Annual Report 2017/18

Kirklees Citizens Advice and Law Centre

Delivering quality advice for the people of Kirklees







Foreword

An Amazing Service

Welcome to our annual report which tells you a little about the amazing service we are proud to offer at Kirklees Citizens Advice and Law Centre. We know we provide high quality advice and support which has a huge positive impact on the people of Kirklees partly through what you tell us and also because we have recently been rigorously inspected by Citizens Advice and by the Law Society for its Lexcel quality mark. And we passed with "flying colours".

This year the Trustees agreed our Mission Statement to read:

"To be part of a community where everyone has equal access to free support and advice, and the ability to enforce and defend their rights".

But how do we achieve this?

- The service is led by our chief executive and a large team of experienced highly trained professional staff working alongside our Trustee Board.
- The volunteers from all walks of life, with a wide range of skills, are well qualified and highly motivated.
- Our two main offices centrally located in Dewsbury and Huddersfield are easily accessible and open five days a week.
- Our outreach services work in a number of more distant locations.
- Our website offers a full range of advice and support for those who prefer using information technology.
- Our telephone advice line is readily available and staffed by advisors.
- Our drop in service can offer personalised information alongside support with our computer system.
- Our generalist advisors can offer one to one support alongside our specialist staff dealing with debt, pensions, benefits, housing, asylum, energy, employment, relationships, education, community care and welfare issues.
- Our legal team which includes solicitors is also able to offer high level advice.
- We can signpost to other agencies where necessary.

And our services are free.

Do enjoy reading our case studies to see more about the impact we have on peoples' lives.

Judith Priestley, Chair of Trustees

Trustees 2017/18

Chair:

Theresa McDonagh (deceased 7/09/17) Judith Priestley

Treasurer:

Laurence James Campbell

Adrian Hugh Cruden Gulnaz Akhtar Linda Summers Joanna Gadsby Martyn Kevin Pritchard (resigned 26/09/17) Mark Robinson (appointed 26/09/17)



Overall Vision

To be part of a community where everyone has equal access to free support and advice, and the ability to enforce and defend their rights.

Mission Statement

To provide access to justice for people in Kirklees and surrounding areas by providing a high quality social welfare advice service, covering all levels of information, advice and litigation, delivered by skilled and experienced staff and volunteers.

As a leading advice organisation we will support our wider vision by working with, supporting and inspiring others in our networks and by campaigning for social rights and justice.

Strategic Objectives

- To maintain a viable and sustainable organisation in a difficult funding environment
- To maintain and, where possible increase, service delivery levels including the provision of specialist advice
- To develop a regional and national reputation as an effective and innovative advice delivery organisation

Our Services



in the Kirklees area received help from our services during 2017/18.

††*†

15% increase

in people using our generalist service compared with 2016/17.

The third year in a row in which there has been an increase.





31%

received our service via telephone.



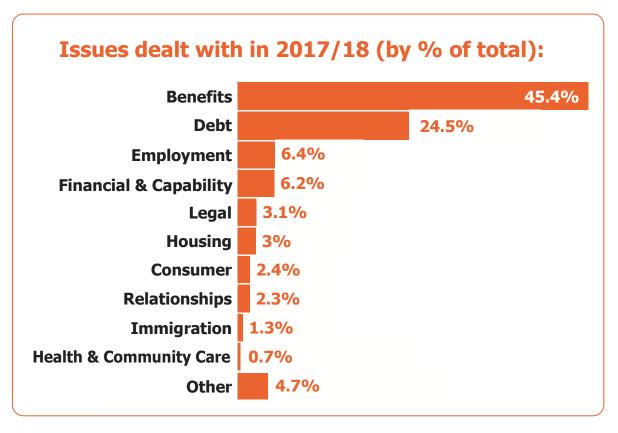
44%

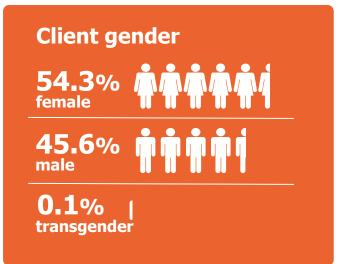
received our service face to face.

