



EVALUATION OF

The Children and Young Persons' Project

On behalf of Coventry Citizens Advice

June 2017

Prepared for Coventry Citizens Advice (CCA)

Evaluation of the Children and Young Persons' Project

FINAL

June 2017



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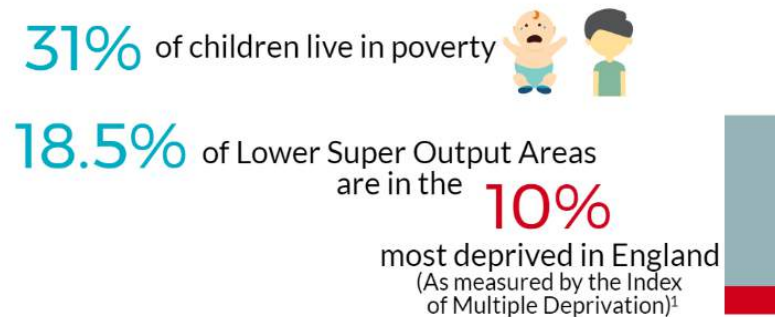
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Executive Summary

Since 2010 Coventry Citizens Advice (also known as Coventry CAB) has been delivering the Children and Young Persons' Project (ChYPP) in partnership with over 55 schools and other organisations. The purpose of ChYPP is to **“increase the life chances and opportunities for children in Coventry by removing the barriers faced by them and their parents”**.

The project works with young people and their families to provide a holistic service, to help them deal with and address multiple issues and challenges they experience, from housing advice, to support with managing debt and accessing benefits, as well as help with housing issues and other personal problems. This includes Financial Information Support Sessions (FISS) for post-16 and parents. By supporting the whole family the project creates a more positive environment for children, and helps to improve their educational attendance and engagement.



Coventry is one of the most deprived cities in the country. It was one of seven cities in the UK to become a 'Marmot City' in 2013². The Marmot principles aim to reduce inequality and improve health outcomes for all, and this has meant that improving health and reducing inequalities in Coventry has become a priority for all organisations aiming to improve the lives of Coventry's citizens. As part of Coventry's Marmot Strategy³, there are aims to build resilience, aspiration and improve mental health in young people, and to ensure prevention and early intervention are prioritised; these aims link directly to the priorities and values of ChYPP.

As in many deprived communities across the country, people in Coventry have also been affected by recent welfare reforms, and uncertainty over the new system means that some disadvantaged families are simply going without the support they need. ChYPP aims to address these issues by:

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government, English Indices of Deprivation 2015

² Coventry City Council, Coventry: a Marmot City - Making a difference in tough times, 2016

³ Coventry City Council, Marmot Strategy Summary, 2016-2019

- Increasing the life chances and opportunities for children and young people in Coventry.
- Providing a holistic service to families, helping them deal with and address multiple challenges.
- Educating people about the support available, and where to go for help.
- Providing support to families at an early stage, before they reach crisis point.

Coventry Citizens Advice works with a wide range of partner organisations to raise awareness of the project, how it can help the families they work with, and how to identify clients who can be referred to the project for support. Dependent upon their needs, families will be offered further support and advice in a number of ways.



Since it began, ChYPP has:

- Helped more than **3,000** families to address problems with



and more

- Supported clients to collectively achieve an increase in income of more than **£380,000** between 2015 and March 2017

- Referred clients to get help with:

Nutrition

Alcohol problems

Referral to MIND

Exercise

Domestic violence

Smoking cessation

Counselling

Fire safety

The schools and organisations involved in ChYPP are enthusiastic about the project and its impacts. They believe the project is well managed and offers a quick, responsive, comprehensive and effective service to its beneficiaries. Meanwhile beneficiaries themselves are positive about the support they have received, and in particular are very happy with the ChYPP staff and the ability of the support to meet their needs

Overall, feedback indicates that ChYPP has offered good value for money, given the comprehensive, tailored support delivered and the positive outcomes that have been achieved. The tiered system of support helps manage the flow of referrals and ensures that many clients can be given advice over the telephone or via email. In addition, by participating in the project and training partners as Information Assistants (IA) partners themselves have gained valuable knowledge that they can use to advise and guide clients, thereby reducing the likelihood of emergency support being needed later down the line.

As a result, staff and stakeholders believe that, given the right level of funding, the project is scalable and has the potential to be rolled out to a wider client base to improve the lives of many more families from disadvantaged communities in Coventry.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Children and Young Persons' Project

Since 2010 Coventry Citizens Advice has been delivering the Children and Young Persons' Project (ChYPP) in partnership with over 55 schools and other partners to

“increase the life chances and opportunities for children and young people in Coventry by removing the barriers faced by them and their parents.”

ChYPP works with young people and their families to provide a holistic service, which helps them deal with and address multiple issues and challenges they experience. It gives information and advice to help people to improve their lives, and supports families with a wide range of underlying problems from housing advice to support to manage debt and access benefits, as well as help with housing issues and other personal problems. By providing whole family support, the project helps to create a positive and healthy environment in which young people can grow. This has a positive impact on the family as a whole, as well as improving the life chances of children and young people, and can result in improved educational attendance and attainment.

By providing early interventions and support the project helps people to deal with their problems at an early stage, reducing the need for emergency interventions where problems have become critical and entrenched and are more likely to persist.

The project allows Coventry Citizens Advice to increase the accessibility and visibility of its support reducing barriers, empowering clients to seek advice before a situation turns into a crisis. As well as providing information and advice by telephone and email, ChYPP offers specialist caseworkers who deliver appointments in outreach locations, thereby taking its support out into communities to the hardest-to-reach families who are in the most need of help. The project works in partnership with schools and other local organisations that already have relationships with these families. Coventry Citizens Advice works with staff in these partner organisations to raise awareness of the project, how it can help the families they work with, and how to identify clients who can be referred to the project for support.

Once referred to ChYPP a client is first assessed by the Initial Assessor at Coventry Citizens Advice. Dependent upon their needs they will then be offered further support and advice in a number of ways, either:

- Given information and advice over the telephone;
- Given assisted information by email;
- Allocated an appointment with a case worker, whereupon a tailored plan ensures the complete situation is dealt with; or
- Referred to a specialist appointment offered within the organisation.

In addition, the delivery of financial information and support sessions (FISS) have helped families to address issues with financial confidence, employability and welfare reform.

The service aims and principles of ChYPP are:

To **provide the advice** people need for the problems they face

To **improve policies and practices** that affect people's lives

Being independent. Always acting in the interests of clients without influence from any outside bodies

Being impartial. Not making judgements or assumptions about clients, and making sure the service is open to everyone, and everyone is treated equally

Confidentiality. Never passing on what clients say or that they've visited without their permission

Free service. No-one having to pay for any part of the service provision

1.2 Project funding

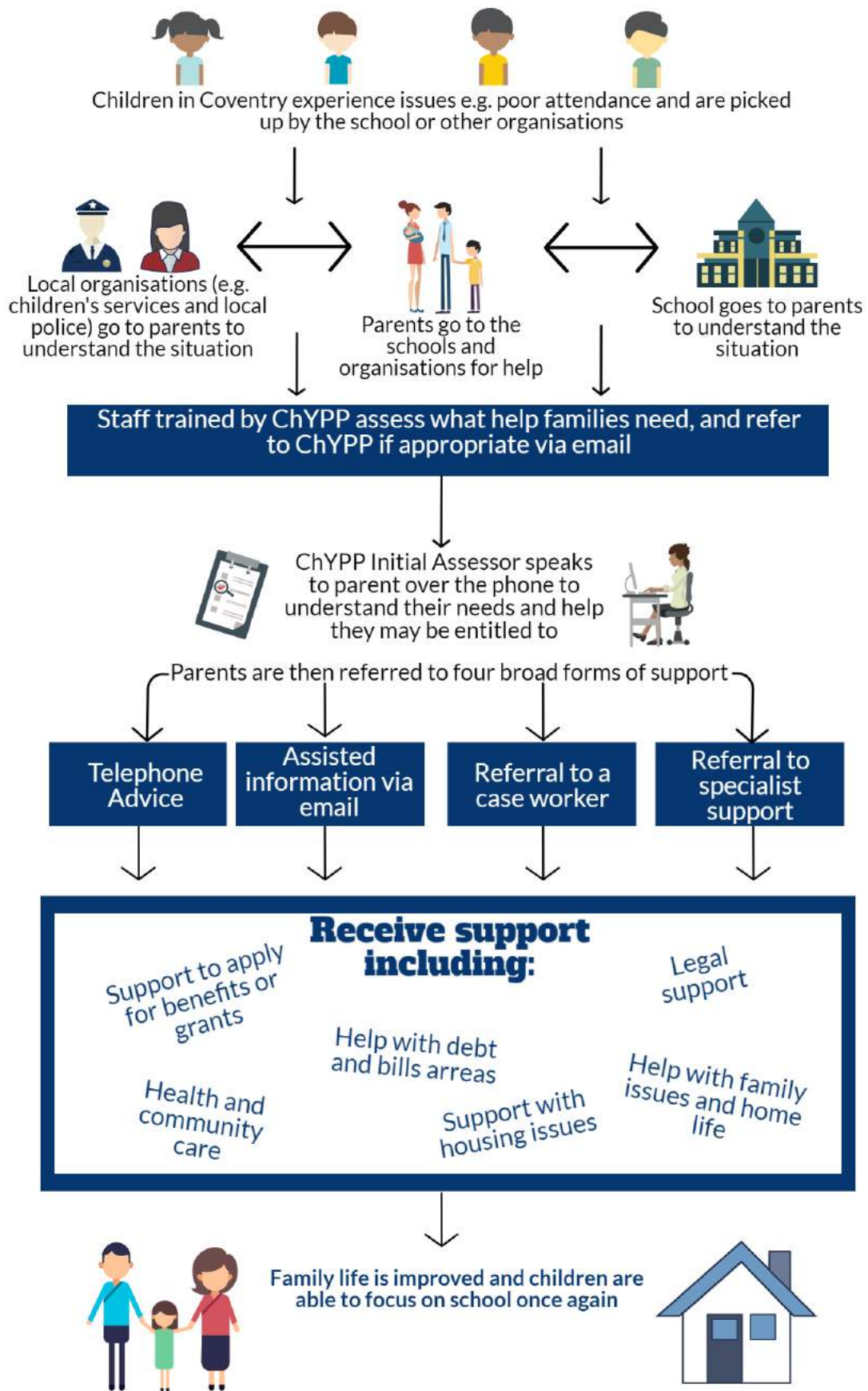
Originally the project was set up by the Local Authority and designed to be sustained longer term. However due to public sector cuts the Local Authority funding was withdrawn, and Coventry Citizens Advice had to consider other funding options. This included individual schools paying a small fee to participate in the project. Whilst many schools have been able to pay this fee and continue their participation in ChYPP, some have had to withdraw from the project due to tightening budgets and other competing demands on their funds.

