

# Citizens Advice

Summer 2021

[newforestcab.org.uk](http://newforestcab.org.uk)

## A Year of Pandemic

Citizens Advice New Forest has helped more than 5,600 people with over 14,000 issues during the past year of the pandemic.

The charity, which quickly adapted to help more people via the phone, email and webchat, has found employment, benefits and housing have been its top pandemic issues.

Citizens Advice New Forest has seen many worrying cases such as people needing foodbanks and help with fuel costs for the first time in their lives. In response the charity has worked closely with the New Forest foodbanks, New Forest District Council and Fareshare to support pop up foodladders in 10 communities across the forest.

Around 50 staff and volunteers have been working from their living rooms, dining tables and kitchens to make sure people could still access much-needed help.

Justine, from Citizens Advice New Forest said: "We've all been on a rollercoaster of change throughout this pandemic.

"We've spoken to people who've never used Citizens Advice before, have never claimed benefits before and have had a steady income for years, if not decades. Suddenly, they feel as if the rug has been pulled from under them and they don't know what to do.

"We're here to listen, support and then help them find a way forward, and it's a reward to hear the relief in their voices at the end of the call."

Alison Talbot, Chief Officer of Citizens Advice New Forest, said: "I'd like to thank our staff and volunteers who've continued to help people find a way forward, as we face the problems of this pandemic together.

"Our advisers have been able to help people check what benefits they're entitled to, navigate the furlough scheme, and ensure they're getting all the help and support that is on offer.

"We know people are going to need our help as we begin on the road to recovery, and we urge anyone that needs some support to get in touch as soon as possible."

### Protect others from scams

If you've been targeted, speak out.  
Think. Report. Talk.  
#ScamAware



If you are worried or affected by any of the issues we have covered in this newsletter, please contact us and one of our advisers will be very happy to offer help and support.

**0808 2787860**

## Scams Awareness Fortnight 14-27 June

It's important you're aware of the many new scams around at the moment because of coronavirus. Scams to look out for include:

- **emails or texts pretending to be from the government**
- **emails offering life insurance against coronavirus**
- **people knocking at your door and asking for money for charity**

If you see emails or texts about coronavirus from someone you don't know, or from an unusual email address, don't click on any links or buy anything.

Don't give money or personal details to anyone you don't know or trust - for example someone who knocks on the door and offers to help.

It might be a scam if:

- **someone you don't know contacts you unexpectedly**
- **you've been asked to transfer money quickly**
- **you've been asked to pay in an unusual way - for example, by iTunes vouchers or through a transfer service like MoneyGram or Western Union**
- **you've been asked to give away personal information like passwords or PINs**
- **you haven't had written confirmation of what's been agreed**

### Think Twice Before You Act

Contact the Citizens Advice consumer service online or at 08082231133 for advice and support on scams

# We're supporting **KICKSTART** **SCHEME**



**W**e are delighted to welcome Amelia Adams who will be joining the Citizens Advice team as one of two Kickstart recruits based in the New Forest.

The Kickstart Scheme is a £2 billion fund announced by Chancellor Rishi Sunak back in 2020 aimed at getting

young people on Universal Credit, who have lost jobs and opportunities because of coronavirus, back to work.

The 6-month work placements are aimed at supporting the participants to develop the skills and experience they need to find permanent work after completing the scheme. Funding is provided for the job placement to cover the relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week, plus the associated National Insurance contributions and minimum automatic enrolment contributions. There is also funding for their training and set up costs.

Primarily based at the Lymington office, Amelia will receive training and work experience in both the delivery of client services and other projects relevant to the work of Citizens Advice

New Forest. "When I completed my Health & Social Care course I was a little worried about finding work and the jobs available to me but when my Work Coach spoke to me about the position at Citizens Advice I was quite excited. After my interview, I knew it would be a great opportunity and am even more excited about working there now". Amelia said.

Stuart Wood... of the Job Centre said "DWP are delighted to be working with Citizens Advice and offering young people an insight into their invaluable work across the New Forest."

To find out more, click: <https://citahants.org/partners/kickstart.html>

## Dealing with Debt

**D**ebt can be a very debilitating problem, causing stress, anxiety, depression and can even lead to relationship breakdowns.

CANF is part of a national project funded through the Money & Pensions service that helps people work through their debt problems, looks at all the options available to people and provides ongoing support for clients through the journey out of debt.

