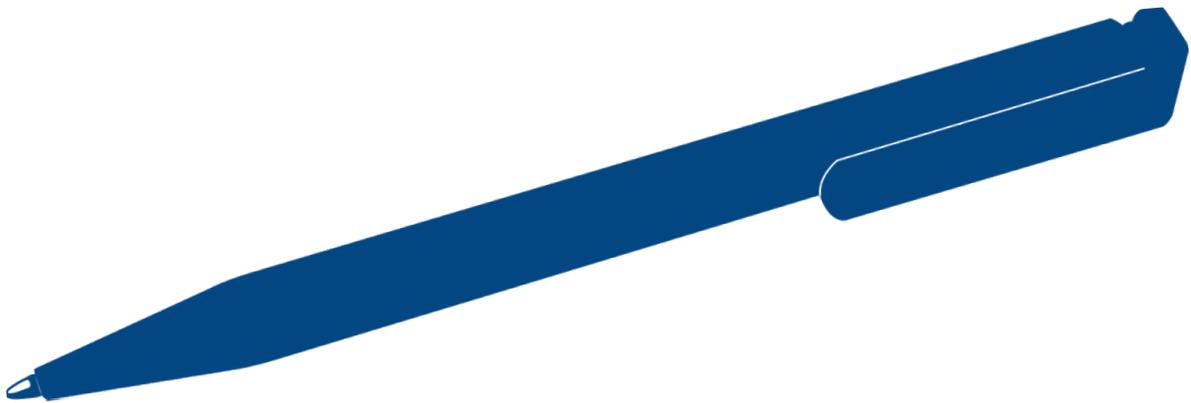


Reach Out to Warwick Town

Citizens Advice South Warwickshire

April - December 2018 (project supported for 12 months)



Prepared for Warwick Town Council

Overview

Reach Out to Warwick Town delivers an at home and community based support programme to those in Warwick who need our help, but for whatever reason they cannot make it to our main office. We help some of the most vulnerable in our society. We help those who are isolated or disabled to find the help they need, in a lot of cases we also advocate on their behalf. We provide intensive support at home, taking the time to understand the individuals, what is important to them and the issues they face.

Thanks to Warwick Town Council's contribution of £5,000 towards this project - together with other generous funders - we have able to provide a much needed 32 hours a week service since October 2018 for people living in Warwick Town. This has been a significant increase compared to previous years, during which we had seen a high level of unmet need in the CV34 area and not enough paid capacity.

CASW is grateful for Warwick Town Council's continued support, without which we would not be able to provide this much needed crisis support service to people at home.

The period from April - December (which this report covers) has been very challenging. In addition to the ongoing trend in referrals presenting with increasingly complex issues and vulnerability, there has been an unusually high prevalence in suicide attempts which appears to be ongoing. This has put huge strain on the team and we have worked to support them as they support people in crisis.

Challenges - *complexity and suicide attempts*

The upward trend of increasingly complex, high-need people within our home visiting project continues. Complexity means more case work, more issues, more advocacy work and more referrals to other organisations to work together with us to solve difficult problems.

An additional spike we have seen in complexity is specifically around suicide attempts. Seven people who continue to be supported by the team have attempted suicide in the last 12 months. Four of them were from Heathcote ward. This puts a huge amount of pressure - both in case load and emotional strain - on our caseworkers, as they have to juggle already busy workloads with sudden urgent demands on time. They work closely with a variety of external agencies to support each person through this crisis and often work out of hours to ensure this is attended to urgently.

This significant and emerging trend has demanded our urgent attention. Our focus to build new connections and use existing ones to develop our internal skill base in dealing with Mental Health First Aid. We attended the Mental Health Partnership forum during the summer and made many good links with local suicide prevention organisations. Emily Van de Venter has invited us to join the Suicide Prevention Board meetings, to provide a platform to put forward the experiences of people and gaps in services that they have observed.

Warwick District had the highest rate of suicide in the county and yet there has been difficulty in accessing local mental health/suicide prevention support.

'...a significant increase in suicide rates in **Warwick District** compared with the England Average, since 2011...' (Warwickshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2016-2020, Warwickshire County Council).