In addition, the project has been successful in securing grants from the Tudor Trust, which enabled Coventry Citizens Advice to recruit a caseworker for 30 hours per week to deliver appointments, and in January 2015 this funding was extended to retain and increase the hours of the specialist case worker. However, the Tudor Trust has now ended its funding for the project and, with schools budgets tightening further, alternative funding is needed if ChYPP is to continue delivering valuable support to some of the most disadvantaged families in Coventry.

Since 2014 CCA have formed a partnership with the Local Authority Youth Service. The partnership provides some much needed funds to support ChYPP but has also provided a further offering to its clients. This work is continuing and has meant that the Youth Service, who are based at CCA, have been able to take advantage of the training the organisation can offer as well as access to quality resources when advising clients.

The main focus of this evaluation is on activity delivered during the period covered by the most recent Tudor Trust grant funding, from January 2015 to March 2017. However, broader impacts over the entire course of the project, from 2010 to date, have also been considered.

Figure 1: Children and Young Person's Project Delivery Model



1.3 About the evaluation

Whilst the project has made good progress, the scale of the challenges in Coventry suggest there is a continued need for support. For example recent figures suggest 31% of children in Coventry live in poverty⁴. It is therefore an opportune time for this evaluation to review and reflect on delivery of the project, to gather evidence of what difference it has made to those that have received support, and to help inform the future delivery and direction of the service.

The purpose of this evaluation is to:

- 1 Assess the effectiveness and impact of the project and delivery model, highlighting what works well, what works less well, and why.
- 2 Highlight the key lessons learned, critical success factors and key issues or challenges that are important if the project is extended into new areas.
- 3 Recommend improvements to service delivery as well as to extending or replicating the project into new areas.

The following research activities have been undertaken to inform this evaluation:

- 1 Consultations
 - Telephone interviews and surveys with 15 staff and stakeholders on the project, including members of Coventry Citizens Advice ChYPP team, and staff making referrals from schools and other organisations.
 - Surveys with 32 clients and families who have been supported by the project.
 - Case studies of clients the project has supported.
- 2 Review of project performance
 - Analysis of client data supplied by Coventry Citizens Advice.

1.4 Report structure

The remainder of the report is set out as follows:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Section 2 | Context and objectives |
| Section 3 | A review of project performance and impact |
| Section 4 | Lessons learned and progress against objectives |
| Section 5 | Key recommendations for future and conclusions |

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http://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/195/facts_about_coventry/2435/population_and_demographics/3

2 Project overview

2.1 The economic context

Coventry is one of the most deprived cities in the country, with an estimated 31% of children living in poverty, and 18.5% of Lower Super Output Areas are in the 10% most deprived in England (as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation⁵), 31.3% are in the 20% most deprived in England, and 66% are in the bottom half of all areas in England. The most deprived areas in Coventry include Wood End, Bell Green, Manor Farm Estate, and Hillfields, and some Lower Super Output Areas in these areas are ranked within the 100 most deprived areas of England, with one in Wood End ranked 8th.

Compared to the rest of the UK, Coventry has a higher rate of economic inactivity (28% compared to 22.3%) among the working age population (those aged 16-64)⁶. Coventry has a lower median annual income at £22,319 compared to £23,350 in England, particularly for women (£16,804 compared to £18,000)⁷. In addition, 10.2% of the working age population in Coventry have no qualifications, compared to 7.9% in England⁸.

As in many deprived communities across the country, people in Coventry have also been affected by recent welfare reforms. In 2013, many benefits began being abolished and replaced by a new benefits system. For example, Universal Credit will gradually replace most means-tested benefits (such as Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, and Housing Benefit); Personal Independence Payment replaced Disability Living Allowance; Council Tax Benefit was replaced by local schemes; a benefit cap was introduced; benefit appeal rights changed; and parts of the Social Fund were abolished, including Community Care grants and Crisis Loans. These changes have affected some of the most vulnerable members of communities, where people have found themselves excluded altogether by new benefit criteria, had to apply for entirely new benefits, or simply struggle to understand the new system. Difficulties understanding, accessing and applying for new or changed benefits and grants, combined with uncertainty of who to go to for help, means that some disadvantaged families are simply going without the support they need and are entitled to.

2.1.1 Welfare and benefits

In Coventry in August 2016, there were 27,550 people receiving benefits, 12.1% of the working age population. This is a higher proportion than at Coventry & Warwickshire LEP level (9.9%) and in England (10.9%). There were also more women receiving benefits than men, with 14,990 women in Coventry (13.5% of all working-age women) receiving benefits, compared to 12,560 men (10.7% of all working-age men).

In addition, 9,680 people in Coventry were claiming incapacity benefit (IB) or ESA only in August 2016, equating to 4.2% of the working-age population, compared to 3.6% in England overall. A further 3,280 people were claiming job seekers allowance (JSA), equating to 1.4% of the working-age population, compared to 1.1% in England overall.

⁵ Department for Communities and Local Government, English Indices of Deprivation 2015

⁶ ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan 2016-Dec 2016

⁷ ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – resident analysis, 2016

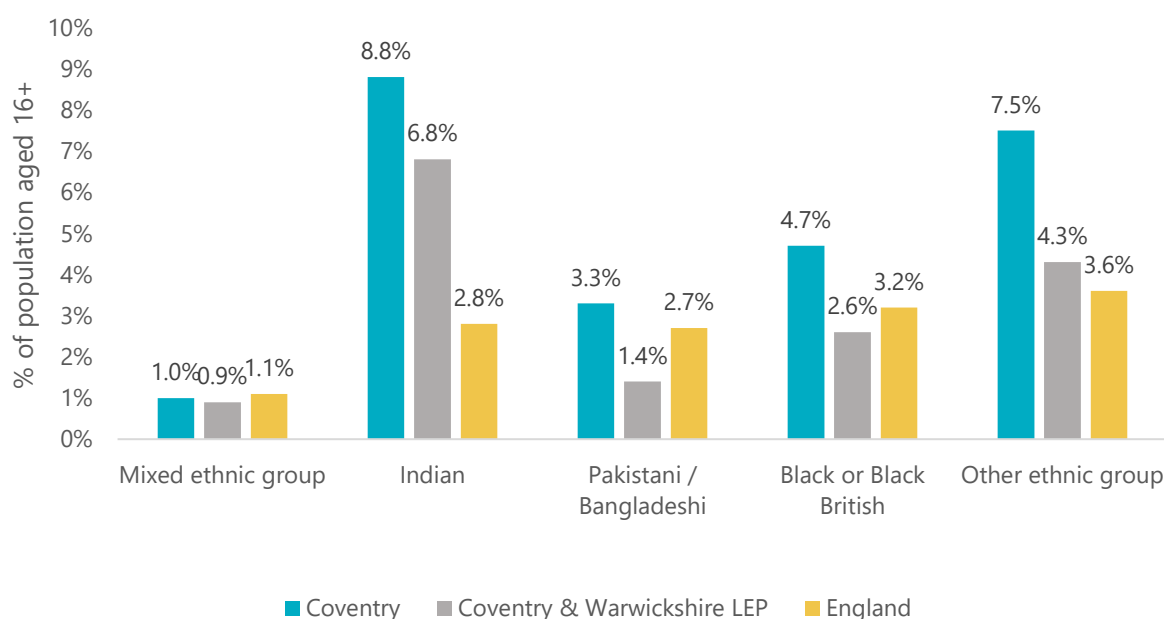
⁸ ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan 2016-Dec 2016

6,870 people in Coventry had child dependents in August 2016, a larger proportion of the working-age population than nationally at 3% compared to 2.5%. There were also 2,990 lone parents in Coventry (1.3% of working-age population), slightly above the national rate of 1%. The vast majority of these (2,910) were female, making up 2.6% of the female working-age population compared to 2% nationally.