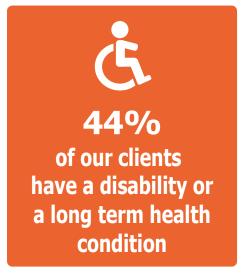


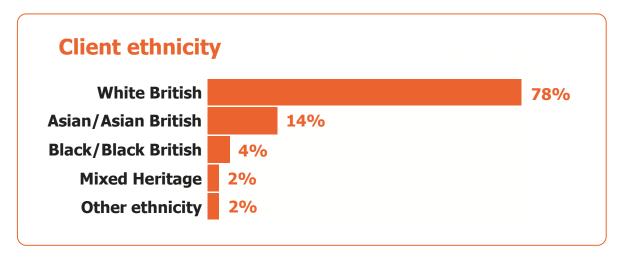
25%

received our service via our website.









We provided advice in 27 languages:

Albanian Mandingo Armenian **Portuguese Amharic** Punjabi Arabic **Pushto British Sign** Russian Somali Language Dari **Spanish English** Swahili **Farsi Tigre** French **Tigrinya Kurdish Sorani Turkish** Kurdish Badhini Urdu

Kurdish Kumanji Vietnamese Lingala Wolof

Lingala Mandarin Survey of clients who used our telephone service:



100%

would use our service again.

100%

would recommend it to a friend or relative.

★竹本竹本竹本竹付 83% of clients

were happy or very happy with our service.

中市中市中市 65% of clients

had their issue resolved on their first visit to one of our Contact Centres.

神神神神 62% of clients

using the Contact Centres felt more confident about dealing with their problem after their visit.

Our Services

Generalist Advice Services

Contact Centres

Our Contact centres in Dewsbury and Huddersfield are open from 9.30 to 3.00 each weekday.

Telephone Advice Line

The Telephone Advice Line is available from 9.00 to 4.30 each weekday.

Outreach

Our outreach sessions are held in Skelmanthorpe, Marsden and Meltham in partnership with local community organisations. Advice is delivered by appointment.

Website

Our website gives contact details for our organisation and details of the services we deliver. It also provides links to self-help material and other websites which can assist our clients.

Case Study

Our client had learning difficulties and needed to make a claim for Universal Credit, which is done online. The Job Centre had told the client they could not assist in making a claim.

We challenged this with the DWP as they should make reasonable adjustments where the client has a disability so that they can make a claim.

If a client has complex needs they should be assisted by the Job Centre's Service Team to make an application.

With our assistance the client returned to the JCP and explained the reason why he could not make a claim and received the support which he needed and which he had originally been denied.

Case Study

A single-parent client contacted us for advice and support about their transition from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payment.

She was extremely anxious about the process having been on disability benefits for nearly 20 years. As well as long-term physical injuries including kidney failure, incontinence, spondylosis, chronic nerve pain in her neck, shoulder, hands and legs the client also had significant mental health issues including PTSD and anxiety. She was very distressed and isolated and her only support was her 17 year old child.

The client had contacted the DWP assessment centre to request that her medical assessment appointment was changed to a home assessment because some days she was bed bound and that she couldn't predict when she would have a 'bad day'.

She was "terrified" about the possibility of missing her assessment appointment which would result in her benefits being stopped.

Her request for a home assessment was declined because she had a mobility car and therefore should be able to get to the appointment.

The client felt that she had been 'shouted down' when she spoke to DWP and that she had to accept their decision and ultimately had no rights.

We were able to talk to the client about her rights and options moving forward, and explain how she could provide medical evidence from her GP to challenge the home assessment decision.

Following this guidance the client was able to get obtain a medical evidence letter from her GP; escalate her DWP request to management level and secure a home visit.

