



## **CITIZEN ADVICE EPSOM & EWELL – 2022 ACTIVITIES**

### Introduction:

This report for EEBC’s Community & Wellbeing Committee’s meeting on 17 January 2023 outlines our work over the past year supporting all those who live, work or study within the borough; how we support EEBC and its key priorities and sets out our plans to enable more local people to access the help they need. We are grateful to EEBC for its financial support which enables us to cover our core costs, supports our specialist debt team and demonstrates our financial viability to other funders thereby supporting more people within Epsom & Ewell.

### Overview:

Our key outcomes for the period 15 December to 14 December 2022 include:

<b>Category Area</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Number of unique clients helped	2708
Income gained for clients	£928,757
Full financial outcomes (incl. debts written off; repayments rescheduled)	£1.2 million
Rent repaid value	£62,883
Council tax repaid value	£68,688
Hardship/Crisis Support Payments (incl. energy)	£5086 payments (energy) ; £9117 payments (hardship)

Survey Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 84% of clients stated that our service help them find a way forward</li> <li>• 100% of mental health clients stated that our advice and support made a lot of difference to their situation</li> </ul>
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How we support Epsom & Ewell Borough Council:

<p><b>EEBC 2020-24 Four Year Plan Strategic Priorities</b></p>
<p><b><i>Strategic Priority: Improve health and wellbeing of communities, in particular vulnerable people</i></b></p> <p><b>CAEE Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 49% of our clients self-identify as being disabled or having long term health problems. Effective advice reduces the stress known often to exacerbate those problems, with resulting savings to health and other services. We also find that the changes in welfare reform have left many inconsistencies, with many of the vulnerable in our local society being turned down initially, only to be awarded when we intervene to challenge. Last year, our Specialist Mental Health team secured £418k in much needed financial gains for Epsom &amp; Ewell clients suffering from severe and enduring mental illness.</li> <li>● £95,858 in local authority savings by preventing homelessness, housing evictions and mental health services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Preventing homeless £54,902</li> <li>○ Preventing housing evictions £30,305</li> <li>○ Reducing need for MH services - £10,651</li> </ul> </li> <li>● We support referrals from the Social Prescribing Team, providing advice to practical problems for vulnerable people.</li> <li>● Recruitment of digital support officer who assists digitally excluded local people, helping them to complete online forms so that they are not negatively impacted. Much of the support provided relates to helping local people to get on the housing register, which saves EEBC officer time, particularly as this client group requires a lot of support.</li> <li>● We are also now a data bank provider which enables us to give local people who are eligible a package of free mobile data, plus free calls and texts, for six months.</li> <li>● Since July, we have a regular weekly outreach at the Epsom &amp; Ewell Refugee Hub to better support the refugee community.</li> <li>● From January, we will be extending our outreach services to include the 3 Warm Hubs in the borough.</li> </ul>

***Strategic Priority: Enable community and voluntary sector run activities***

**CAEE Activities**

We have worked to ensure that we engage with the community to alleviate isolation:

- Recruited 10 volunteers providing huge social value and helping to make a positive difference to people's sense of connection, community and their general wellbeing. We have found that volunteers learn and develop new skills, and can experience tangible improvements to their health and longevity. Our public value of volunteering is calculated as £334k (based on a conservative valuation using a Citizens Advice National Treasury approved model).
- In partnership with Chris Grayling MP and the Good Company, we have established a community run project, the Epsom & Ewell Energy Support Scheme (<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/epsom-ewell-energy-support-scheme>), which is helping local people in energy hardship, providing energy advice and purchasing energy efficient appliances.
- For the past 6 years, we have run the Wenceslas Fund in partnership with Epsom & Ewell Rotary Clubs, supporting local people with energy funding from winter fuel allowance donations.
- Additionally, we partner with Epsom & Ewell Parochial Trusts to help identify those in crisis, in order to make hardship grant applications on their behalf to the trusts.

***Strategic Priority: Promote Epsom & Ewell as a great place to live, work and study and encourage investment***

**CAEE Activities**

- We have had considerable success in gaining benefits for Epsom & Ewell clients, bringing £928k into the Borough through income gain, which can then enter into circulation within the local economy and reduce demand on public services as clients are more financially stable and able to manage. ● Clients who suffer financial difficulties are known to spend a higher than average percentage of their income on services they can obtain locally.  
Research indicates that the multiplier effect of our financial gains from welfare benefit advice of £1 has a value to the Epsom & Ewell economy of £13.70
- A significant amount of our work is negotiating with Council Tax bailiffs. We intervene typically to renegotiate the debt into manageable payments, meaning that the Council collects more tax and the client suffers less stress.