2.1.2 Ethnic minorities and language barriers

There is a higher proportion of ethnic minorities in Coventry than nationally; 25.3% of the population aged 16+ are from an ethnic minority background, compared to 13.4% in England. The largest ethnic minority group in Coventry is Indian (8.8%), as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Percentage of the population aged 16+ who are ethnic minorities, 2016



Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan 2016-Dec 2016

Data shows that people from ethnic minority groups are more likely to experience disadvantage. For example, in Coventry, the employment rate for working-age ethnic minorities is lower than for whites (56.2% compared to 74.6%), and amongst women it is 48.6%, compared to 69.4% nationally⁹. Across the country, ethnic minorities are more likely to be economically inactive compared to whites, and this is even more apparent in Coventry where 40.5% are economically inactive, compared with 29.9% in England. This rate is even higher for ethnic minority women, where 46.5% in Coventry and 38.8% in England¹⁰ are economically inactive.

In addition, in Coventry in 2011, English was not the main language for 13.9% of residents (42,013), compared to 8% in England overall. Meanwhile, 2.6% of residents (7,869) in Coventry 'cannot speak English well' compared to 1.4% in England overall, and 0.5% of residents (1,373), 'cannot speak English' compared to 0.3% in England overall¹¹.

⁹ ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan 2016-Dec 2016

¹⁰ ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan 2016-Dec 2016

¹¹ ONS, Census: DC2105EW – Proficiency in English by sex by age, 2011

2.2 Project objectives

The direct impact of these economic and social challenges on the lives of young people in Coventry were highlighted when Coventry City Council produced its Child Poverty Needs Assessment in 2010. This report found that:

- 12.3% of students eligible for free school meals are persistently absent.
- In 2008/09 Coventry had the second highest rate of persistent absenteeism for secondary schools.
- National figures show that students who are eligible for free school meals are those most affected by poverty and are three times more likely to be permanently excluded from school.
- In 2009, 48% of pupils eligible for free school meals gained 5+ GCSEs in any subject compared to 74% of pupils who are not eligible.

The report concluded that an "underlying factor in poor attainment levels does appear to be poverty". It is in this context that the ChYPP project was developed with the following objectives:

- To increase the life chances and opportunities for children in Coventry.
- To provide a holistic service to families, which helps them deal with and address multiple challenges.
- To educate people about the support available to them, and where to go for help.
- To provide support to families at an early stage, before they reach crisis point.
- Also encourage better attendance at schools by addressing the social issues.

3 Project performance

In order to understand in more detail the project's performance, outcomes and impact, we undertook consultations with staff, stakeholders and clients, as well as analysing client data supplied by Coventry Citizens Advice. Since the project began in 2010, there have been a number of changes to the staff involved due to both staff turnover and the impact of reduced funding. Therefore staff and stakeholder interviews have focused on those who have been involved during the past five years. Client consultations, meanwhile, have been focused on those supported during the past two years of project delivery. Given that these clients have recently been supported by the project, it is far more likely that the contact details recorded for them are still current, and that their recollection of the support delivered will be more detailed.

3.1 Project outputs

Since it began in 2010 the ChYPP project has helped **more than 3,000 families** to address problems with eviction, benefits, welfare reform, multiple debts and unsuitable housing. It has also supported clients to **collectively achieve an increase in income of more than £380,000** (from 2015 to March 2017). In addition, it has referred clients to access help with smoking cessation, nutrition, exercise, counselling, alcohol problems, fire safety, MIND (mental health support) and domestic violence. The schools and organisations involved in ChYPP are enthusiastic and overall very positive about the project and its impacts.

3.2 Project management and co-ordination

ChYPP is managed and run by CCA, through a small ChYPP project team made up of managing staff, an initial assessor a case worker and admin. Overall, feedback indicates that this team has worked well with its partner organisations, and many report that the level of communication from Coventry Citizens Advice was good. This is particularly the case amongst partners who made a high level of referrals to the project. A number of schools commented that Citizens Advice staff were easy to get hold of if they had questions, and that the maximum 3 day turnaround time from referral to support was quick.

Partner feedback also indicates that the training of staff within schools has worked effectively, particularly in schools where there are family support workers who already have contact with parents. The training via the ChYPP project has enabled these staff to identify and refer parents who could benefit from the support, and in some cases the school staff have been able to provide information themselves. The initial process of training individual staff members was slightly less effective in some of the other, large partner organisations, such as West Midlands Police, as staff have less day-to-day contact with potential clients. To address this, CCA staff instead delivered on-site awareness raising sessions with a much wider staff group so that all officers had sufficient knowledge to refer people to the project. This flexible approach to delivery appears to have worked well for those referral partners, where it is more efficient to simply refer people to ChYPP to access specialist support from CCA staff.

Overall staff and stakeholders believe that ChYPP has offered good value for money, given the level of information and support that beneficiaries have received and the positive outcomes it has delivered. The advisory and informational nature of the support also means that, in many cases, clients are able to improve their lives and financial situations with a relatively small resource input from the project. As a result, staff and stakeholders generally believe that the project is scalable and has the potential to be rolled out to a wider client base across more schools and more disadvantaged communities.

3.3 Project design and delivery

3.3.1 Project design

Feedback from staff and stakeholders indicates that the project has made the support from CCA much more accessible for the hardest to reach families. By delivering support through local schools or community organisations, appointments are much quicker and easier to secure for families who are unable or reluctant to attend the CCA city centre office. In addition, they have easy access to detailed information about the support available, which they are often unaware of, provided by a familiar and trusted person.

Referral staff also praise the flexible and bespoke nature of the support provided by ChYPP. It is clear that a 'one size fits all' approach is not suitable for hard-to-reach client groups, and schools particularly appreciate the project's holistic approach, where the entire situation of the family is taken into consideration and a variety of support is provided. Consultees report that this bespoke support helps families to improve their situation and circumstances, and schools also indicated that there are examples of this leading to improved attendance for the children.

There is a tiered system of support in the project where, dependent upon the nature of their problem, clients are either given advice over the telephone, provided with supported information via email, or referred to a Citizens Advice case worker or other specialist support. These differentiated tiers of support help manage the flow of referrals, enabling ChYPP staff to process a large number of referrals efficiently and diligently.

3.3.2 Engagement

Much of the engagement of clients in the project has been undertaken via outreach work, for example with ChYPP staff attending school and community events, parents' evenings and school fairs. Feedback indicates that this approach has been effective, as it gives project staff the opportunity to speak to people who would otherwise be completely unaware of their services. In addition, general outreach services in schools are reported to have been particularly effective as it is easy for parents to get to the school to attend appointments.

3.3.3 Referrals to ChYPP

Feedback from referral staff overwhelmingly indicates that the partnership working and referral system was a key success of the project. The process enables staff in partner organisations to inform clients about the project, and then refer them to experienced ChYPP staff who are able to quickly assess their needs and make sure appropriate support is received. In many organisations, such as schools, staff were able to use the existing and trusted relationships with parents to engage them in the project. Meanwhile for some referral partners, such as the police or social services where relationships with families can often be more difficult, it enabled staff to refer them to support from an organisation they may perceive to be more independent or 'friendly'.

Staff report that having this referral system in place in their schools and organisations has provided a trusted point of contact to whom they feel comfortable referring families, to deal with issues they often do not have the knowledge or experience to deal with quickly and appropriately. For their clients, meanwhile, it offers a safe entry point to valuable support that they otherwise may have felt uncomfortable accessing, or that they simply may not have been aware of.

During the project's current funding period, from January 2015 to March 2017, there were 1,058 referrals made to ChYPP, of which approximately 511 (48%) went on to engage with the project and were followed up as an enquiry. A total of 476 (45%) clients received support directly via ChYPP staff, and 118 clients (11%) were referred onto specialist providers for support.

Table 1 below shows the projected total client numbers on ChYPP for 2015 to 2017, where figures for 2017 are projected based on data from the first quarter¹².

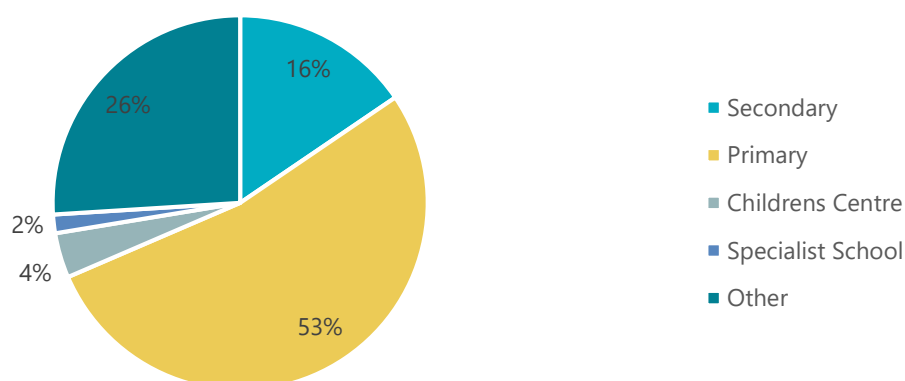
Table 1: ChYPP client numbers for 2015-2017

	2015	2016	2017 (projected)
Referred to ChYPP	570	397	287
Enquiry	275	185	151
Supported	251	175	150
Referred on from ChYPP	72	46	0

The data shows there has been a decrease in referrals since 2015, which is likely to be at least partly due to the impact of reduced funding on project resources and the number of schools able to participate.