We also signposted the client to a specialist charity where she could access emotional support and advice about her mental health issues and which could provide a much needed listening ear and outlet to express her emotions, something she admitted she'd not been able to do for many years.

Specialist Advice

Immigration & Asylum

During 2017/18 we worked with 320 clients to give specialist help with their asylum matters.

We have a Legal Aid contract which enables us to undertake some asylum casework for clients. Unfortunately we no longer have the funding to undertake specialist immigration cases.

Pathways Project

292 clients used the project during the year.

This project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, helps local people who are asylum seekers, refugees, have been given humanitarian protection, are an EEA citizen, been given Discretionary Leave, or who want to make a family/private life claim.

We give advice and support for a number of issues including Indefinite Leave to Remain, applications for British Citizenship, travel documents, EAA Family permits, statelessness and family reunion.

Case Study

We represented a young child who had arrived in the UK from Iraq.

His family had been killed in the conflict and his only remaining family member had arranged for him to leave.

Social Services had not done anything on his case for 6 months when we had the case referred to us.

We were short of time because of the delay but we saw the client, took instructions and agreed with the Home Office for the interview to be listed at the earliest possible date.

The asylum application was refused even though the Home Office accepted everything about his case.

We appealed the decision and represented the client in court ourselves which resulted in the client being accepted as a refugee.

He now has leave to remain for 5 years.

Case Study

We represented a client who had come from Iraq. On route to the UK he had been fingerprinted in another European Country.

The Home Office were taking steps to remove the client to this third country.

We were able to challenge that by accumulating and gathering evidence from the client and from background research about the conditions and treatment of asylum seekers in the third country.

We put in detailed representations to the Home Office opposing removing our client.

The Home Office accepted our representations without the need for us to challenge this further by way of Judicial Review proceedings.

This enabled the client to have his case dealt with in the UK without being sent to another country where he had real concerns about how he would be treated.

Case Study

Sara came to us distressed and worried about her future in the UK.

She suffers from long term depression following domestic violence in Bangladesh.

She had to struggle with the heartbreak of being separated from her young daughters in her home country when she fled in 2004.

She was renewing her leave in this country so she could finally receive citizenship.

The Pathways Project has been able to support her with this by building a complex evidence base in response to demands of the Home Office decision makers.

Once her citizenship was successfully granted she had an emotional reunion with her daughters after 14 years.

Community Care

During the year we helped 44 people with specialist help for their Community care cases.

We help clients with specific needs to access appropriate care and support services provided by local or health authorities. We can help children and adults as well as any carers they may have.

The sort of issues we help with include obtaining an appropriate care assessment, securing appropriate care and support services, issues regarding direct payments/ personal budgets/charges for care and support services, accessing appropriate aids and adaptations within a person's home, and disputes regarding whether a person should receive children or adult services, usually in an immigration context where a person's age is being disputed.

We can also deal with issues relating to a person's mental capacity under the Mental Capacity Act 2005, such as deprivation of liberty issues and best interest decisions

"I really enjoyed being able to work with you although, as you say, the outcome was different to how we thought it would pan out.

I feel sure that this will not be the last time your services are called upon and I look forward to working with you at some point in the future. You've gone out of your way to help and advise me, and I'm genuinely grateful for that."

Case Study

Our client Judith has a disabled adult daughter called Sarah.

Sarah resided in a care home with a package of care in place commissioned by the local authority.

Judith wanted increased contact with Sarah but this was being resisted by the local authority on the basis that this was not in Sarah's best interests.

Sarah lacked the requisite capacity to decide such issues for herself, with reference to the Mental Capacity Act 2005, and therefore the matter was required to be heard by the Court of Protection, in contested court proceedings.

Fortunately, there was a favourable outcome for Judith and a decision made that it was in Sarah's best interests to have increased contact with Judith.

(Note: Names have been changed to protect their identities.)

Debt

2,331 people received specialist advice and assistance from our debt team during the year.

