**Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau**

**Background Information**

Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau was established in 1939 and has been providing advice and assistance to those who live or work in Aberdeen City for 80 years. We have a complement of highly trained and experienced staff and volunteers who offer a wide range of services to our clients on a variety of issues. These also include a range of specialist projects offering more in-depth advice and assistance to specific groups or those with specific issues, for example those who have been in the armed forces; those who are facing employment issues; or those who are kinship carers. These projects include the Patient Advice and Support Service, Armed Services Advice Project, Kinship Care Project and Money Advice to name just a few of them. We also host the Grampian Macmillan project and have several outreach services including a money advice and benefits outreach to deprived areas of the city, and a hospital outreach.

We subscribe to Citizens Advice Scotland aims of;

1. ensuring that individuals do not suffer through ignorance of their rights and responsibilities or of the services available; or through an inability to express their needs;
2. exercising a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services, both locally and nationally.

Our advice and services also meet the following 12 principles - our advice is free, confidential, impartial, independent, and generalist (i.e. not restricted). We offer a volunteer based service which is accessible, effective, accountable, and we gather information from clients in order to promote social change (both locally and nationally). We always promote the client’s right to decide and empower them to help themselves.

In 2017/18, the Bureau dealt with 18,241 enquires from the public and obtained £2,968,049.95 in financial gains for our clients. The Table below shows the broad range of topics on which we provide advice. The Table also shows the percentage of enquiries we received on each subject for the year 2017/18:

**Table 1 Percentage of Client Enquiries by Subject 2017-18**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Enquiry Type** | **Percentage** | **Enquiry Type** | **Percentage** |
| Benefits | 28.4% | Housing | 6.1% |
| Consumer | 2.7% | Immigration, Asylum & Nationality | 2.2% |
| Debt | 24.8% | Legal Proceedings | 7.0% |
| Discrimination | 0.4% | NHS Concern or Complaint | 0.6% |
| Education | 0.4% | Relationship | 4.8% |
| Employment | 12.4% | Tax | 3.4% |
| Finance & Charitable Support | 3.2% | Travel, Transport & Holidays | 1.2% |
| Health & Community Care | 1.1% | Utilities & Communications | 1.0% |

When a clientpresents with a number of issues these may often be linked, for example debt, redundancy and benefits. We offer holistic advice to these clients in order to provide them with maximum support. We therefore offer a one-stop-shop in order to address the full extent of our clients’ needs effectively. The Bureau currently has 31 members of staff and 80 Volunteers and continues to expand the services it provides as well as develop new ways in which services are delivered. For example using on-line services and working in partnership with other Bureaux in the “Help to Claim Multi Channel Service”.

**March 2019**