

Whole person, whole community - a new approach to advice

Summary report and accounts for the year ending 31 March 2021

Presented with unprecedented challenges, we worked successfully to adapt to the emerging pandemic environment, and develop our work to meet future sustainability.

Following government guidance, we were forced to repeatedly close face-to-face services and ask staff to work remotely. We noticed a reduction in client confidence to access services, and a shift in the help they needed.

We consulted with staff, trustees and clients to understand what type of service people would feel confident and comfortable using. This helped us to continue to deliver relevant and useful services through the pandemic.

In partnership with other agencies, we coordinated promotional activities to reach clients in a new way. Much of our work moved from face-to-face to telephone or digital advice provision. We were able to maintain a limited reception service and offer appointments in person when essential.

"Our Whole Person Whole Community project is helping us to deliver more effective, longer lasting outcomes for the people we help."

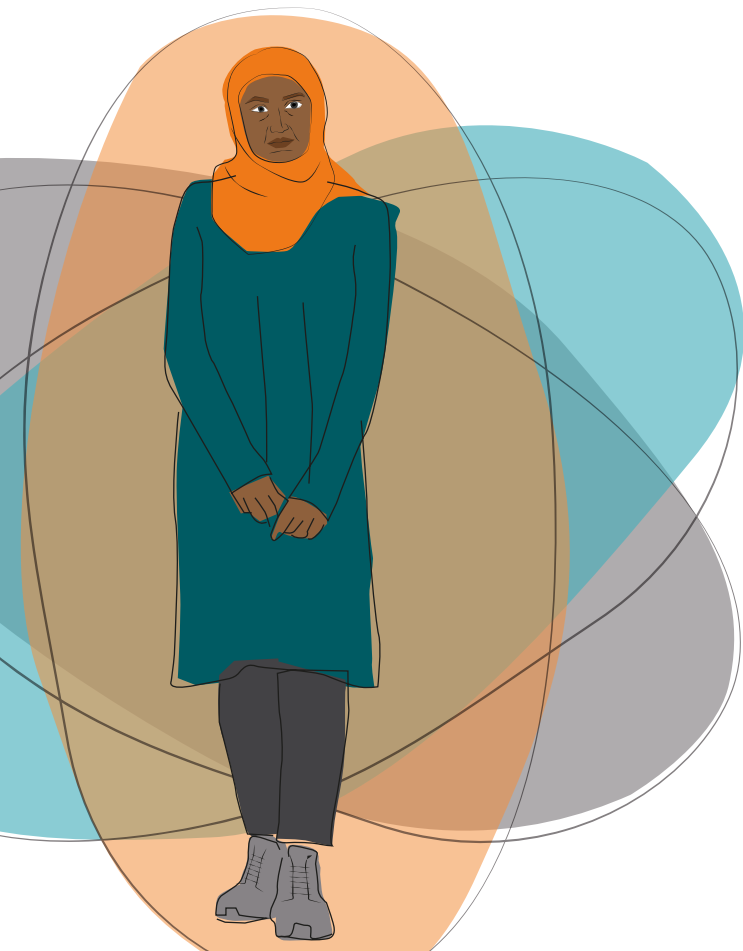
The European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) continued to be a major focus for us. All EU citizens who wished to remain in the UK needed to register before the deadline in June 2021. As the lead agency in partnership with other Bristol community advice agencies, we coordinated service provision designed to help the most vulnerable to apply.

We recruited and trained new volunteers for our Advocato Project. They are helping clients with form filling for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and other benefits vital for disabled people or those who are long term sick. Through the pandemic, these volunteers were offering virtual appointments for clients to complete benefit and charity applications.

Our greatest success this year has been starting our ambitious new 'Whole Client, Whole Community' project, despite the difficult environment. Its purpose is to experiment with new systems and delivery methods, to make St Pauls Advice Centre a truly holistic, person-centred service.

We are running this project in partnership with Talking Money and Advice UK, with a view to sharing our learning nationally.

Laura Corballis, Trustee &
Steve Woodcock, Executive Director



Vital statistics



We helped 520 people and advised them on 888 legal issues



96% of clients felt they were given information that was easy to understand



85% of people said they were no longer worried about the issue they came to us about



95% of clients would recommend our service to others



72% of clients were from local BAME communities.



85% of clients felt they had a better understanding of their legal rights*



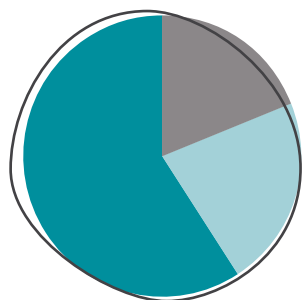
We increased household incomes by €756,000



85% of benefit appeals we help with are successful

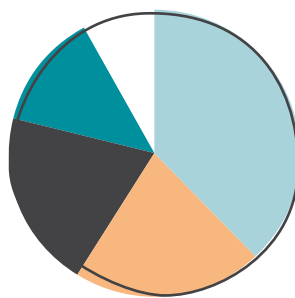
Our finances

Income €460,137



- 19% Money and Pensions Service (MAPS)
- 22% Bristol City Council
- 59% Voluntary income including grants

Expenditure €407,147



- 38% Welfare Benefits
- 21% Debt Advice
- 20% Generalist Advice
- 13% Immigration Advice
- 8% Fundraising

This information is extracted from the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021, which is available on request or from the Charity Commission website.

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Our whole client approach in action

Sadiya and Ahmed lived with 10 children in an overcrowded two bedroomed flat. They were not receiving enough benefits to live on and were surviving on overdrafts and borrowing. They had accessed advice from various Bristol agencies many times over the previous years.

From our first meeting, we took time to establish a trust-based working relationship. We worked with Sadiya and Ahmed at their pace, in their own language, to fully understand their situation.

We adapted how we worked to meet the couple's unique needs. We aimed to work with them rather than for them, enabling them to resolve their own issues if possible.

Once we had understood all of their needs, we presented the couple's situation visually, so that it was easier to understand the whole picture. This helped to dispel the feelings of injustice.

We discovered that Sadiya's UC was subject to a benefit cap because the couple didn't understand how UC worked.

We helped them understand how to lift the cap. We worked with Shelter to lift the Homechoice suspension and explained the importance of paying priority debts first.

What we have learned

We learned so much, and this is detailed in our main Annual Report.

Overall, we found that adopting a holistic approach prevents clients returning for the same issues over and over, saving resources and time. Empowering clients to deal with things themselves improves resilience and effectiveness.

Working jointly on cases improves adviser and client wellbeing and effectiveness, reduces pressure and opens opportunities to learn new ways of working.