Our clients had debts totalling over £7,800,000.

Case Study

Our client had sustained a brain injury in the past leaving him with difficulties in communicating. He was also suffering from depression.

He was unable to work and in receipt of benefits. His Housing Benefit payments did not cover all his rent costs because of the bedroom tax. He owed money on credit cards, water arrears and also utility bills.

We helped him calculate his current personal budget. We wrote to all creditors asking for information about his debts.

We investigated his utility bills and discovered that when he had switched suppliers he had not been refunded an outstanding amount that he had overpaid.

We applied for assistance with his rent and for a grant towards his outstanding

water bill because he was vulnerable.

After significant work on the case the client then disclosed that he had another debt for a Hire Purchase agreement on a vehicle for his son. We made arrangements for him to return this car to the company but he still owed money.

It was unlikely that the client's health would improve in the near future or that his income would increase so we applied for a Debt Relief Order to remove his outstanding debts and allow him to manage his affairs better with the income he had available.

"Just to say thank you for all your help. Without you and the Contact Centre staff I don't know what I would have done.

Please don't ever leave Dewsbury I may well need you again. I just wish I could return the favour."

"Thank you so much for all your help. You have changed my life around."

Employment

994 people called our Employment Helpline during the year for assistance with a work related problem.

We provide an Employment Helpline for people living in Kirklees where we give advice and support.

"I am really happy with the service you provide and very friendly and helpful staff as well."

"My advisor was very informative and encouraging."

"I really believe that you are doing a good thing and please carry on."

"Keep up the good work."

Case Study

Our client was employed continuously for over 17 years. She was off work due to illness for quite some time and then the place where she worked was closed. The employer did not become insolvent but just closed the business.

We assisted her to apply to the Employment Tribunal for a redundancy payment, pay in lieu of notice and accrued holiday pay. As the employer didn't properly pursue a defence, the tribunal issued a default judgment.

However, because the employer wasn't insolvent but had merely ceased trading, the Redundancy Payments Office (RPO) could only pay the redundancy payment. They did so but limited it to only 4 years service. We had to assist her to prove that she had continuity of employment. The RPO then paid her the full amount of redundancy payment she was entitled to but could still not pay the other amounts ordered.

As the company was not insolvent they were still showing as an active company with Companies House. As a result we can pursue them and have instructed the High Court Enforcement Officer to pursue the other payments and that is currently in hand.

NHS Complaints Advocacy Service

121 clients were helped by this service during the year.

This service assists people to make complaints about NHS care or treatment received.

Case Study

A client was having difficulties with Accident and Emergency understanding his health condition.

To overcome this a letter was placed on his A&E records for the health professionals to understand his health condition.

A local resolution meeting was attended with our assistance, we helped the client work out what he wanted from this and a satisfactory outcome sought.

The client was satisfied following this meeting. The client has also established a path for ongoing continuing care with relation to his health condition.

Case Study

Two complaints were made by our client in relation to the care her deceased husband received from the Hospital Trust and the Clinical Care Commissioning Group.

Both referrals were made to the Ombudsman for a independent review of the case and along side this, a referral was made to Action Against Medical Accidents for their opinion on the case.

"I would like to compliment you on your efficient and professional work.

Thank you for getting me so far with John's case. I know it's not over and there is still a long way to go but we have taken a huge step forward."

Pension Wise and Financial Information

787 clients had individual appointments with our Pension Wise Team.

Pension Wise is a free and impartial government service delivered by KCALC to help people understand their defined contribution pension options.

This team also assisted 212 clients who had energy related issues to resolve their problems with their suppliers and/or to switch to tariffs which were better suited to them.

"I don't think there is any need or space for improvements. Staff deal with any problem pretty much immediately and keep things very confidential.

I will definitely recommend this place. Thank you so much!"

"I feel 100% better leaving than when I arrived."

"Very prompt, informative advice. Very helpful staff who made me feel comfortable."

Case Study

A 60 year old man had six pension pots with a combined value of approximately £288,371.