Tracey came to us with over £2500 worth of debt, this included 2 priority debts (council tax and rent arrears) which had to be dealt with.

She was on a low income, with less than £50 a month in hand when all her bills were covered.

Our debt team helped Tracey to complete a benefit check, she found she was entitled to £130 a month and we assisted her to apply for these benefits

We discussed other options with her including the new Breathing Space scheme which can give people in debt 60 days to engage in debt advice and work towards a solution. During that time people in debt have legal protections from creditors, including pausing most

enforcement action and freezing most interest and charges on their debts.

While not right for every debt client it's a great tool to have in the box.

We help clients understand the options that are available to them and make informed choices about the best option for them

Tracey has decided to go down the road of a debt relief order so whilst she waits until she is eligible we are helping her to maximise her income and negotiate with creditors to set up affordable payments whilst she waits until she's eligible for a debt relief order.

Dealing with debt is about getting back in control of your finances or in Tracey's words:

**"Without Citizens Advice I wouldn't have known I was entitled to any more money and this amount is the difference between me being really worried about my debts and feeling that I have a way forward."**

If you are worried about debt, speak to one of our advisers on **0808 278 7860**

# New Forest Food Larders

**W**ith our offices closed due to the pandemic, Citizens Advice New Forest has taken to the road to meet clients. An outreach worker is on hand each week at the church or village hall, school or leisure centre in the New Forest where Fareshare's food larder stops.

Operational since January, food larders have popped up all over the New Forest from Calshot to

---

**Since their launch, The New Forest Larders have supported 661 households across the 10 sites**

---

Fordingbridge. Run by Fare Share and its many wonderful volunteers, the food larders have served those in need by providing essential foods for the people of the New Forest for a low weekly cost, making it great value for money with up to twenty-five products available plus fruit and vegetables on the side!

Coming to each site once a week, the

## MONDAY:

**Marchwood:** Marchwood Village Hall, Marchwood Village Centre, SO40 4SX : 12.30pm – 1.30pm

## TUESDAY:

**New Milton:** Ashley Baptist Church, New Milton, BH25 5AA: 9.30am – 11am

**Hythe:** St Anne's Neighbourhood Centre, Warrys Close SO45 3QR : 1pm – 2.30pm

## WEDNESDAY:

**Totton:** Totton Church, 283a Salisbury Road SO40 3LZ : 9.30am-11.30am

## THURSDAY:

**Blackfield:** Queen Elizabeth Recreation Centre, Thornbury Avenue, Blackfield, SO45 1YP : 9.30am – 11am

aim of the scheme is to help make people's money go further each week by reducing the food shopping bill. At the Pennington site, fresh meatballs, salad, eggs (real and chocolate) were some of the many things on offer showing just how diverse the products are.

There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to the scheme with clients describing them as beneficial to the local area, a godsend and great value for money.

One client has told us that after having surgery and not being able to work anymore, the scheme was so helpful and gave her one less thing to worry about.

People wait in orderly queues, chatting with neighbours until it's



**Calshot:** St Georges Hall, 11 Tristan Close, SO45 1BN: 12.30pm – 1.30pm

**Pennington:** St Marks Community Hall, The Square, Pennington, SO41 8QN: 1.15pm – 2.30pm

## FRIDAY:

**Ringwood:** Ringwood Leisure Centre, Ringwood, BH24 1PX: 1.30pm – 3pm

**Fordingbridge:** St Mary's Church, Fordingbridge SP6 1BB: 1:30pm - 3.00pm

**Bransgore:** St Mary The Virgin Church, Ringwood Road, Bransgore BH23 8JH: 9:30am - 10:30am

their turn to pay and collect what's on offer. It's a great opportunity for a Citizens Advice representative to connect with clients who we can't see in the office. While people wait they can talk with the representatives and bring up any issues they might need some help with.

The representatives took the opportunity this winter to tell people about the fuel voucher scheme which many hadn't heard of but were keen to take up. For clients it's the ultimate one-stop shop: guaranteed bags of staples, fresh fruit and vegetables and an assortment of chilled items, plus a helpful representatives from Citizens Advice New Forest offering a myriad of services.