Over the period January 2015 to March 2017, the majority of clients were referred through primary schools (53%), with 16% coming from secondary schools, 4% from children's centres, 2% from specialist schools, and just over a quarter (26%) from other organisations. The project also appears to be engaging with clients from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, as by February 2013, 38 different nationalities had accessed ChYPP¹³.

Figure 3: Referral outlets January 2015-March 2017



3.3.4 Support provided

Data indicates that the primary reasons for people accessing ChYPP are financial and housing problems. Between January 2015 and March 2017, there were a total of 268 enquiries about benefits, 175 about debt, and 154 regarding housing issues.

¹² Projected figures calculated using ChYPP client data from January to March 2017, scaled up using proportions from 2015 and 2016 data.

¹³ ChYPP flyer

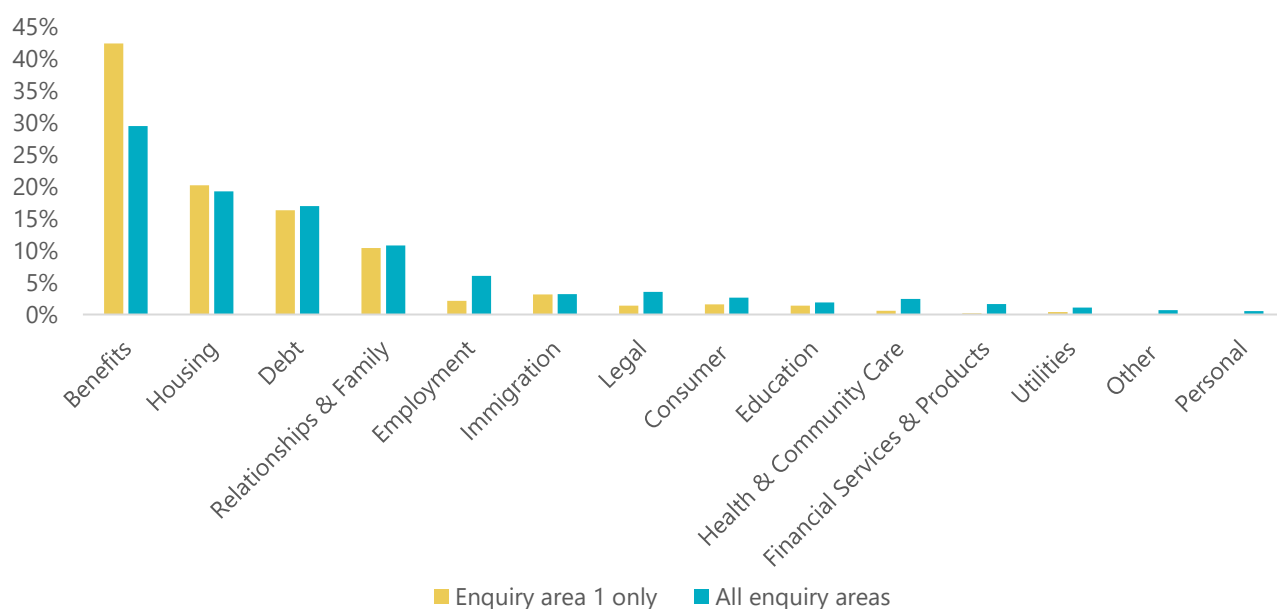
Table 2: Total enquiry areas, January 2015 to March 2017

	2015	2016	2017*	2015-17
Benefits	150	87	31	268
Debt	97	63	15	175
Housing	86	56	12	154
Relationships & Family	55	35	8	98
Utilities	26	25	4	55
Legal	23	5	1	29
Health & Community Care	22	10	0	32
Other	19	5	0	24
Employment	13	2	2	17
Immigration	13	7	2	22
Education	7	7	1	15
Consumer	4	6	0	10
Financial Services & Products	4	2	0	6
Personal	2	3	0	5
Total	521	313	76	910

*January to March only

In addition, benefits were by far the most common initial enquiry reason¹⁴ with 42% of all first enquiries being about benefits, and housing issues were second, accounting for 20% of all first enquiries (as shown in Figure 4).

Figure 4: Comparison of enquiry areas by main enquiry area and all enquiry areas, Jan 2015-March 2017

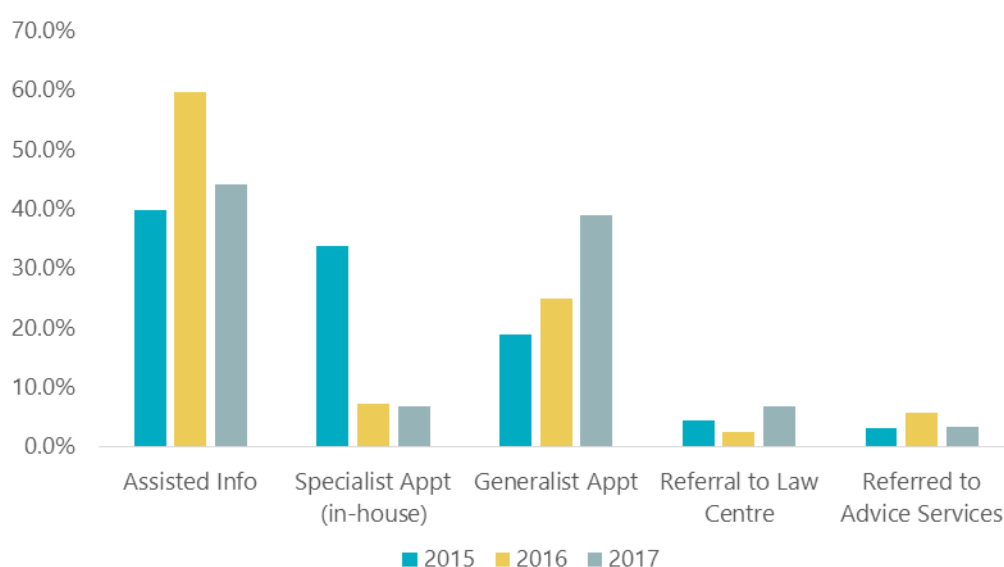


¹⁴ Clients were recorded with multiple enquiry reasons, ranked from 1 onwards

Nearly all enquiries (94%), and 45% of all referrals, went on to receive services from ChYPP or a partner organisation. Figure 5 illustrates the 'next steps' of these clients, and shows that the most common types of support received have varied over time. Between January 2015 and March 2017, 278 (47%) of those supported received 'Assisted Information', and this was at its higher proportion in 2016 where it accounted for 60% of all next steps support. In the same period 136 (23.1%) of those supported got 'In-house Specialist Appointments', which was at its highest in 2015 (34%) but much lower in subsequent years at around 7%.

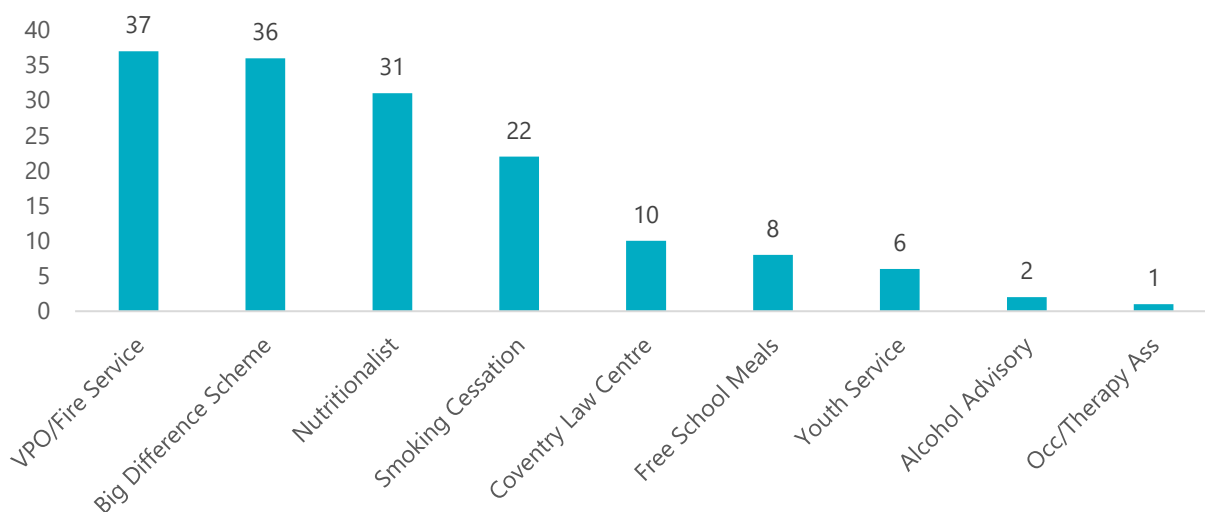
'Generalist Appointments' meanwhile accounted for 128 (21.7%) of support, and have been more frequent recently, with 39% of supported clients receiving this type of support in the first quarter of 2017. Smaller proportions of clients were also referred to advice services (4.1%) or the law centre (3.9%).

