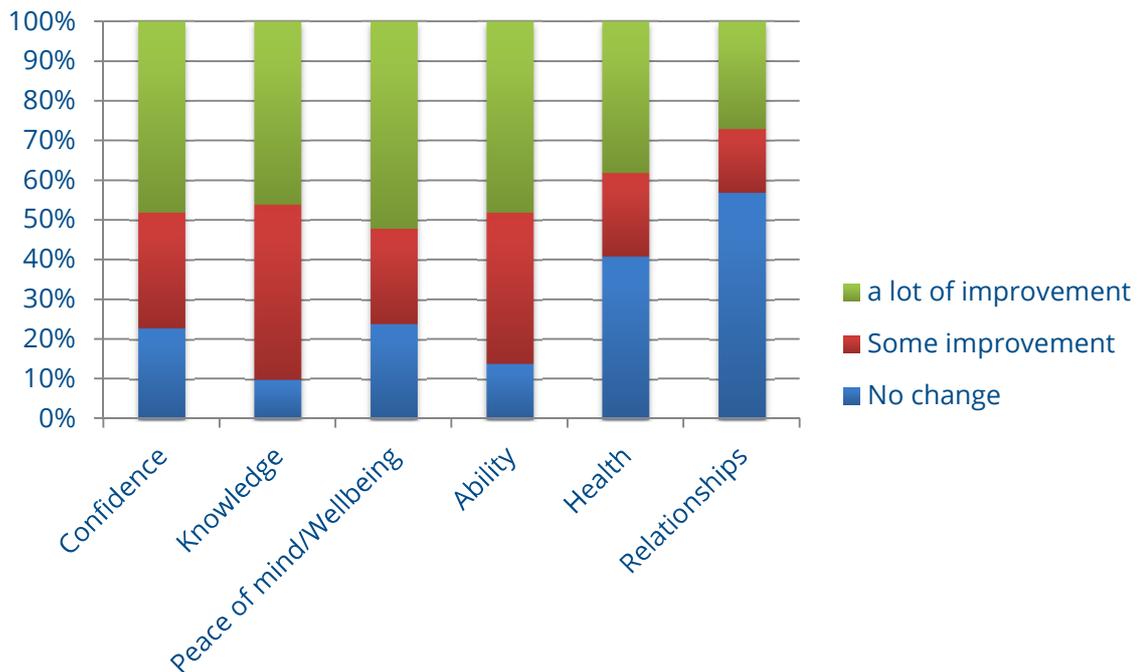
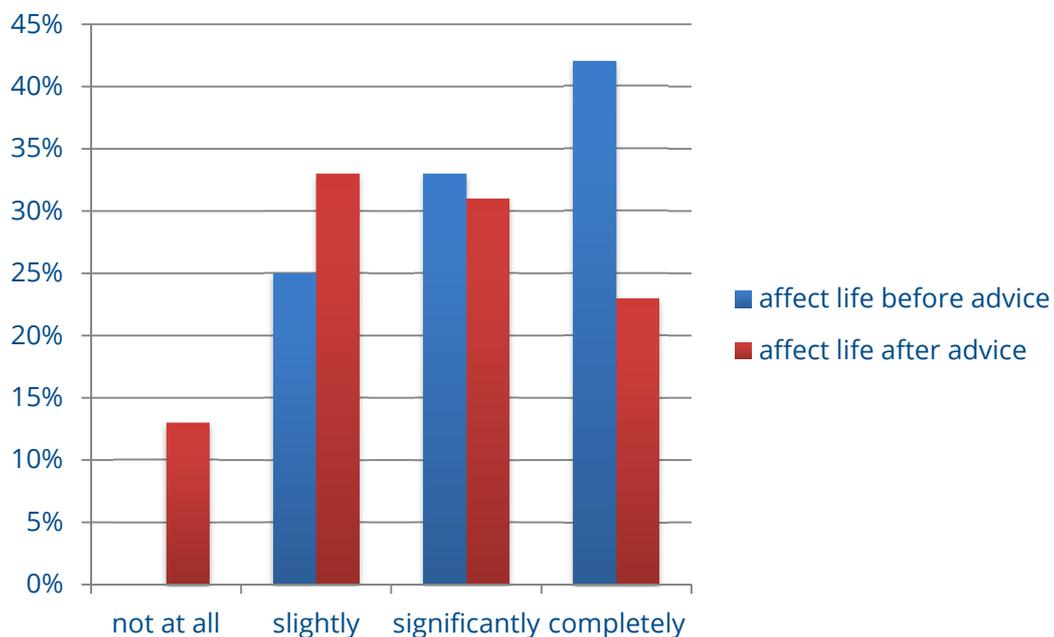