## Anyone can be a member

■ *Joining is easy and free. Applications forms can be requested by emailing [FSSouthernCentral@fareshare.org.uk](mailto:FSSouthernCentral@fareshare.org.uk)*

■ *There are no eligibility criteria-they are there for anyone who needs them or would like to use them.*

■ *You can join by completing the application form when you attend the larder for the first time-you just need a form of ID. You can also request a form online.*

■ *A small payment is made each week that you attend the larder, based on the size of your household. A single person household is £2.50/week; a 2 person household is £3.50/week and a 4 person household is £5/week.*

■ *The food larders are in regular and easily accessible locations, and on the same day and time each week.*

■ *They are a friendly place to chat with other people in your community, and are regularly attended by Citizens Advice.*

■ *The food larder membership scheme does not require or affect benefits in any way.*

■ *You do not have to attend every week.*

*They are a brilliant way to help combat food waste and to help redistribute surplus food in the food chain.*

# Fuel Poverty

**W**ith lockdown causing more people to stay at home, keeping the house warm has been a real problem for some. People have been telling our advisers that they are going to bed early in order to keep warm, because they cannot afford to heat their homes.

CANF runs an Energy Advice Programme which targets clients who are fuel poor or vulnerable, and we have helped 54 households and advised on all issues, with a holistic approach. We check and deal with any debt issues with the client and always ensure they are getting all they are entitled to regarding income. We also check clients are on the correct tariff, offer comparison searches and help with switching providers and discussing and addressing energy efficiency issues. Where possible, we have helped apply for the Warm Home Discount and put people on the Priority Service Register.

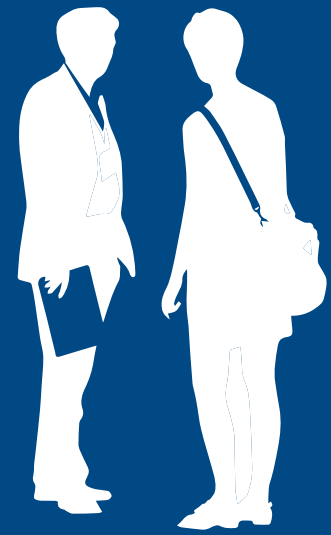
One client has a 2 year old son and is on Universal Credit. Her payments are currently reduced by £100 because she is paying back a loan. She is on a

pre-payment meter with SSE and has run out of credit. We applied to the foodbank for an immediate top-up for the client of £49 as well as a food parcel.

We then applied to Hampshire County Council for top-up vouchers for gas and electricity, to the value of 3 vouchers, each worth £49. A total of £147. The application was processed and 2 days later, she was emailed the voucher codes for immediate use.

The client emailed us back "Hi it's me, I received some help from you for the winter grant I just wanted to say thank you so so much, it's one less thing I have to worry about this month, it means a lot to me , so again thank you and stay safe"

We have helped many clients apply for Hampshire County Council Fuel Poverty Payments and when the Hampshire County Council Covid fuel voucher scheme rolled out, we helped 165 households to £147 each. A total of £24,256 in the New Forest area. 220 children were warmer (or had less stressed parents) as a result.



## Contact Us

### By Phone: (New Forest Advisers)

Ring our Freephone Adviceline  
0808 278 7860

Monday - Friday

### Email: (New Forest Advisers)

Fill in the online webform @  
[newforestcab.org.uk/contact-us/](http://newforestcab.org.uk/contact-us/)  
[email-adviceline](mailto:email-adviceline)

### Webchat: (National Service)

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/  
about-us/contact-us/contact-us/  
web-chat-service/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/web-chat-service/)

### National Citizens Advice:

0800 144 8848

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/)

*We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.*

*Company Limited by guarantee, registered at Companies House No 06983394.*

*Charity registered with the Charities Commission, Registered Charity No. 1132425*

*Printed and published by New Forest Citizens Advice Bureau on 01/06/2021*

Follow us on Twitter  
[@CABNewForest](https://twitter.com/CABNewForest)



## Client Testimonials

“It was the best service I have used the staff over the phone were so helpful and comforting and I couldn't recommend them anymore highly.”

“I could not have had better more prompt or sensitive advice. Indeed it went beyond that: the advisor concerned organised telephone conversations with necessary authorities for me. He also invited me to contact him again should I require further help. This for me was first class service sympathetically delivered.”

“Thankyou for your help in getting me a grant to help with electric and heating. While my son was home schooling. The lady was a pleasure to talk to thanks again.”

“The advice I received enabled me to make the right decisions about my future and I am really grateful for that.”