

Advice Shop Ward Profile Report

Bathgate

April 2017 to March 2018

About Your Community



- 21% Children
- 66% Working Age
- 13% Pensionable Age



Number of people in West Lothian in receipt of out of work benefits

12,720

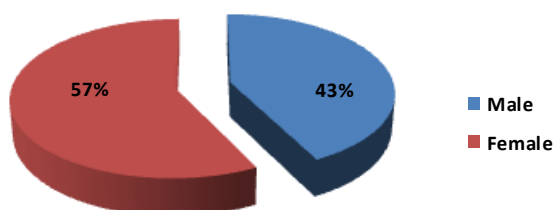
% of children in poverty after housing costs in Bathgate

22%

Who we have worked with

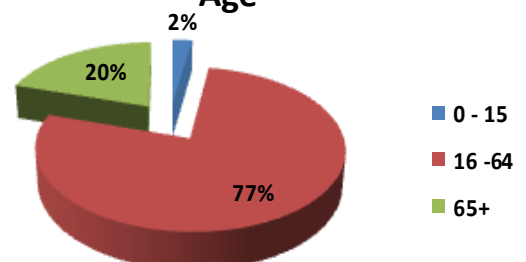
Individual Customers = 1942

Gender



Number of Enquiries = 6543

Age



Maximising Income For Customers in Bathgate

Type	Amount	Information
Benefit Awards	£4,233,444	The amount the service has gained in benefits
Appeal Awards	£236,574	The amount the service has gained through appealing unfair decisions
Energy Savings	£23,855	The amount the service assisted customers to make in fuel savings
Debt Managed	£732,914	This is the amount of debt the service help customers manage

The Advice Shop in Your Community



The Advice shop now has a permanent presence within St Johns Hospital. The new service is called Advice @ St Johns and offers a full Advice Shop service to patients, carers and their families. Advisors carry out ward visits, appointment sessions and information stalls with support of volunteers. The Advice Shop has developed

excellent partnerships with Citizens Advice Bureau and NHS Lothian to ensure customer receive the help at the earliest possible point to aid their recovery and return home.

**NO ONE
SHOULD FACE
CANCER
ALONE**

Macmillan@WestLothian Cancer Information and Support Service offers anyone affected by cancer access to information and support and welcomes visitors with a friendly smile and a listening ear. You may have cancer yourself, be a relative, friend or carer of someone with cancer, or maybe you just want to find out more about cancer. The service continues to grow and support affected customers across West Lothian.

There are hubs at West Lothian Council partnership centres in Bathgate, Fauldhouse, Strathbrock and Blackburn. We also have a hub in Carmondean Connected in Livingston.

Case Study

Miss H is a single parent with two young children and was referred to the Advice Shop by her Social Worker as she had a very low income.

Client attended the Advice Shop and we were able to establish that her low income was the result of being refused Income Support due to being deemed to have failed the Habitual Residence Test. Her only income was Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Disability Living Allowance for one of her children. She was also in rent arrears as Housing Benefit had stopped.

From her circumstances, it was established she should have been receiving Carer's Allowance and an application for this, with three months backdating, was lodged with Department for Work and Pensions.

Working with the Revenues Unit, the Advice Shop were able to get Housing Benefit reinstated under EEA Legislation. This was backdated and the rent arrears were cleared.

We were then able to establish that the client had lodged a Mandatory Reconsideration against the decision to refuse her Income Support Claim, but had never received a decision on this. Due to the time which had elapsed, we raised the case with Department for Work and Pensions as a complaint. It was then discovered that the reconsideration had never been decided on and the case was fast tracked to a specialist decision maker.

Department for Work and Pensions then contacted the Advice Shop to inform us that Income Support had been awarded and again would be backdated. Client was awarded over £2500 Income Support Arrears and now receives all benefits she is entitled to.

In 2018/19 we plan to

- Become one of the first local authorities in Scotland to gain accreditation of Scottish National Standards for Advice Providers in Welfare Benefits, Money/Debt and Housing Advice.
- To work with customers and partners to support those who have been affected by the new contribution policy in non residential care by ensuring all entitlements are in place and minimising impact and maximising income.
- To continue to modernise the service by introducing new referral methods for partners improving efficiency and early intervention allowing the service to help customers at the earliest point of need.

Did you know?

In 2017/18 the Advice Shop represented customers at 537 Social Security appeals which was a 46% increase from the previous year. The service had a success rate of 74% which is above the national average of 61%.



The Advice Shop now has a permanent presence within St Johns Hospital. We supported 783 patients in 2017/18 with benefits, housing, money and energy advice enquiries.

In 2017/18 the Advice Shop worked with 8 Syrian Families and generated £169,000 through benefit entitlements.

In 2017/18 we had 41 volunteers working across our service in six different roles.

Volunteers contributed a total of 2325 hours resulting in over 1400 customers contacts across the year.

99% of respondents rated the overall quality of service from the Advice Shop as good or excellent in 2017/18.



The One2One project provides tailored advice and advocacy for the most vulnerable groups in West Lothian.

The majority of customers who have engaged with the project have faced the barriers of mental ill health and being in a jobless household. In addition to this many are affected by substance related issues and criminal convictions. Difficulties with engagement to statutory services have affected all those referred.

In total there have been 264 referrals to the project and a financial gain of nearly £921,548.

How to contact us

Email: advice.shop@westlothian.gov.uk

Phone: 01506 283000 and select Option 5

Website: www.westlothian.gov.uk/advice-shop