Figure 5: Next steps of clients by year, Jan 2015-March 2017



While there were no referrals to other organisations in the first quarter of 2017, between January 2015 and December 2016, there were 118 referrals (28% of those who accessed support in the same period), of which 37 were to Vulnerable Persons Officers (VPOs) or Fire Services; 36 were to the Big Difference Scheme; 31 were to a Nutritionist; and 22 were to Smoking Cessation. These referrals also varied over time, for example only 1% of referrals in 2015 were to the Big Difference Scheme, compared to 60% in 2016; and 34% of referrals in 2015 were to Fire Services, compared to 9% in 2016.

Figure 6: Referrals to other organisations, January 2015-December 2016



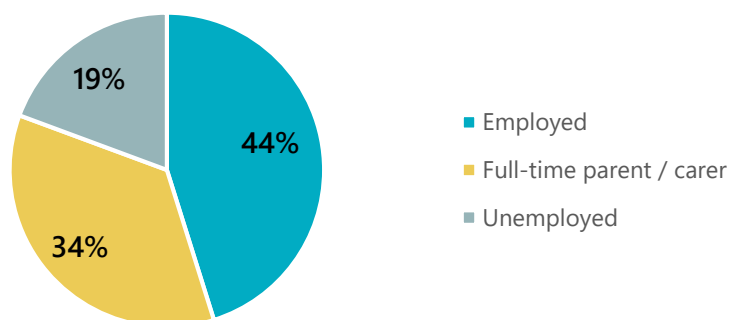
3.4 Outcomes and impacts

3.4.1 Client feedback

To understand the outcomes and impacts of the project from the perspective of its beneficiaries, we undertook consultations via online and telephone surveys, as well as a focus group with a small group of clients. A total of 32 clients provided feedback, the vast majority of whom were female (91%), and aged between 25 and 54 (93%), with the most prevalent age group being 35-44 (41%). All those who responded lived in Coventry, with the most common locations being Hillfields (21%) and Radford (11%).

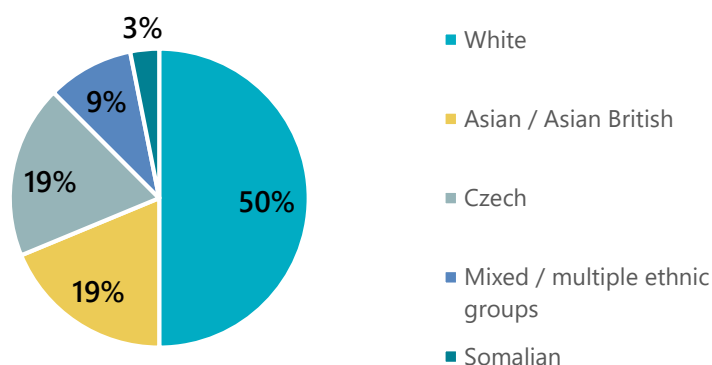
44% of respondents said they were employed, while 19% were unemployed, and 34% were full-time parents or carers (economically inactive).

Figure 7: Economic activity of respondents



Respondents to the survey were an ethnically diverse client group, with 50% stating they were White, 19% Asian / Asian British, 19% Czech, and 9% Mixed / multiple ethnic groups.

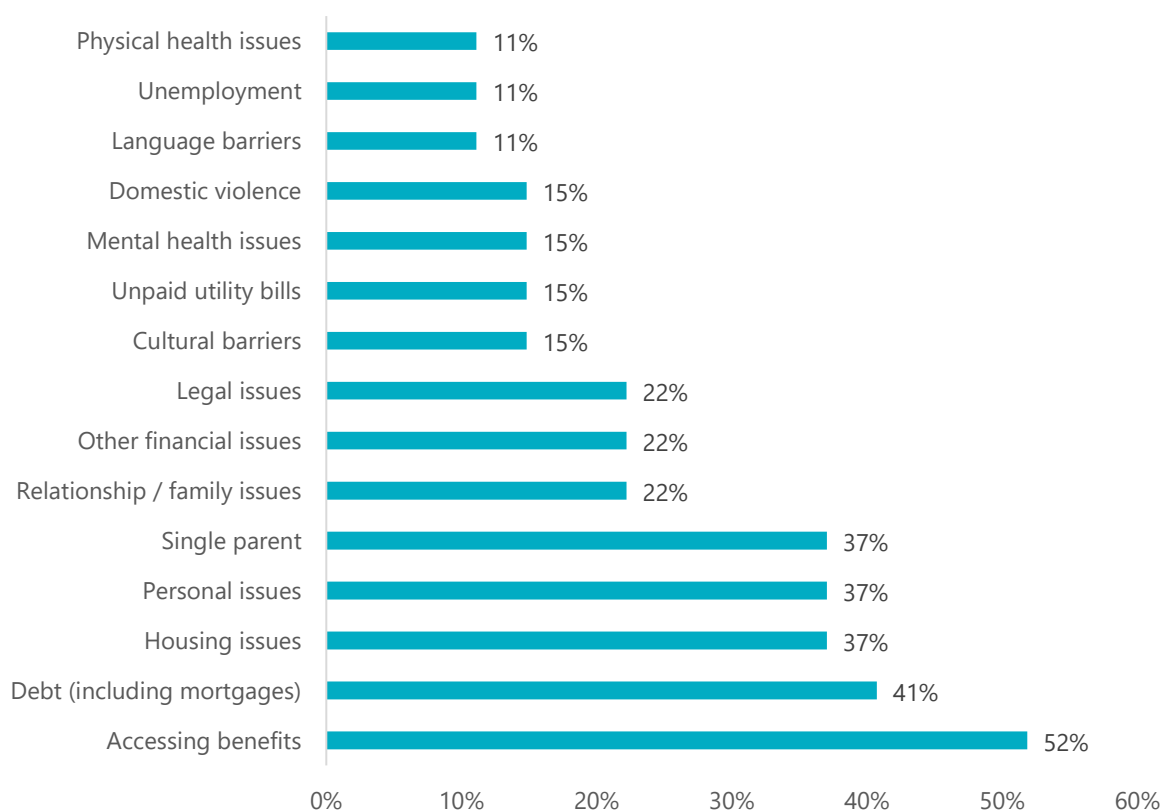
Figure 8: Ethnicity of respondents



Issues and barriers

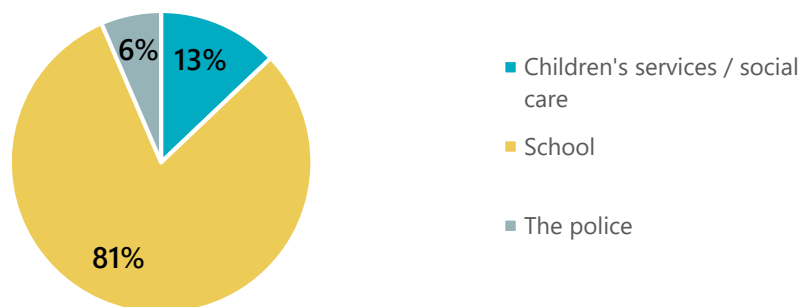
The main problems survey respondents faced when they first engaged with the ChYPP project for support were financial, with just over half (53%) having difficulties accessing benefits, and 41% experiencing problems with debt. Other common problems included housing issues, personal issues and being a single parent, each stated by 37% of respondents as a problem.

Figure 9: Problems faced before receiving support



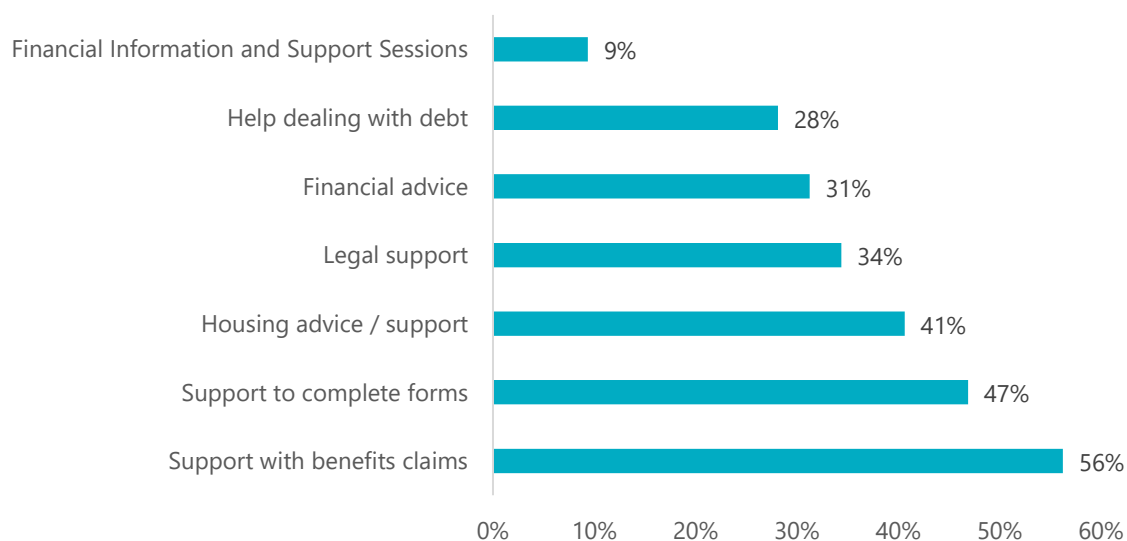
The majority of respondents (81%) found out about ChYPP through local schools, while 13% came through children's services / social care, and 6% were referred by the police.

