

How we have helped people through our Advice Services

1 April 20 to 30 June 20

The headlines are :

- Almost 7000 people helped, more than in a similar period last year
- Most people asked us about help with benefits but we also saw a significant increase in employment related enquiries. Many of our enquiries were from people impacted by COVID-19. These include help with claims for benefits primarily universal credit and enquiries about redundancy, in work employment rights and concerns in relation to job retention scheme.
- We have also seen a significant (but almost certainly temporary) dip against usual levels in enquiries in relation to disability benefits, debt, immigration and housing. This is probably because of a combination of the temporary debt protections in place and a sense that clients did not feel able to ask about issues not related to Covid.
- The demographics of who we are helping have not significantly changed from previous periods
- 29% of our clients identified as being part of a BAME community
- 39% of our clients were disabled or had a long term health problem.
- However, we appear to be helping more younger people, with 33% of our clients aged under 34 (compared to 25% during a similar period last year)
- We continue to focus on how to reach people who face additional barriers
- Almost 200 Deaf and BSL users received advice through video conferencing.
- Advice is being delivered in community languages by bi-lingual advisers and we are making extensive use of Language line to enable people who face language barriers to be able to get help from us.
- All types of casework is being undertaken via phone, email and other digital means including disability benefit applications, benefits appeals, immigration applications and applications for Debt Relief Orders.

From 1st April 2020 to 30th June 2020

We have helped 6907 people



**53%
Women**

**47%
Men**

**39%
Disabled or
ill people**

**29%
Black, Asian and
Minority Ethnic
people**

We have helped with 18,347 issues



**52%
welfare
benefits**

**12%
debt**

**9%
employment**

**3%
immigration**

**5%
housing**

**19%
other**

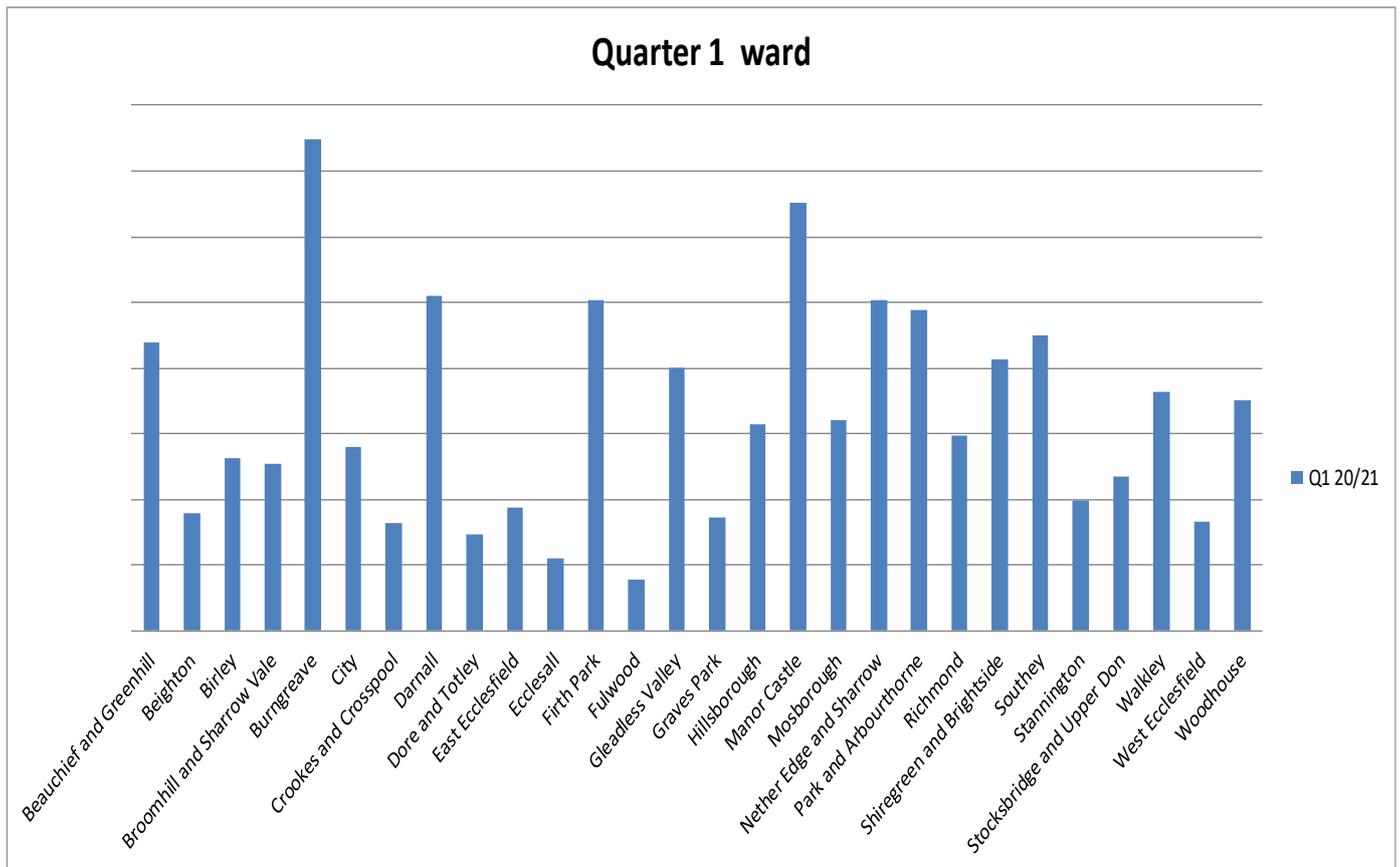
We have helped people achieve positive outcomes



£2,894,382 income gained

£312,209 debts written off

Where our clients live



Since 24 March 20 we have delivered all of our advice services by phone and digital means. So it is very important for us to see to what extent we are still helping people in the greatest need. One measure of this is where our clients live.

- **The table above shows that we continue to help more people who live in the poorest areas of the city.**
- Given that we have been helping predominantly with issues related to Covid-19 **it is a likely indication that people living in these areas have been disproportionately impacted, particularly in relation to their income and employment status.**

Looking Ahead

We can see that, during this period, the level of enquiries in relation to debt, immigration, housing and disability benefits was lower than in previous periods.

We believe this has been influenced by two factors :

The temporary debt and housing relief measures including payment holidays and protection against eviction have given temporary respite

Some people have felt unable to address their everyday issues at a time of national emergency—a similar albeit on a smaller scale to why people have not been dealing with symptoms of serious illnesses

We are also starting to see the impact of an increasing number of job losses and the subsequent sudden and devastating impact of loss of income. We must also factor in the impact of the end of debt protection measures.

Citizens Advice at a national level has quantified this latent demand. We are expecting an increase in people seeking help by as much as 40% during this year and into next.

Sheffield Advice line 03444 113 111

(Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm)

By email : getintouch@citizensadvicesheffield.org.uk

By text : 07860 026184

Universal Credit Help to Claim

0800 144 8 144

(Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm)