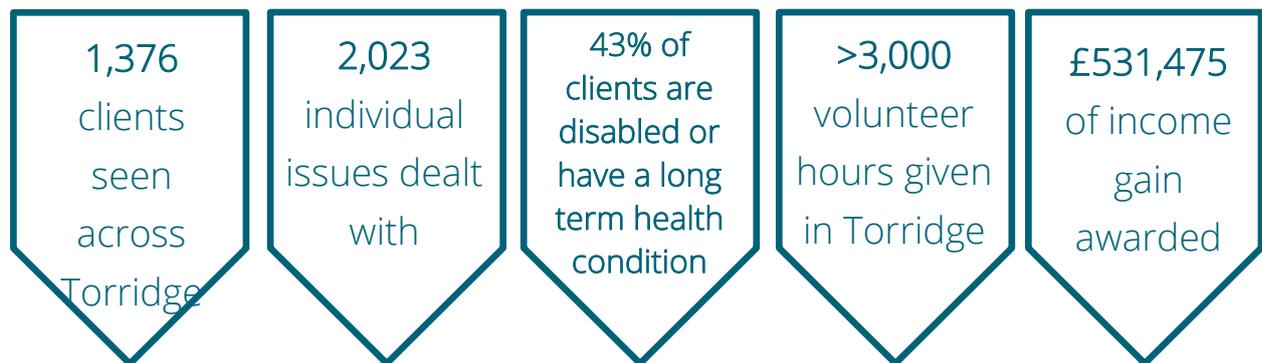


2019/20

# Torridge

citizens  
advice Torridge, North,  
Mid & West Devon

6 month report



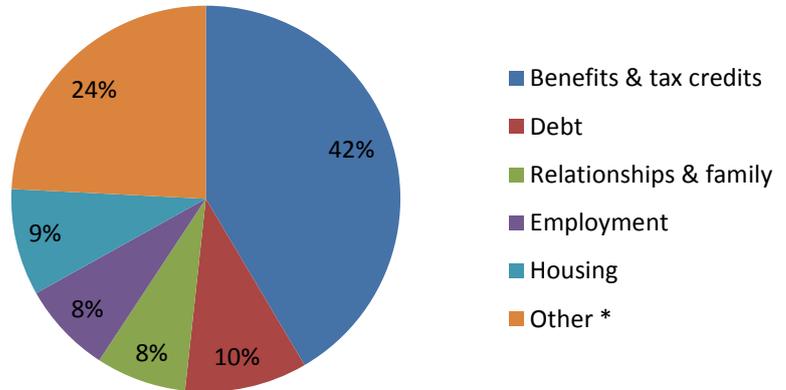
Our Citizens Advice (CA) offices in Torridge, operate as a local independent charity, providing free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to everyone in the Torridge District of Devon. Our offices in Torridge are located in Bridgeland Street, Bideford, the Training & Business Centre in Holsworthy and Castle Hill in Torrington. Torridge 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 a dramatic increase from clients choosing to contact us in this way. In addition we logged 42,388 visits to our local website, where people can search for advice themselves. The service in Torridge makes a huge contribution to the local community and in the first 6 months of 2019/20 we have generated £531k of income gain for our clients, brought back into the Torridge economy.

Our new service called "Help to Claim", for those who need help to apply for Universal Credit in Torridge, North, Mid & West Devon has been incredibly busy with clients accessing the service locally at Bideford Job Centre Plus (JCP). This is a project funded by DWP for one year only. Clients requiring support following initial payment are referred into our generalist service.

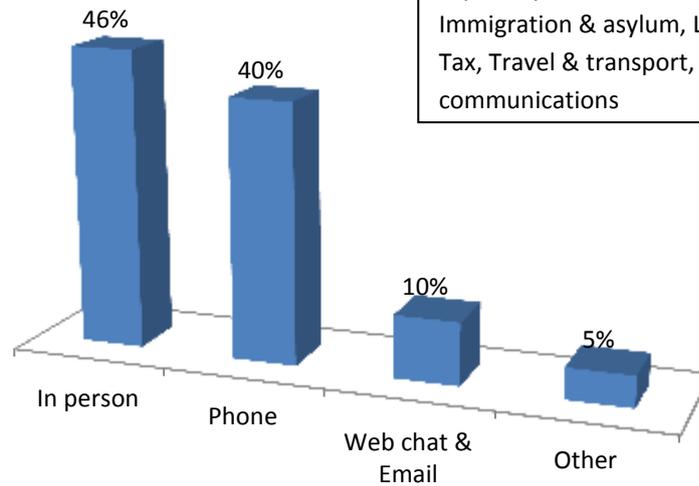
We have a number of ongoing projects which clients can benefit from depending on their circumstances.

## Torridge April-September

### Top 5 Advice Categories



### How do our clients contact us?



Other \* includes: Consumer goods & services, Discrimination & Hate & GVA, Education, Financial services & capability, Health & community care, Immigration & asylum, Legal, Other, Tax, Travel & transport, Utilities & communications

### Gender



### Disability / Long-term health



## What our clients say about us...



**98%** of clients would recommend our local advice services across Torridge

## After receiving our support clients felt...



**4 in 5**  
Felt less stressed, depressed or anxious



**Nearly 1 in 2**  
felt their physical health had improved



**1 in 2**  
had more money or control over their finances



**Nearly 1 in 4**  
had a more secure housing situation

Our Torridge volunteers donated time last year, equated to an amazing £128,706 (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 Torridge 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 31 evidence forms in Torridge. Some of the issues raised included claiming for Universal Credit, debt, Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), energy suppliers and housing.

The **funding** to operate our core service is helped with a grant from Torridge District Council and Devon County Council (via CA Devon). We also receive donations from Bideford, Holsworthy and Torrington Town Councils along with local Parish Councils. We apply for grants for our core service and for projects and these include specific locally focused funders like the Bideford Bridge Trust. We have also diversified to alternative funding streams, including our own local event fundraising, supermarket collections in the area and online donations.

## Recent Case Studies:

### Benefits

John (name changed) had been diagnosed with Mesothelioma (a form of cancer). John would be eligible to apply for the Government payment as he has been diagnosed and under the '2008 Diffuse Mesothelioma Compensation Scheme' he will be awarded £14,334, this is for people over the age of 77 when diagnosed. This payment is usually made within approximately three weeks. We also suggested that he may qualify for Industrial Injuries benefit as well as Constant Attendance Allowance and that he should contact a Solicitor. As a result of our involvement, John is eligible for High Rate Attendance Allowance £87.65 per week, as well as the £14,334 pay out as well as Constant Attendance Allowance which will be a top up of the Attendance Allowance.

### Utilities

During 'Big Energy Saving Week' we helped one lady who was spending £180 per month on Gas & Electricity to switch supplier, saving £700 per year. She felt empowered to change and we also informed her about Priority Services as she has twins who are severely disabled.

### Consumer issue

Client is an older female (Mary – name changed to protect identity) who lives in her own home with her husband and disabled adult child. She brought a new marble fireplace from a company in March 2018 and was very happy with the service and product, however when client used the fire this winter she noticed that the mantle shelf was becoming very hot, she contacted the company who said it was because the marble was cold to begin with and the more the fire was on, it would settle. Mary found this was not the case, so contacted the company again who sent an engineer to fit a heat plate as this was missing, client was charged £1000 for this as they said she was out of warranty.

We helped the client to write a letter stating her case and that she would like to be reimbursed for the missing plate and Mary would be happy with a refund.

Mary returned 2 weeks later to say that they had reimbursed her the money and sent a new warranty certificate dated from when they fitted the plate for the entire unit client was very happy.