Figure 10: How respondents found out about ChYPP



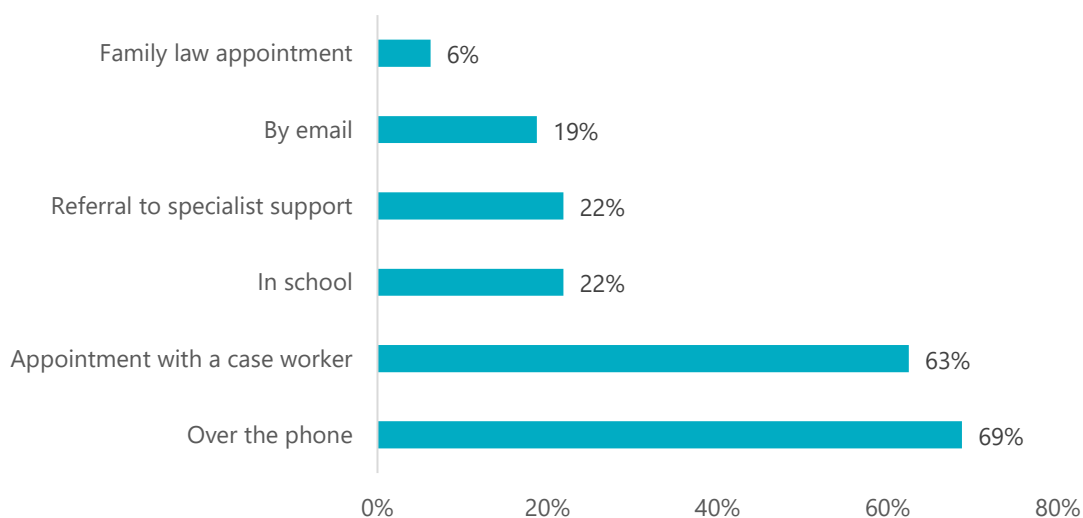
The types of support most commonly delivered to these clients were help to access benefits and advice on housing issues. Just over half of respondents (56%) had received support with benefit claims, 47% had received support to complete forms, and 41% received housing advice or support. Just over a third (34%) received support with legal issues, while 31% received financial advice, and 28% had help to deal with debt (28%). Meanwhile 9% stated that they had accessed one of the Financial Information and Support Sessions through ChYPP.

Figure 11: Types of support received from ChYPP



Project beneficiaries could access support in a number of ways, dependent upon their specific needs, and in some cases received support via more than one route. The majority of clients received support over the phone (69%), while 63% had an appointment with a case worker. Just over one fifth (22%) accessed support in school or were referred to specialist support, more specifically a family law appointment (6%). Meanwhile 19% of respondents received support via email.

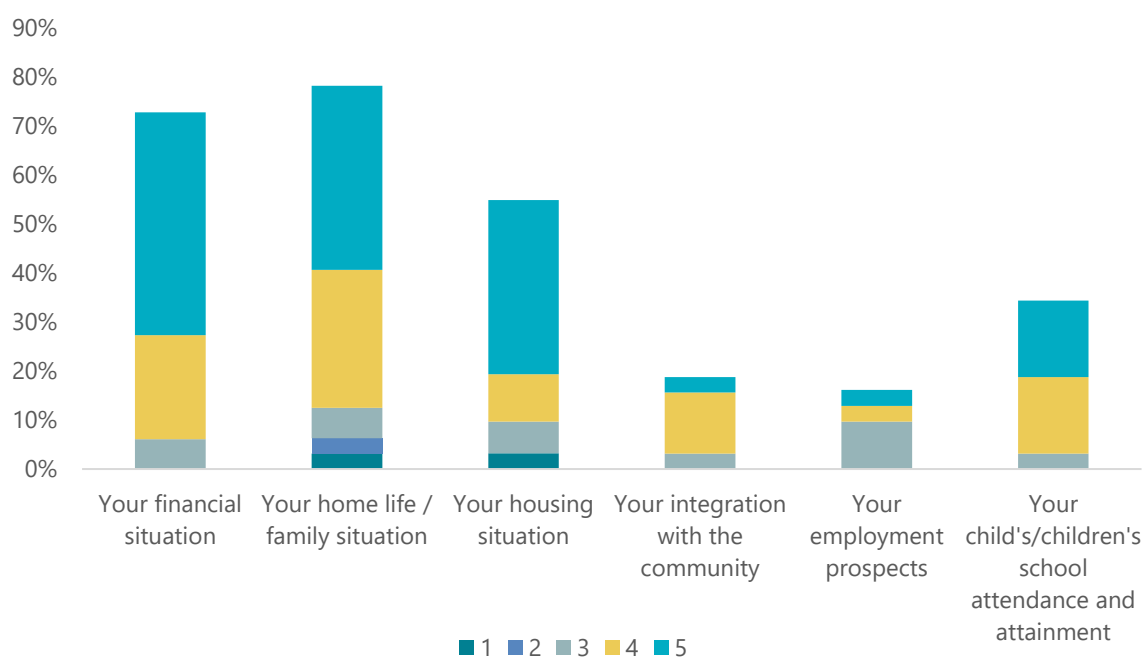
Figure 12: Ways support was delivered on ChYPP



Impacts

Clients were asked to rate how much they thought various aspects of their lives had improved after receiving support from ChYPP, where 1 was 'not improved at all' and 5 was 'improved a lot', and respondents were also given a 'not applicable' option. Figure 13 below shows the responses to this question, with the 'not applicable' responses removed.

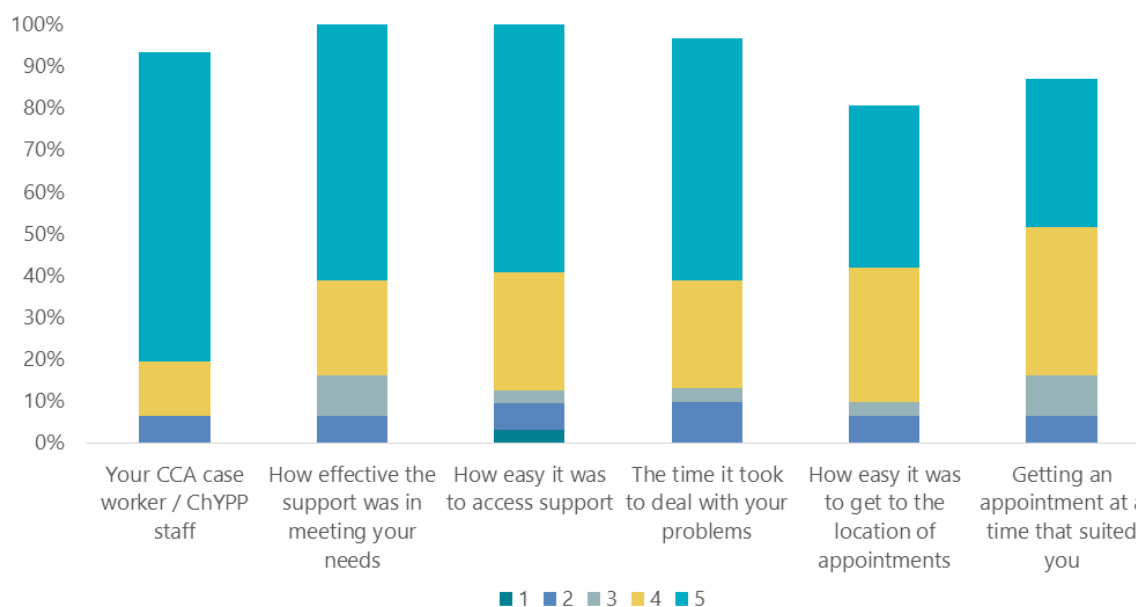
Figure 13: Improvements after receiving support from ChYPP



Overall the feedback indicates that the project has had a positive impact on the lives of its beneficiaries. For example, 67% of all respondents stated that there had been an improvement in their financial situation as a result of the project, while 66% saw improvements in their home life / family situation, and 45% stated that their housing situation had improved. Meanwhile a very low proportion of respondents said that they had seen no improvement, or low levels of improvement, across all indicators.

Clients were also asked to rate different aspects of the support they received. This was rated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was 'very poor' and 5 was 'excellent'. Again, respondents were also given the option to select 'not applicable' and these responses have been removed from Figure 14 below.

Figure 14: Ratings for different aspects of ChYPP support



Respondents were very positive about the project overall. On average across all indicators rated, 81% of respondents gave a score of either 4 or 5, while only 8% gave ratings of 1 or 2.