He was not looking to retire until he was approximately 62/63 years old but was exploring options and considering combining all plans into one to reduce the amount of paperwork he receives annually.

On reviewing the situation it was clear that some of the plans held very valuable guarantees (Guaranteed Annuity Rates) which meant the client will receive much higher guaranteed income in retirement from these plans.

If he closed these plans and merged the funds into one combined policy he would lose this guarantee meaning potentially much less income in retirement.

At the end of the appointment the client understood that he could mix his retirement options and thus maximise income for life for himself and his wife meaning a comfortable future.

Welfare Benefits

Our specialist Welfare Benefits Upper Tribunal worker worked with 147 clients during the year.

We also hosted the Kirklees Council Welfare Benefits Advice Service who assisted over 6,000 local people.

Case Study

Our client was receiving Employment Support Allowance as she was disabled and could not work.

This did not cover her rent costs and she was advised by DWP that she would need to shut down her ESA claim and apply for Universal Credit instead to receive the housing element.

Unfortunately she had been misinformed as she could have applied for both benefits at the same time and had her main income from ESA and the housing element from UC.

Claiming only UC left her substantially worse off because she lost additional premiums payable under ESA but not under UC.

We contacted DWP who informed us that she could not be in receipt of both benefits.

We knew that we were correct and spent a lot of time and effort contacting DWP and trying to get the situation involved.

During this period our client was without income for over a month.

Eventually her ESA was restored, she received the housing element of UC, she received backdated payments and DWP awarded her compensation because she had been misadvised.

"I was seen by the staff in a very short amount of time. They dealt with my problem very quickly and assured me that things are going in the right direction.

Also, staff have a brilliant attitude towards their customers."

Research and Campaigns

We undertake research and campaigns work on local issues and also contribute to national campaigns headed by Citizens Advice and the Law Centres Network.

We have a research and campaigns team including trustees and volunteers who assist with gathering and analysing information. We also have a regular column in the *Dewsbury Reporter* and a Twitter account where we tweet about issues that affect our clients.

Case Study

We used the case of one client to change the law for everyone.

Our client has Type 1 Diabetes and needs insulin when his blood level drops. He has a monitor with an alarm but he sleeps so deeply that he needs his mother to monitor his condition and give him insulin at night if he needs it. He applied for Personal Independence Payment to help support him but was refused.

We assisted him to request a mandatory reconsideration as we believe that he should have received the benefit because he needed assistance with "Managing therapy or monitoring a health condition". We represented our client at the First Tier Tribunal which we won and then at the Upper Tribunal

because the DWP appealed on a point of law.

We challenged the incorrect way in which the DWP were interpreting the regulations. Having taken the matter to the Upper Tribunal we requested an oral hearing before a panel of three Judges as a way of getting a definitive ruling on the matter. In the event, the Secretary of State was forced to back down before the hearing and we used our influence in negotiating a settlement to ensure wider public benefit.

The Secretary of State made a public statement that DWP would review all similar cases and implement backdated awards of PIP benefitting thousands of claimants. The Regulations were changed in March 2017 but this work opens up the possibility of a Judicial Review challenge to those changes which we are now working on with good prospects of success.

This would ensure ongoing benefit to anyone who needs help managing therapy or monitoring a health condition. It also has a positive impact in demonstrating how advice/casework services can effect positive change.

This work shows how our advice model harnesses the skills of volunteers through to caseworkers, to senior solicitor and barrister, to campaign through casework and together change the law for the benefit of our clients.



Our Volunteers

Here's what our volunteers had to say:

"I'd really like to thank you and the rest of the team for all the training and help provided and the invaluable experience that I gained at my time at the contact centre. I really enjoyed myself and learnt a lot."

"I volunteer because I have had a difficult few years myself and believe that if everyone helped someone else the world would be a better place."

"I get a buzz out of helping people. The face to face contact is very helpful and important to the clients.

