

Campaigns and Research

September 2019 update

1. Current national calls for evidence.

The central team continue to identify issues where they believe that Citizens Advice will be able to effect change. The statistical monitoring of AICs is a key part of this, supported by the personal cases identified in BEFs (Bureau Evidence Forms). Their current calls for evidence are listed below. If you come across any examples of these please do complete a BEF, preferably using the same heading. It is helpful in the script to include how it is impacting on the client. And do double check that the client's profile is up to date.

There are calls for evidence on:

- **Low compensation amount offered by energy suppliers** - Citizens Advice Cotswolds is seeing cases of low compensation amounts being offered for poor customer service by energy suppliers and we want to see if this is a common problem.
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- **Bills and statements** - We're collecting evidence around clients' use of paper bills and statements to manage their essential services. Sometimes essential service providers charge for receiving paper bills, some offer discounts for paperless billing and some don't offer paper bills and statements.
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- **Universal Credit claim closed** - We want to understand more about why Universal Credit claims are closed. Was this because of something the client did/ didn't do? Or poor administration from the DWP?
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- **Universal Credit claim scam** - There have been recent media reports of people being tricked into claiming UC as a way of accessing low cost credit. Scammers are allegedly offering people cheap loans, then taking the individual's ID and personal and financial details in order to claim benefits. We want to know how whether this issue is affecting Citizens Advice clients, and how widespread the practice might be.
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- **Post office changes** - We want to hear from you about how post office changes have affected your local area and how the Post Office Limited (POL) engaged with your local community about these changes.
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- **Domestic abuse and access to post or use of an address** - We're collecting evidence looking at the issues that people experiencing domestic abuse face when accessing their post and using an address to access essential services.
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- **Universal Credit - No Recourse to Public Funds** - When one member of a couple has no-recourse to public funds (NRPF) Citizens Advice (and CPAG) guidance states Universal Credit claimants should make a single claim but make a clear disclosure that they have a partner who has NRPF. However, we are aware that the DWP/JCP are advising claimants to make a joint claim for UC

2. Local Campaigns work

Free TV Licences.

The CRAG team continue to meet to discuss local issues and consider how we could make a difference (& raise our profile with potential funders). We have just launched a campaign on Pension Credit, targeted at Paradigm tenants. You will have seen the publicity around the withdrawal of free TV licences for over 75 year olds wef next year. However if someone in the household qualifies for Pension Credit (regardless of how little) then they will also qualify for a free TV licence, worth £150. They will also qualify for Warm Home Discount @£140. You may come across clients who contact us because of the publicity, but in any event please could you check clients' potential for Pension Credit & facilitate a claim for that plus Warm Home Discount and Council Tax Reduction if they are not already receiving those. Hopefully we can record some positive outcomes!

Bucks Unitary Authority.

We have started to work with the Campaigns & Research functions from other Bucks local offices to identify common issues and present one view to our new local government structure. The new authority has a lot of work to do to bring together the different councils' systems and processes and hopefully we will be able to contribute. Hopefully this will include views on the claim process for things such as the Severe Mental Disability discount for Council Tax, where currently different approaches are taken.

The Local Team.

Our local group regularly reviews all your BEFs and aims to identify issues which we believe requires local action. So please keep the BEFs coming. If you conclude a discussion with a client feeling **OUTRAGED** chances are it is appropriate to complete a BEF. And you may feel better for it! If you feel you require more training or guidance on BEFs please speak to your supervisor or Penny as they do form part of your performance review.

Our committed team members are currently: Katie, Heidi, Camilla, Claire (Trustee rep), Kate, Wayne, Max and Trish, supported by Emma & Jane. Please speak to one of them if you have any suggestions, or contact Penny (hayesfam@btinternet.com).

Thanks for your support with this dual purpose of Citizens Advice's work- stopping the source of clients' problems.