- 74% of respondents thought their ChYPP case worker was excellent, with another 13% also rating positively.
- 84% of respondents thought the support was effective in meeting their needs, with 61% rating this as excellent, and a further 23% rating this positively.
- When asked how easy ChYPP was to access, 59% of respondents rated this as excellent, with another 28% rating this positively.
- 58% of respondents thought the time it took to deal with their problems was excellent, with another 26% rating this positively.

Meanwhile the proportion of people who gave positive ratings to 'how easy it was to get to the location of appointments' and 'getting an appointment at a time that suited you' was 71% for each. However, for both of these indicators the proportion of respondents rating them as not applicable was higher, as many had not been supported via a face-to face appointment.

3.4.2 Key outcomes

Feedback from both clients and stakeholders has been very positive in terms of outcomes of the support. For example, direct quotes from interviews with stakeholders included:

"There has been a huge difference in children's attendance."

"Happy parents means happy children."

For clients, a key positive aspect was how easy the service was to access through their child's school:

"Appointment at school was really helpful"

"Easy to access support from school-based information assistant"

"It was more useful being able to see a CAB advisor in school. I feel if I just went to the CAB offices it would have meant me having to take time off"

Other comments praised the project staff, speed of response, and the real difference made in their lives:

"Fantastic support worker. Very helpful."

"No delays, very quick. I've worked with others but this service was quickest and best."

"I would have been in debt if I hadn't had their help."

"Given motivation to carry on, directed to the right place."

"Spent a lot of time with everything, even stuff I didn't know I needed help with."

Figure 15 below shows some of the additional comments respondents made through the client survey, all of which were positive.

Figure 15: Direct quotes from client surveys



3.4.3 Key successes

Consultations with staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries indicates that the project has performed very well in a number of areas and has achieved some key successes.

Focus on early intervention: ChYPP intervenes with families in need as early as possible, helping them to understand how systems work and enabling them to access valuable support, often before a crisis point is reached.

Educating people about where they can get support: The project engages with some of the hardest-to-reach and most disadvantaged families, who are often unaware of the support that is available to them or how to access it. By delivering support via outreach and working with a wide range of partners, families are benefiting from extensive support that they otherwise would have been unable or unwilling to access.

Flexible and bespoke support: The breadth of the support offer means that ChYPP is able to address a wide range of issues that are negatively impacting upon people's lives. It is able to achieve tangible improvements to families' lives by tackling the specific set of circumstances they are facing, which many other agencies or services are unable to address in isolation.

Support for complex cases is available: Case workers support clients from beginning to end to help them address the full range of problems they are experiencing. Many are dealing with multiple and complex issues, and the caseworker will help them to understand and access relevant support to deal with each issue.

Removing issues and alleviating worries from children's lives leads to better attendance and engagement at school: Given the complex barriers families are facing and the often chaotic lives they lead, many parents and carers are unable to focus on issues with their children's education. When facing immediate and pressing problems of poverty, debt or potential homelessness, education becomes a secondary concern. By alleviating these worries, and removing financial strain from the family, the project enables parents to focus on improving other areas of their lives, and schools have reported a positive impact on children's attendance and engagement as a result.

Partners have improved their knowledge. By participating in the project, partners themselves have gained valuable knowledge about the benefits and housing system, which has helped them to perform their own job roles more effectively. They are able to use this knowledge to advise and guide parents, thereby reducing the likelihood of emergency support being needed later down the line.

3.4.4 Case studies

Case studies collected by Coventry Citizens Advice over the course of the project demonstrate the breadth and depth of the work delivered by ChYPP. The project has helped people to cope in crisis situations, including:

- Bereavement;
- Loss of employment
- Homelessness and Evictions
- Bailiff Enforcement
- Alcohol dependency;
- Life limiting health issues; and
- Domestic abuse.

Two of these case studies are provided below, and further case studies illustrating the real life examples of ChYPP's work and impact are included in Appendix 1.

Case Study 1

Jane's story

A single mother in her 20s with a 7-year-old son found out she was terminally ill. Facing concerns over custody, income and funeral costs, she turned to her son's school for support. The school was able to refer Jane to a specialist ChYPP caseworker, and with their support she has been able to improve the family's financial situation.

What was the client's situation?

Jane, a lone parent in her 20s who has a 7-year-old son, found out she was terminally ill. The child's father had no contact with the family, and Jane wanted to make sure her parents would take custody of her son. Jane also had concerns about who would pay for her funeral as she had no money or insurance in place. The situation was already having an impact on Jane's son and his academic performance was suffering, and the school knew they needed to do everything they could to help Jane and her son, both now and in the future.

Jane had already tried calling a telephone advice line but had been told they were unable to help with her problems. Worried about what would happen to her son when she passed away, she approached her son's school to see if they could offer any help.

What support did the client receive?

Thankfully, the school was already working with the Children & Young Persons' Project, and the school's learning mentor was able to refer Jane directly to Coventry Citizens Advice. Regular hospital treatment and a lack of income meant Jane was unable to access the Citizens Advice drop-in service. However, a specialist caseworker has been supporting Jane and her parents, making appointments at Jane's home, her parent's home and at the hospital.

What was the impact?

The support provided by ChYPP enabled Jane and her family to access all the appropriate benefits and grants they were entitled to. Not only has this increased their income, it has given Jane reassurance that her funeral costs will also be paid.

Case Study 2

A single parent with health conditions was struggling with debt and dealing with verbal and physical abuse from his son. John was referred to ChYPP after the school approached him about his son's poor attendance. Support from the project helped him to improve his financial situation, as well as access to family support to address the problems with his son.

John's story

What was the client's situation?

John was a single parent living in rented accommodation with his dependant 15-year old son. He was being treated for osteoarthritis, asthma and depression, and was also struggling with verbal and physical abuse from his son. He also has a 14-year-old daughter who helped to care for him on his worst days.

John was receiving Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Child Tax Credits (CTC), Child Benefit (CHB), Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support, but felt anxious when completing forms for benefit requirements, and needed assistance to complete an ESA limited capability for work questionnaire. He also had several debts for which he had applied for Debt Relief Order (DRO).

What support did the client receive?

John was called to a meeting at his son's school to discuss his poor attendance. It was clear from this meeting that John's underlying health and financial issues were a major factor in his son's poor attendance, and the family were referred to ChYPP for further support. Via the project John received help with completing his ESA limited capability for work questionnaire and obtaining supporting evidence. He also received advice on eligibility for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and submitting an application to the Big Difference Scheme (BDS) for help with water bill arrears. To address his family situation John was put in contact with West Midlands Police to get help from the neighbourhood team; and both of his children were referred to the youth service to access further support.

What was the impact?

As a result of the support from ChYPP, John saw his income increase by **£9,326.70 per annum** through PIP and ESA payments and water charge savings.

3.5 Challenges

3.5.1 Staff and stakeholder feedback

The main challenge for partners throughout the project has been the reduction in funding for schools, and the subsequent impact this has had on staff and resources. In particular this has impacted on participating schools, who have been asked to make a financial contribution to project funding since Local Authority funding was withdrawn.

In a challenging financial climate for schools, a number have been forced to drop out of the project altogether. Staff from those schools were overwhelmingly positive about the ChYPP project and the benefits it had for pupils and their families. They also stated that they definitely wished to continue their participation in the project, as they believe there is a continuing need for it in their schools. However, feedback indicates that one potential reason for the lack of buy-in from schools is the low awareness of the ChYPP project and its direct benefits to pupils amongst the business development staff charged with making funding decisions and allocating school budgets. Given the lack of information they have on the project benefits and the return on investment achieved as a result, they are reluctant to commit scarce budget resources to the up-front costs of funding it.

In addition, the general outreach services delivered by the project in schools is considered to be particularly effective, as it is easy for parents to get to the school to attend appointments. However, feedback indicates that this valuable form of engagement has had to be scaled back recently due to reduced funding and resources.

Some feedback from staff and stakeholders indicated that there may be opportunities to improve communication within the project. For example, some schools suggested they would like to receive more updates about changes in the ChYPP team, project progress, and changes in welfare/legislation that may affect parents. During the early years of project delivery, reports were provided to schools on service use and progress, for example the number of referrals made into the project, and schools report that this information was very useful. However, again possibly due to reduced resources, these reports are no longer produced.

Communication within larger partner organisations was also identified as a challenge in project delivery, leading to a lack of awareness of ChYPP across the organisation and how it could potentially benefit their clients. The financial constraints was a contributory factor, and that reinstating this reporting function could improve communication and awareness between Coventry Citizens Advice and its partners. As the number of partners shrunk the service was remodelled to reflect the resources available and to prioritise the direct delivery of the service to the clients. However, the knock on effect was the reporting was scaled down.

3.5.2 Client feedback

The impact of reduced funding on project resources was also evident from client feedback. While overall they were very positive about the project, and many that responded thought the support could not or did not need to be improved, some did offer suggestions for future improvements to the project. Of nine comments on improvements, four related to the need for increased staff, resources or capacity to extend the service.

"More employees, more staff, more money, more outreach appointments and home visits"

"Should be (available for) all schools"

In addition, two clients mentioned the service could be improved with faster appointment times, and one person said that while they received telephone support, they would have found a face-to-face appointment with a case worker more beneficial.