They come to us for free help and sometimes we are the last set of people to show help and compassion."

Why our staff value our volunteers:

"All our volunteers make the service what it is. We could not do it without them."

"Volunteers are the backbone of our service. They do the most amazing work, helping our clients through their difficult times."

"Wonderful people who give their own time to help others."

"The service wouldn't be run without volunteers, they are a very big part of the organisations. Thank you, each one of you."



At 31st March 2018 our volunteers were:

Hina Ali Demi Arnold Caroline Bath Nigel Baxter Godspower Bestman

Ruth Davies
Anne Douglas
Abbie Dowd
Lauren England
Patricia England
Kenneth Farrington

Susan Firth
Chloe Flynn
Raad Gorji
Julie Griffin
Rachel Grogan
Lavin Hama-Saleh
Leila Hanson
Rod Harris
Peter Hart

Laura Higginbottom

Amber Hussain
Samina Hussain
Haddijatou Hydara
Isobelle Ingham
Philip Jay
Armaan Khan
Suzanne Kirkham
Eleanor Lamb
David Lawrence
Sarah Lockwood
Vera Mackin
Shona Maiden
Alastair Megahy
Peter McKenzie
Natalie Milner

Antonia Nita Avis Nunn Laura Ogden Hasan Patel Jackie Ramsay

Julie Moffatt

Asma Rawat Rifat Rehman

Christine Richardson

Joe Roe Paul Sands Marion Simmers Elizabeth Stevens Andrew Stock Ann Strain Jonils Sula

Veronika Susedkova

Nada Tariq

Christine Thorburn Tracy Walker Jan Walters Kate Ward

Stephanie Watkiss Sharon Weed Steven West

During 2017/18 the following people also volunteered:

Aleksandra Bartoszelwska Zenab Bibi Emily Bosworth Arabella Chimpondah Paula Clapham Sandra Cooke Michael Evans James Graham Mariam Iqbal Rhys Jones Diana Kucko Muhammad Naqash Monjoot Singh

Our Finances

Extract from Trustees Report in our accounts 2017/18.

The past three years have seen significant (50%) cuts to core funding and as a result there was considerable change including the introduction of a new service delivery model which succeeded in maintaining support for the same number of clients despite the reduction in funding, a move in premises in Huddersfield, and an overhaul of IT and telecommunications systems. Core funding has now stabilised and we are looking at a period of consolidation alongside exploration of new opportunities as they arise.

In particular, we have been successful in retaining and increasing contracts for Legal Aid work which will start in September 2018 and allow for development of a specialist Housing advice service.

We have been funded for a refugee and asylum seeker support service which we will look to expand in 2018.

We have also maintained skills and profile in the area of discrimination law which we will continue to seek funding for.

We are mindful of development in digital technology and plan expansion of digital services, including further enhancements to our website, advice using webchat, and potential development of apps to support advice provision. The Trustees maintain a strategic business plan which is reviewed annually and updated regularly. This contains an analysis of the various associated risks and a summary set out in an organisation risk assessment matrix.

The organisational risk assessment matrix assesses potential consequences, likelihood, and impact. It also sets out policies, procedures and systems to mitigate those risks or manage any potential impact on the organisation should those risks materialise.

The principal risks and uncertainties facing the organisation include:

- Loss of key funding or failure of income streams
- Failure to meet quality standards or regulation required by regulatory bodies
- Breach of systems relating to security of data
- Loss or failure of IT systems
- Unplanned loss of key staff

A copy of our full accounts can be obtained, on request.

The figures on the next page are a summary of information contained in those accounts.



Income

Council and Community	£772,020
Kirklees Law Centre (Legal Aid)	£208,836
Transitions	£30,096
Money Advice Service	£277,386
Pension Wise	£65,959
Investment income	£1,324
Income TOTAL	£1,355,621

Expenditure

Council and Community	£803,162
Kirklees Law Centre (Legal Aid)	£170,505
Transitions	£30,515
Money Advice Service	£274,676
Pension Wise	£63,123
Expenditure TOTAL	£1,341,981

Our Unrestricted Reserves at 31st March 2018 were £307,016.

