and having two kids in a difficult situation and I had poor health. Once I started dealing with your service I was taken seriously by my creditors and I was able to sort things out and it gave me control'

Client seen by Debt Advice Service

'You took away the worry and uncertainty which in turn helped my health problems as I was not on my own'

Client seen by Welfare Benefits Service

'The Service is professional, focused, impartial and deals with matters in a timely manner. Assisting you at all times'

Client seen by Welfare Benefits Service

'We would definitely recommend you as you are so understanding, caring and knowledgeable, professional but friendly'

Client seen by the Home Visits Service

'The help made a big difference to Mum's quality of life'

Client seen by the Home Visits Service

'By getting the help I needed, it has made me an independent person as far as I am able and I thank you for this'

Client seen by the Health Outreach Project

'You are a voice for people who have no voice. To interact with an actual person and that same person stay with you throughout your case makes all the difference'

Client seen by South Northants Project

'My advisor was efficient and spoke so well on my behalf. I am sure without his help and support my husband and I would have lost our home.'

Client referred by the Court to the Court Help Desk

'With both my wife and myself unable to walk without assistance, we are now able to make local trips with assistance and have help about our flat'

Client seen by Benefit Take Up Project

'Your excellent organisation provides the much needed advice and assistance in completing many complex forms'

Client referred to the Health Outreach Project by their G.P.

'Your help was invaluable at a stressful time trying to look after our ill son. You were able to sort the paperwork out and get benefits reinstated'

Client referred by Northampton General Hospital to the Bangladeshi Outreach

'The staff are helpful, knowledgeable and consistently professional'

Client seen by the Immigration Advice Service

'My life was a very big struggle juggling my money and trying to keep out of debt. My family tried to help me by buying or giving me some meals. Now I'm so grateful that I don't have to scrimp and save to make ends meet'

Client referred by their Warden to the Castle Ward Benefits Project

'The difference to us was that we have our life back and we feel free of the pressures we had that were ripping our family apart'

Client referred by the Citizens Advice Bureau to the EMMA Project

'Very helpful team, comfortable atmosphere, professional and friendly'

Client seen by Welfare Benefits Service

'Because of the excellent level of service I received I have already recommended you to someone else'

Client seen by Family Law Service

The Community Law Service (Northampton & County) holds the Legal Services Commission Specialist Quality Mark in Welfare Benefits, Debt, Housing, Immigration and Family Law.



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