People who may refuse help elsewhere have a tendency to form strong relationships with our caseworkers. Trust is built. They feel valued and begin to open up. They share information about their suicide attempts. It is a fact that people experiencing extreme mental health issues

require very intensive, ongoing support. We must also be fully prepared to provide effective signposting and perhaps most importantly we should be in a strong position to target prevention strategies where they can be most useful.

Our caseworkers also need to feel supported in their own right however, there is little or no provision for people who are 'on the edge' without significantly hard work on our part.

Partnership work - *strengthening our links with mental health support agencies*

We continue to strengthen our links with Mental Health Matters, Samaritans, local Community Centres and GP surgeries, the MP's office, Adult Social Care at the County Council to name but a few. Our close working relationships with these key services ensures awareness of our services to provide fast and effective referrals for vulnerable people. We attended the Mental Health Partnership forum in Leamington Spa, The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment steering group with Warwickshire County Council and the Child Accident Prevention Steering Group. Warwickshire is currently an outlier with high prevalence of hospital admissions for child accidents as well as parent and infant mental health.

We will be continuing our joint work with local authorities, Public Health and third sector organisations to feed into and deliver the strategy to improve on these issues for Warwickshire. Wendy has also been working very closely with MP Matt Weston's caseworkers - one of whom is also a volunteer in our Leamington general service - to best support and advocate for residents of Warwick.

Outcomes

Over this period we have seen continued complexity in people's situations, including the full roll out of Universal Credit in Warwick District. This has had an impact on how many hours it takes so solve issues for people and therefore overall we are seeing fewer people. It is important for us to see casework through to its conclusion. Quantitative outcomes such as financial outcomes are therefore high as we deliver significant impact to people's lives.

The support we provide includes face to face support, phone support, liaising with third parties on behalf of the individual and so on.

Outcomes achieved (over 9 months for all of Warwick Town, all funders)	
Number of people helped	68
Number of issues addressed (from benefits and debts, hardship grants applied for, referrals to partner organisations etc.)	793
Debt managed	£89,020
Annualised Benefits Identified and Secured	£187,766
No. of people supported to access suitable Health and Social Care services	28

Split by ward, this overall figure is: Aylesford 15%, Emscote 14%, Myton and Heathcote 8%, Saltisford 40% and Woodloes 22%.

To give context of the amount of work, some appointments can take an entire morning, some people need repeat visits (up to 10 visits in acute cases). The case studies below give an idea about the level of complexity of issues we see through this service as well as the depth and breadth of support we offer.

Obviously we are therefore seeing fewer people than expected, due to the significant need we are finding and capacity of the team.

Case Studies

Names changed to protect anonymity. Consent provided to share these details.

Case Study I

Casework carried out with Angela and her whole family over a period of 7 months

Angela is married and living in a council house with her 3 dependent children. Her husband works but Angela has recently given up a good job to be permanent carer for her 1 year old grandson, Jake and her mother, Mary, who is undergoing chemotherapy. Jake was born to her adult daughter, Stephanie who has severe mental health problems and has been sectioned under the Mental Health Act and then moved to supported accommodation in Coventry. Jake's father has a court order preventing him from looking after his child.

Social services arranged the placement of Jake with Angela with their ongoing assessments confirming Jake was thriving whilst living with them.

Due to the loss of her income, the family was really struggling financially. Angela was spending a lot of money travelling to Coventry daily to visit Stephanie in her supported accommodation, as well as caring for her mother, Mary through her chemotherapy treatment.

Wendy was contacted to help Angela as she had been served an eviction notice due to rent arrears. While working with Wendy, she revealed she had other significant and other priority and non priority arrears including £1,000 for gas and electricity.

Angela had been trying to hide the debt from social services as she was worried they would take Jake away.

Support from the Reach out to Warwick Town project

Income maximisation We helped Stephanie to claim PIP, which was awarded. This then enabled us to help the Angela claim carers allowance which has eased the financial pressure of travelling to Coventry to visit Stephanie.

- We successfully applied for water reduction to £4 month
- Our inhouse grantfinder successfully obtained a grant for 2 new mattresses for the family and a £120 grant for help with school uniform for her 3 children
- Our specialise financial capability project helped Angela managing money better as well as helping her find good deals for things such as days out for the children

Through our continued work with Angela's family, we have been able to see how much she has benefited from financial capability support, managing better on her budget and seeking good deals to help entertain the children in half term.