- We commenced our Financial Literacy Project at Epsom & Ewell High School, supporting local schools to educate our young people about money management

### ***Strengthening EEBC's Financial Independence***

#### **CAEE Activities**

- Our work not only saves the Council much of the burden of undertaking the work directly, but also indirectly, as early correct identification of entitlement prevents debt and potential escalation to bailiffs. Pursuing debts or benefit entitlements is very expensive for the Council and other public bodies in terms of officer time.
- Our access to translation services help supports EEBC through removing the need to fund translator services, which are costly.
- We work to prevent homelessness, which can place a high burden on the Council costs. Last year we saw 1060 issues regarding housing, 66 cases of actual homelessness and 54 of threatened homelessness. Our debt work focuses always on priority debts including rent and council tax. Sometimes it does not take much to keep people in their homes: we have found emergency grants to prevent evictions, challenged unlawful evictions and aggressive landlord behaviour.

#### Looking to the future:

Our data is showing that the cost of living crisis is beginning to tip the 'just managing' into hardship, which will increase with more local households now missing at least one payment. We have helped 72% more clients with debt in November 2022, in comparison to the number of debt clients in November 2021. As a result, more people are relying on crisis support such as food vouchers and crisis grants as payments leave little to no spare

money. Again, our local data shows a 42% increase in clients receiving charitable support this quarter (September – November 2022) compared to the same time last year.

Unfortunately, without intervention, this can lead to further grave outcomes including homelessness, poor health and wellbeing and the correlating economic strain those issues have on the local community, local authority and health services. We will continue to do our part to meet the community's needs and thereby prevent or lessen these impacts.

## AGE CONCERN EPSOM & EWELL – 2022 SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT FOR EEBC

**2022** saw a significant increase in enquiries through our I&A desk resulting in an increase in our client database due to support given during the pandemic, promoting our services at outreach settings, and increasing our marketing presence through social media channels, newsletters and increased marketing activity.

2022 saw the opening up of our offices and services on a gradual basis, with staff and volunteers adhering to government guidelines.

**Information & Advice Service** - support providing a free and confidential information & advice service on a wide range of issues affecting older people, through a dedicated help desk by phone, e mail or one to one. Providing the right information at the right time we save clients and their carers time, money, as well as unnecessary worry and ensuring effective interventions. Delivered by our Information & Advice Officer supported by 5 volunteers on I&A desk. 1652 clients made use of our I&A service. 4 office volunteers support office administration.

**Home Visiting** - assessing clients' needs in their own surroundings including welfare benefits checks. Increase in income by benefits successfully claimed. Improved financial circumstances a key indicator for improved health and wellbeing. Successful Blue Badge applications helping mobility. Referral to Social Services, Occupational Therapist or other specialist organisations i.e. for Dementia and Parkinson's support. Delivered by our Home Visitor. Attendance Allowance claims = 69 worth 3114,718 Blue Badge applications = 63 Pension Credit claims = 5 Disability Living Allowance/PIP claims = 0 Council Tax benefit = 1 Housing Support Allowance = 0 Carers Allowance = 0

**Medical Transport Scheme** - service used by clients to medical appointments, or to visit family or friends in hospital or residential homes. Less medical appointments missed. Monies saved as service less expensive than taxis. Cost effective service as run by volunteers. Clients raise issues with the drivers who pass the matter onto our I&A and Home Visiting team. Overseen by our Office Manager. Supported by 24 volunteer drivers and 6 transport desk volunteers. 159 members, 1063 drives made.

**Men's Club** - dedicated to like-minded men within the borough sharing knowledge and skills and meeting to enjoy activities of their choice. Alleviating and reducing isolation and loneliness within the Borough. Delivered by our Men's Club Co-ordinator with 28 members.

**Foot Clinic** – delivered at the Community & Wellbeing centre Sefton Road, Epsom until end October 2022. This service was losing money which ACEE was unable to sustain along with problems of employing future workers at an affordable rate. We ensured that there were alternative services with both home visits and at outreach settings within the borough and supported clients with a list. Although very sad for us all the clients took the closure of the clinic well.

**Befriending Service** -supporting lonely and isolated older people, who live alone, with volunteer befrienders. Delivered by our Social Support co-ordinator, supported by 51 volunteer befrienders

**Monthly Sunday Teas** - providing a full tea and entertainment once a month with transport. Overseen by Social Support Co-ordinator, supported by volunteers 8 at the tea and 15 drivers. 35 members.