Helping the people of Wokingham

Although we have helped thousands of people from Wokingham Borough every year since 1977, we have never really asked them about the effect on them of our advice and help. In the 3 months, September, October and November 2016 we asked 50 clients how they were doing, about 2 months after they had been to see us. The results are no real surprise to us and are a very good indication that we are doing the right things and spending money wisely. These are the results:



This chart shows how clients told us that their lives were affected by their problem before and after receiving advice:



If you would like more information on any of our client statistics please send an email request to admin@citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk and we would be happy to send you a PDF or hard copy version.

Service News

Funding continues to be a big issue for us. The move to Waterford House resulted in us having to divert some of our charitable efforts to fundraising to avoid an annual deficit. Despite this we are now forecasting an annual deficit of around £15,000 from 2017-18. If we do not receive at least the same core funding from all our funders (the main one being Wokingham Borough Council) then this deficit will only increase and will likely result in a curtailment of our service to the community.

Our plans:

- To raise sufficient funding to continue to serve the residents, and workforce, of Wokingham Borough to a high standard and avoid having to close part of our service next year.
- To continue campaigning for change on any national or local issues which affect our community in an unfair way. For example, homelessness, indebtedness and unfair consumer practices.

The issues that people have

People that come to us for help have a myriad of issues. However, the main focus is on welfare benefit cases. The recent changes made to the benefit system are causing havoc with many clients' lives and there are still more changes to come. The main problem with benefits is for people who are too sick and/or disabled to work. The stringent assessments and seemingly poor decisions by the DWP are taking their toll, with many of the decisions being overturned on appeal. Unfortunately, being in debt now seems to follow people who are forced to rely on welfare benefits. It is not possible to live in this area if you are forced to rely on benefits. This leads many clients into debt and many of our volunteers are now quite expert in handling debt cases.

	Total Debt	Number of Debt cases
2014-2015	£5,247,367	382
2015-2016	£4,393,179	425

Client Satisfaction Survey 2016

99% of clients were 'very happy' or 'happy' with the service they received from us.

100% of clients would recommend us to others.

Case Study This client has been coming to us for many years. We have supported her through very difficult times, primarily by Hugh - an experienced adviser. She has many debts that came to light after her husband's tragic death, many of which she did not know about as he had kept them to himself. She is working but on a low income and is struggling to manage all the debts. We established that she would be a good candidate for a Debt Relief Order but she would not be able to afford the £90 application fee. We applied to the Retail Trust Charity for help with the fee, which was granted. We made a successful application for a Debt Relief Order, and client is now debt free allowing her to make a fresh start without the constant worry over finances.

Case study the client has long-term multiple health problems including learning disabilities. He had been in receipt of Disability Living Allowance for many years. His health was deteriorating and was now required to claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP). He was also in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and was in the Support Group and therefore not required to take part in any work. Following an assessment, and despite his deteriorating health, he was moved to the Work Related Activity Group. At his assessment the assessor was told of several activities that the client had difficulty with. These were not properly recorded and he wasn't awarded points where he should have been. We helped the client ask for a mandatory reconsideration of his ESA and helped with the PIP application. Both were successful and he is now receiving the benefits he is entitled to.

Some client feedback:

"I was very emotional and the lady who advised me helped me a great deal. I am ever so grateful" "Most helpful, thank you" "You do a wonderful job" "Adviser really helpful and patient" "Gave me courage to take action" "very friendly and focussed on people" "very helpful and relaxed, informal atmosphere" "very grateful for the help I'm getting"