4 Conclusions and lessons learned

ChYPP has been running since 2010, and over the past seven years the project has seen a number of changes. Stakeholders feel project staff have been receptive to feedback, and have actively sought ways to improve the service. Coventry Citizens Advice has made excellent progress towards meeting the objectives of ChYPP, and the project has delivered a wide range of positive outcomes for its beneficiaries. The evaluation of ChYPP also identified some key lessons learned, and potential opportunities for improvement that partners may wish to consider for future delivery.

Overall the project is well managed and responsive, with good levels of communication

Feedback from staff, stakeholders and clients indicates that ChYPP has been managed well by its partners, and offers a quick turnaround from initial enquiry to receipt of support, meaning that families can have their needs addressed quickly and efficiently. Beneficiaries are very positive about the support they have received, and in particular are very happy with the ChYPP caseworkers and the ability of the support to meet their needs. Feedback also suggests that, where there have been challenges, project staff have worked flexibly to ensure these challenges are addressed.

Some feedback from staff and stakeholders indicated that there **may be opportunities to improve communication within the project**. For example, some schools suggested they would like to receive more updates about changes in the ChYPP team, project progress, and changes in welfare/legislation that may affect parents. Possibly due to reduced resources, the level of information reported to partners reduced over time. However, schools in particular report that this information was very helpful and it would benefit the project if it could be reintroduced. Providing vital information on the outcomes, impacts and benefits of ChYPP could also help project staff within schools to make a **stronger case to the schools' budget managers for continued financial support for the project**.

The referral system has worked well in engaging families who otherwise would not access support

The ChYPP project makes use of a wide range of partner organisations to identify families that could benefit from the support and to encourage them to access it. In the case of many partners, such as schools, they have been able to use the existing and trusted relationships between staff and families to identify potential beneficiaries and refer them onto the project. Meanwhile, for other partner organisations such as the police or social services, ChYPP offers them a referral route for families to access support that they are unable to offer, and from an organisation that is often perceived as being more independent or 'friendly'.

Some staff and stakeholders suggested that **the referral system could benefit from improved communication**. For example in raising awareness of the project, and how and when to refer clients to it, particularly across some of the larger partner organisations. They also believe that the removal of the Co-ordination Officer role, due to financial constraints, has been a contributory factor to communication problems. Therefore, reinstating this role may help to improve communication and awareness between Coventry Citizens Advice and its partners.

The outreach nature of the support has worked well for partners and clients

The outreach approach to delivery adopted by the project has been effective because it enables project staff to engage with families who otherwise would not be aware of the services available to them. In addition, by delivering support through schools and local community organisations, appointments are much easier to access for people who are often unable or unwilling to attend appointments at the Coventry Citizens Advice city centre office.

However, reductions to funding have had an impact over time on the resources available for outreach work, and feedback indicates that more recently **the project has become less visible** than it was. Given that a key objective of ChYPP is to educate people about the support available to them, and where to go for help, it is vital that project staff are available in schools and the community. Therefore, in any future delivery it will be **important to ensure resources are allocated to maximise project visibility** to those who need help.

The comprehensive and flexible nature of the service has delivered tangible results for families

The breadth of the support offer, and the project's ability to tailor it to meet the individual needs of families, means that ChYPP is able to address a wide range of issues that are negatively impacting upon people's lives. It is able to achieve tangible improvements to families' lives by tackling the specific set of circumstances they are facing, which many other agencies or services are unable to address in isolation. This has directly resulted in improvements to families' financial and housing circumstances, and schools have reported a positive impact on children's attendance and engagement as a result.

Nevertheless, despite the good progress, staff, stakeholder and clients indicate that there is an ongoing need for the project and that there are many more families that could benefit from the valuable support it offers. At the same time, as project funding has decreased, there has been a **reduction in the capacity of staff to spend time with clients and to deal with the high volume of referrals**. Furthermore CCA has seen a rise in more complex cases particularly from non-school partners such as Social Care and the Police, this too has impacted on the capacity available. Feedback suggests that this pressure on staff time also leads to potential inefficiencies, for example limited resources at the initial client assessment stage means that opportunities are missed to deal with some problems more quickly at the initial triage stage, such as providing simple advice or information by telephone or email. Continued funding will be essential to maintain and expand project delivery, and it is vital that **resources are allocated to maximise efficiencies in service delivery** to ensure as many families as possible can benefit from the support.

The project delivers value for money and efficiencies, which should enable wider roll out of support

Overall, feedback indicates that ChYPP has offered good value for money, given the level of information and support that beneficiaries have received and the positive outcomes. The tiered system of support helps manage the flow of referrals and ensures that many clients can be given advice over the telephone or via email. In addition, by participating in the project, partners themselves have gained valuable knowledge about the benefits and housing system, which they can use to advise and guide clients, thereby reducing the likelihood of emergency support being needed later down the line.

As a result, staff and stakeholders generally believe that the **project is scalable** and has the potential to be **rolled out to a wider client base** across more schools and more disadvantaged communities.

Appendix 1: Client case studies

Case Study 3:

A single parent, with one dependent child under 1 was a victim of domestic abuse, and financially destitute. The client had a number of debts, and was under threat of eviction due to rent arrears. She was referred to ChYPP for help with sorting out her financial problems.

What was the client's situation?

Client H was a single parent, with one dependent child under the age of one. The client was a victim of domestic abuse and, with just £84 per week to live on, was struggling with her finances. The client had rent and council tax arrears, as well as other non-priority debts, and was under threat of eviction due to rent arrears.

What support did the client receive?

After being referred to ChYPP, the client was supported by a caseworker over a period of 12 months, with support including:

- Help to request Mandatory reconsiderations for Income Support and Housing Benefit Claims.
- Assistance to complete appeal forms.
- Submissions prepared and sent to HM Courts and Tribunals Service setting out the evidence for client's side.
- Represented the client at the First Tier Tribunal hearings.
- Support to fill in a new claim for Housing benefit.
- Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) application submitted on clients behalf.
- Big Difference Scheme (BDS) application submitted.
- Representation at possession hearing for rent arrears.
- Debts negotiated with creditors and payment arrangements put in place.

What was the impact?

The support led to financial gains of:

- Working tax credits (annually): £3,919.76
- Childcare element (annually): £5,810.48
- Income support backdated (potentially): £1,900.60
- Housing benefit backdated (potentially): £1,771.96
- Big Difference Scheme: £358.00

Total gains: £13,760.80

Case Study 4:

A single parent with three dependent children was moving between numerous addresses due to problems with her housing situation. She was also suffering with depression and lack of sleep, and was struggling to get her children to school. The ChYPP team were able to help her access support to improve her housing situation, finances and health.

What was the client's situation?

A single parent living in a three bedroom private rented property with three dependent children aged two months, nine and 14. The client was in receipt of Income Support, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. She suffers with depression and has problems sleeping, as a result of which she was struggling to get her children up and into school regularly.

She was also living between numerous addresses due to serious problems with her housing situation. Her property was in a bad state of repair with mould growing on the walls, and friends advised her to withhold rent until it was repaired. Consequently her rent was two months in arrears and she was given notice to leave the property. Her rent arrears meant she could not find another property and in total she had £4,254 of priority and non-priority debts.

What support did the client receive?

The ChYPP team were able to help the client in a number of ways. They helped her to access the private sector housing team and environmental health policies and procedures, as well as arranging an appointment with a housing solicitor.

A caseworker appointment was made to help her complete benefit claims, and in addition she was referred to: Coventry Health Centre (for access to health and nutrition advice); West Midlands Fire Service (for a home safety check); and an ECO scheme via Npower to help manage her utility bills.

What was the impact?

As a result of the support the client was not evicted from the property, her debts were renegotiated to allow her to make affordable repayments, and she is also accessing nutritional support and developing skills to prepare healthy meals on a budget. In addition, a new boiler and insulation has been fitted to the property free of charge and the repairs were carried out.

Coventry Citizens Advice continued to work with the client to ensure she was managing her situation effectively in the longer term.

Case Study 5:

A mum of five whose first language was Slovak was struggling to access a GP service. Although she had lived in Coventry for six months, her limited English language skills meant she was struggling to understand the systems and paperwork she was dealing with. The ChYPP project was able to give her access to a Slovak speaker, who was able to help her register with a GP and sort out her bills.

What was the client's situation?

A Slovak-speaking mum and her five children were not registered with a GP, despite having lived in Coventry for six months, and therefore the family had no access to medical services. In addition she was struggling to understand some of the bills and paperwork she had to deal with, and had received a letter informing her that she may be prosecuted because there was no TV licence recorded at her address. As she only watched Czech and Slovak channels she believed she would not need a licence, and was not aware she was committing a criminal offence.

What support did the client receive?

The client heard about the ChYPP project via a Slovak parent's group run by the Slovak-speaking learning mentor at her children's school. With the support of the project, she was referred to a GP with a note stating that she needed to register and requesting the appropriate forms. She was able to complete these forms with the support of the project's Slovak speaker, who also helped her to sort out the problem with her TV licence.

What was the impact?

As a result of the support the client and her family are now registered with a GP and can deal with their medical needs. In addition, a direct debit has been set up for the TV licence, which also covers the arrears and has removed the threat of prosecution. The family also know now that should they need further support in the future, there is a trusted contact within school who can help.




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