**IT Support 'Helping Hands'** – one to one support in clients' own home with computer, tablet or phone and monthly computer club. Overseen by I&A volunteers. Supported by 8 volunteers with a broad knowledge of modern technology. 35 visits made.

**DIY Support** - doing small DIY jobs in clients' homes. Overseen by I&A volunteers. Supported by 9 DIY volunteers. 32 visits made.

**Volunteers** - supporting the services that Age Concern Epsom & Ewell deliver. Delivered by our Volunteer co-ordinator supporting 143 volunteers. Volunteer hours' worth £165,000 per annum

**Fundraising & Marketing** – delivered by our Fundraising & Marketing Co-ordinator

A local company, Slitherine, won the Epsom & Ewell Business Awards and donated their 1k worth of advertising airtime on Radio Jackie to us. We advertised our fundraising events via this which included: A Surrey Brass concert, sponsored Sky Dive and Comedy at the College.

Other fundraising events include: Curry Night, Quiz Night, Queens Jubilee Celebrations.

Local businesses have been very generous with donations, and these include: The Family Building Society, The Science Group, Asda.

Charities, local not for profit groups and councillors have also supported us: Epsom Rotary, Epsom Arts Society, Epsom Allsorts Running Club, Councillors John Beckett and Bernie Muir.

We have had very generous private donations and legacies which have been a major part of our income this year.

## **Update on work undertaken from April 2022 – January 2023.**

Central Surrey Voluntary Action have supported 360 organisations in the last 12 months. The interests of the sector range from older people to sports, environment and children and young people.

We have allocated 32 hours a week staff time to Epsom and Ewell at a total of £1,068 per week. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council fund us £7,998 per annum. We currently have 2 volunteers supporting our Epsom and Ewell work which equates to an indicative cost for volunteer support of £8,611 per annum.

Indicative salary for volunteers is based on £13.80 per hour for standard support and £25.00 for “professional” support. These rates are used by Surrey County Council. Those volunteers who receive a significant amount of training and are therefore an expert in their field would come under the higher rate.

We have undertaken 460 DBS checks. We are now providing face to face checks again. We have signed up organisations to do the checks themselves if they are able to through our account. Charges for the checks done through CSVA have remained at: Volunteers check (for all levels) £15, Staff Enhanced DBS - £61.60, Staff Standard - £39.60.

## **Volunteer Centre**

Our Volunteer Centre in Epsom remained closed to the public until June 2022 as the access to the Town Hall for members of the public was compromised, we asked potential volunteers to book appointments for interviews, from mid-November onwards we have operated a drop in service on Monday, Tuesday and Thursdays between 10:00 and 13:00.



As well as inviting potential volunteers in for a chat with an adviser, when people express an interest in volunteering, we are giving them a call. Volunteer roles have picked up a little in the last few months with organisations looking to recruit volunteers however, there are fewer people coming forward to volunteer particularly in roles around social care, befriending has been especially hard hit. Most organisations have returned to their precovid activities, and some have expanded their offer due to the change in needs. The cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated this and over the past 3 months we have been asked to advertise more new roles.

Over the last 6 months we have registered 603 new volunteers and recorded 117 new opportunities. This equates to approximately £32,803 worth of volunteering.

We encourage our staff to volunteer and currently we are supporting EERN through our CSR volunteering with support for writing CVs, interview preparation etc.

Atkins Global approached us through their CSR work and offered meeting rooms, support through volunteering and fundraising support to our local organisations. Both CA and Sunnybank Trust have benefitted through this so far.

We supported Epsom Talking Newspaper to arrange a Volunteer Award event for their many volunteers in December.

### **Covid Champion Network.**

We developed with the support of EEBC and PHS a Covid Champions network sending consistent messages to the community re Covid, testing and vaccination. We have 25 members and have sent weekly updates throughout this period, which have been disseminated to diverse communities across the borough. We have gathered intelligence regarding accessible information and vaccination hesitancy. We were able to invite all our volunteers to a thank you celebration in Guildford for all volunteers across Surrey and will be issuing all of them with a thank you certificate early in 2023. We will continue to keep in contact with all of them but unfortunately our funding for this project has come to an end and we will have to make changes accordingly.

### **Funding**

During this period a lot of our Charities have lost regular funding streams they rely upon. The cost-of living crisis is also taking it's toll. We have, therefore continued to support Charities with funding news, making them aware of new funding streams and sending out information of new funding when it becomes available, quarterly online events and one to one support. The funding for this post came from Elmbridge BC and Walton Charity so the face-to-face support was more focussed on organisations in that area. Please see monitoring attached:



FINAL CSVA  
Funding and Sustai

Funding for 2022/23 for this role will cover all areas for face-to-face support.