

2018/19

# Torrige, North, Mid & West Devon

citizens  
advice Torrige, North,  
Mid & West Devon

6 month report

8720 clients  
seen12,482  
individual  
issues dealt  
with29%  
**increase  
in demand**>16,000  
volunteer  
hours given£4.28  
million  
of income  
gain  
awarded

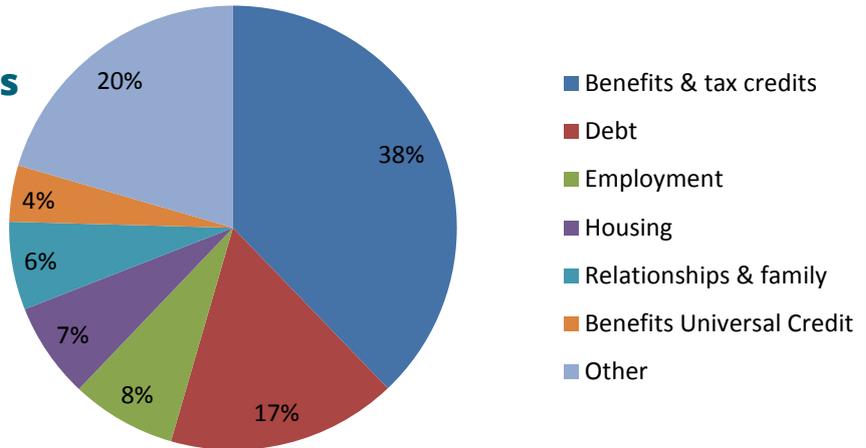
Our Citizens Advice (CA) offices in Torrige, North, Mid & West Devon (TNMWD), operate as a local independent charity, providing free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to everyone in the these Devon Districts. Our offices are situated in Barnstaple, Bideford, Crediton, Holsworthy, Ilfracombe, Okehampton, South Molton, Tavistock, Tiverton and Torrington. Residents who would prefer not to, or are unable to attend face to face appointments at our offices, can receive advice through our telephone (Advice Line) or Webchat services. These services have received an increase in clients choosing to contact us in this way. Our service makes a huge contribution to the local community and in the first 6 months of 2018/19 we have **generated £4.28 million** of income gain for our clients, which is brought back into the local economy.

Universal Credit (UC) went live across our districts between October 2017 and September 2018 and our volunteers have received specific training to support clients with the biggest change to happen to the benefits system since its creation. We are already seeing an increase in vulnerable clients who need support with how Universal Credit is affecting them and the subsequent issues. This includes areas such as debt, as people learn to manage their welfare payments monthly instead of weekly. Evidence shows that when an area goes live with UC, enquiries to Citizens Advice quadruple (Citizens Advice Data: Somerset roll out 2016), and this is proving to be the case.