Debts Our specialised and debt team talked through the options. We then supported Angela's Debt Relief Order. During the process, which took several months, we stalled the house possession process by setting up a repayment rate to be paid to Warwick District Council on top of full rent. This would be a struggle financially, especially as Christmas was coming. We encouraged Angela to speak to her social worker about arrears and financial struggle and enquire if funding like a fostering allowance was available from them to help. The Health Visitor and Support Worker at Children's Centre consequently obtained a grant for £400 to help towards rent. Angela has already made an advance payment with this money to Warwick District Council of the family's rent plus arrears for December, allowing her to save from now until then to buy a few christmas presents for their children. The Children's Centre also supplied christmas presents for the children and foodbank support.

Housing We assisted Stephanie to complete forms to apply for council housing in Warwick to be closer to her family. She has now been rehoused in a one bedroom flat in Warwick just down the road from her parents and son. We also helped Stephanie claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Relief and reductions on her bills. We will be assisting with ongoing budgeting and financial management for some months. This means that she will get more support from her family and see her son more easily.

Utilities Following the Debt Relief Order the energy company wanted to fit a prepayment meter in Angela's house. We helped Angela to switch supplier and secured a cheaper rate and where the company would allow her to continue with a credit meter.

Grandchild Social Services refused any funding advising Angela there was no money available. They reneged on a previous agreement to help Angela find a solicitor to obtain Special Guardianship and encouraged Angela to go for the simpler route of child arrangement order. We advised Angela to seek legal advice, and twice arranged for her to have free half hour appointments with different local solicitors. The solicitors confirmed that Special Guardianship was the best route for Angela but that the process was not covered by Legal Aid and would cost £5,000. Her social worker left and a replacement was not allocated. We phoned around many local solicitors and eventually found a solicitor in Coventry who agreed to try and help Angela through the process. Wendy accompanied Angela to meet the solicitor. Within a week the solicitor had contacted Social Services and got agreement they would pay the solicitor firm £1,500 to apply for and represent Angela. Social Services and the solicitor are now progressing the court order and Angela has been advised by her social worker that she will receive £100 week Guardians' Allowance.

Financial outcomes for this Angela

Debt Relieved	£17,351
Utility Savings	£516 water, £247 energy (per annum)
Benefits gained for Stephanie	£6,760 (per annum)
Benefits for Angela	£3,260 plus Guardian's Allowance £5,200
Hardship Grant	£778
Legal Fees Awarded	£1,500

The following two case studies are of a sensitive nature, so although a significant amount of casework has been carried out, we have focused on the salient issues.

Case study II

Nigel is a single father living within Warwick town. He is suffering with agoraphobia, hallucinations and night terrors. He was referred to the team as his benefit was reduced by DWP as he was deemed fit enough to work.

Action taken by the team to help Nigel

- We advocated on Nigel's behalf and lodged an appeal against the DWP's assessment that he was 'fit for work'
- We helped him make a claim for Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- We carried out joint work with MP caseworker to get home visits for any future benefit assessments
- Provided support to Nigel during the process with bureaucratic hurdles and errors - all of which were causing increasing distress

- We notified GP and Nigel's child's school to progress medical and Social Services support

Whilst we waited for this support to start we kept in touch with Nigel. During this time, he left the team a message saying he was in distress. The nature of the message was particularly alarming and so we raised an alert with the Police for a home check. Nigel was found having attempted suicide and was taken to hospital.

While Nigel recovered, we continued to carry out work on his behalf - as a priority. When he was better, we supported him in fresh benefits assessments.

Nigel was awarded the highest levels of PIP and has home visits and support from psychiatric services. We continue to help with financial management support deal with a few debts and registering him on schemes which will enable him to benefit from energy efficiency schemes.

To date, Nigel continues to improve, and we remain in touch, in a reduced capacity.

We thank Warwick Town Council for the funding provided to support the complex and specialist advice we provide to very vulnerable residents within Warwick. This funding enables us to provide a unique and flexible service to help those who need it most.



Free, confidential advice. Whoever you are.

We help people overcome their problems and campaign on big issues when their voices need to be heard. We value diversity, champion equality, and challenge discrimination and harassment. We're here for everyone.



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