Our Progress

During 2017-18 we have continued to develop the organisation with further improvement to governance, operations and our campaigns work.

In April 2018 we were audited by Citizens Advice, looking at our policies, procedures, leadership and governance.

We have passed with flying colours and are rated Green in all areas. We have been awarded our advice quality marks for our generalist and casework services and an additional quality mark for our telephone advice services for the next 3 years. This is in addition to maintaining our Lexcel quality mark for our specialist work.

Looking at statistics for the year 2017-18, I am delighted to report that over the last year we have helped over 50,000 people more than ever before. Of these, 20,000 were assisted in the contact centres and 14,000 by the telephone advice line.

Across the organisation, our advice has assisted with £12.4 million of new benefits entitlements, while our Debt specialists have managed almost £8million in debts.

We have a new tool for gathering client feedback in the Contact Centres. This allows people to give quick feedback on the computer after they have been assisted. We have only introduced this recently but have already received hundreds of responses – the vast majority of which are extremely positive about the service and the help that clients have received. In particular, 100% of clients seen in both Contact Centres would use our service again or recommend it to someone else.

Looking forward, our budget for the year ahead shows that finances remain tight,

but we should be able to see some stability next year, while we have plans to maintain and improve services and continue to campaign on behalf of our clients. All of this gives me a great sense of both pride and confidence in our organisation and the services we provide for clients.

We can see from the data we hold, from independent inspections and from what clients are telling us that we are delivering excellence - from the trustees, through all levels of staff and volunteers - and that we are helping more people and helping them effectively.

That is very much down to all of our staff and volunteers, both individually and collectively, and I would like to thank them very much for all their efforts over the past year.

Nick Whittingham, CEO

Our Executive Management Team

Chief Executive

Nick Whittingham

Compliance Manager

Darren Grosvenor

Operations Manager

Lesley Kaye

Finance Manager

Ian Parkin

HR, Data and Campaigns Manager

Kirsty Dickinson

Development Manager

Anne Hudson



We are supported by Citizens Advice and Law Centres' Network.

We wish to thank all our funders:

Big Lottery Fund Citizens Advice Money Advice Services Pension Wise Community Spirit Crossroads Centre Cuckoos Nest Kirklees Council Department of Energy & Climate Change Legal Education Foundation Legal Aid Agency

Our partners during 2017/18:

Fusion Housing
Kirklees Council
Looking Local
Healthwatch Kirklees
Cloverleaf Advocacy
The Mission Huddersfield
Money Advice Services
North East Regional Law Centre
St Augustine's Centre Halifax
Wakefield CAB
Calderdale CAB

During 2017/18 the following staff were employed by KCALC:

Karen Adleigh	Charles Greaves	Peter Sales
Feddus Ali	Katie Hellawell	Emsuda Selman
Karen Bentley	Sue Howard	Sharon Smith
Steve Collins	Maxine Hunter	Nina Stansfield
Raashida Daud	Alina Hussain	Amanda Swallow
Fatema Dudha	Suhra Kabalic	Richard Taylor
Craig Eastwood	Jennifer Lay	Hannah Thomas
Sarah Fatica	Asia Majid	Linnet Thornton
Graham Fearnley	Matthew Middleton	Stephanie Webb
Wendy Forrest	Liz Perry	Martin Whitaker
Steve Frain	Joe Power	Cheryl Williamson
Charlie Frielick	Michael Rawnsley	Ginny Woolfenden
Sadie Goldsmith	Shereen Rebbla	











Contact Us

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Also at:

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www.kcalc.org.uk

Kirklees Citizens Advice and Law Centre is a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Charity. Company number 4259550 and Charity Number 1088651

Kirklees Law Centre is a wholly owned subsidiary of KCALC. Company number 5470398 and Charity Number 1112885