

Free advice and information in the heart of our community



Kingston
Upon Thames

Our service is delivered online, by telephone and email.

Online self help materials



31,146 unique web page views last year (150 per day). This was a **44% increase** on the previous year and way in excess of our target of **5,400**.

The pages most visited by clients were;



How to contact us - up **90%** on previous year



Housing information - up **80%** on previous year



Benefits - up **65%** on previous year



Our **'Cost of Living Toolkit'** is already proving hugely popular

Telephone



We helped **2184** clients via telephone this year.

The introduction of a new system for logging incoming calls enabled us to assist nearly twice as many callers this year. Callers who are in a queue for a call back receive a text and an information sheet that will often answer their query or point them in the right direction for help, even before we return their call.

Email enquiries from clients



We received **971** email contacts from clients this year. Added to the **2184** telephone contacts, this resulted in us helping **3,155** people with tailored free legal advice this year - that is **15** people every day.

Our caseworkers made **2640** telephone calls (an average of 13 per day) and sent **1080** emails (5 per day).

What problems affected our communities?

We dealt with nearly 11,000 issues this year (just over 50 every day).

This involved paid staff and volunteers discussing issues with a client, contacting third parties on behalf of the client and preparing documents for legal proceedings, such as benefit tribunals etc.

We advised on 7339 inquiries about welfare benefits;



Over **3,500** were about initial claims and entitlements



Over **800** queries related to disability benefits (often appealing an unfavourable decision).



190 queries on the council tax rebate scheme



747 enquiries about benefits to help with housing costs

We gave **96** people advice that helped them avoid eviction and losing their home. If these clients had lost their homes, it would have cost the council in excess of £2 million to rehome them. We also helped with a common problem of ensuring that deposits are repaid when a client leaves a tenancy.

In the last year we secured income gains of more than **£240,00**, through benefit entitlements and other financial gains, such as debts being written off. This means that nearly £1 comes back to the local economy for each £1 invested in our service by the council.

We received **456** queries about debts. The majority of these related to council tax and housing arrears and fuel debts.

We also helped a significant number of people with advice on settled status following the implementation of Brexit.

Who approached us for help?



58%

of clients were aged 25-50



40%

of our clients were employed (full or part time).



32%

of clients were not white British (15% were Asian, 9% black and 6% from other groups).



7%

of our clients were unemployed. Others were retired, sick, students or carers.



38%

of clients were disabled or had a long term health condition. Of these;

- 29% had mental health issues
- 27% had physical impairments
- 24% had multiple problems



Many of our enquiries came from Norbiton, Canbury, Grove, Beverley and St Marks wards.

Many clients needed advice on more than one topic and their problems were often complex and interlinked.

Who are we?

Our team working with clients is made up of 9 paid staff and 18 volunteers.

Every hour that our paid staff undertakes on client work supports a further 2 hours by our volunteers.

Our current funding from RBK is for £272,000 per year.

If each of our volunteers were paid the going rate for the work they do, the cost to the council would rise by £250,000.

Our volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds and include people who have worked as lawyers, accountants, civil servants, social workers, careers advisers, bank managers, facilities managers, HR and PR experts.

Our advice is quality assured under the Advice Quality Standard scheme and we achieved top scores throughout the year for quality and consistency.



**citizens
advice**

**Kingston
Upon Thames**

Contact us

www.citizensadvicekingston.org.uk

you can call us on 020 3166 0953

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