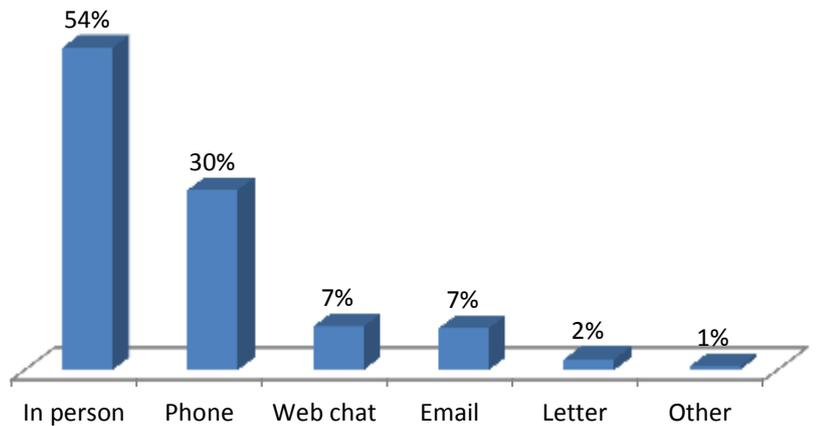


## TNMW Devon April-September

### Top 6 Advice Categories

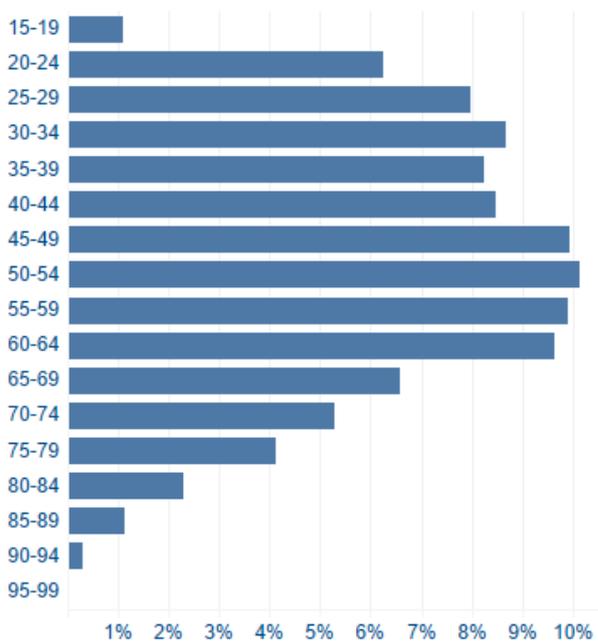


### How do our clients contact us?



### Profile of our clients

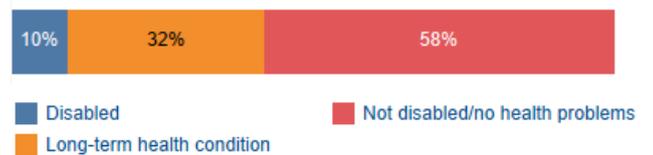
#### Age



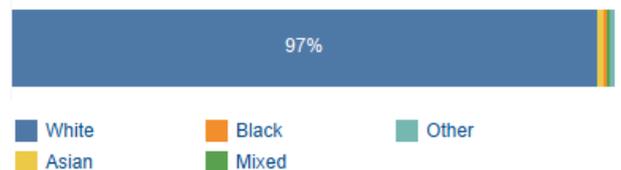
#### Gender



#### Disability / Long-term health



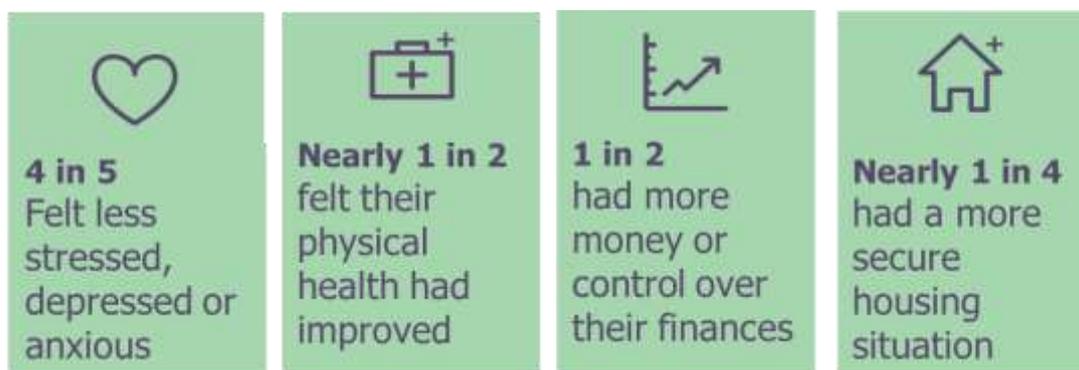
#### Ethnicity



## What our clients say about us...



## After receiving our support clients felt...



Our **volunteers** donated time equates to an amazing £375,249 (according to National Citizens Advice calculations). There is a great value to the benefits of volunteering, 9 in 10 of our volunteers have an increased sense of purpose or self-esteem, 4 in 5 believe volunteering has had a positive effect on their health and 9 in 10 feel more engaged with their community.

## Research and Campaigns: Generating Evidence Forms for our Residents

We generate evidence based on common enquiries that our clients come to see us about. We harness this evidence and use it to campaign to Government at a National and local level. We do this in order to help make society fairer and improve the policies and practices that directly affect people's lives. In the past 6 months, we have generated 166 pieces of evidence. The issues raised included debt, Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Job Seekers Allowance (JSA).

The **funding** to operate our core service is helped with grants from our local District/ Borough Councils, Devon County Council (via Citizens Advice Devon) and from local Town and Parish Councils. We also apply for grants for our core service and for projects. We have also started looking at alternative funding streams, including our own local fundraising which includes supermarket collections in the area and online donations.

## Recent Case Studies:

**A gentleman** with a wife whose first language is not English and a three year old child. He suffers from paranoid schizophrenia and was on Disability Living Allowance (DLA). He had received a letter about moving over to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and came into the office at the end of the day on the last day before the DLA would stop payments because he had not applied for PIP. We saw him and applied on his behalf by telephone. The call takes at least 20 minutes and the client would have been completely unable to complete it on his own.

Following that contact and with his consent, we asked the Healthwatch Champion to message him as he had been without treatment for a number of years. She encouraged him to make new attempts to get treatment from his GP and mental health team, which he did. We completed the PIP form for him asking for a home visit for the Health Assessment.

This person would be without his DLA/PIP at all with implications for the whole family's benefit and not receiving treatment for his condition, if we had not been there.

**A young single** mother with learning difficulties and anxiety and two infants, one nearly 2 and one a few weeks old. Living in private rent and in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Child Benefit (CB) and Housing Benefit (HB). She had debts of £4,600 including council tax. We helped her to a successful appeal for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and to a Debt Relief Order (DRO).

**A gentleman** in his 50's, owned a house subject to a mortgage. He had moved there to be with his elderly mother and brother. The brother committed suicide and a few years later his mother died. He is a depressive character anyway and he stopped paying the mortgage and took to drink. He came in to us when he got a possession hearing date at Exeter court.

He was still working night shifts so we were able to draw up a sensible financial statement with a possible offer. He was getting support from his older sister to deal with the drinking. We contacted the mortgage provider and made a referral to the CA desk at Exeter Court. The client was able to make a deal with the representative from the mortgage provider.

Client subsequently came back to the office and we arranged for him to start making the reassessed payments.