



Bassetlaw Citizens Advice would like to request your help in order for us to provide advice and support for those **individuals within your area that are struggling to find the help they need** as a result of being unable to access digital channels, which includes telephone, email and webchat.

On 17th March, due to Covid-19, we transferred our service to telephone, webchat and email and paused our face-to face service delivery.

We are currently in the process of arranging a return to our face to face service, initially at our main office in Worksop. However, this will be a phased return due to the limited space within our offices and resources to cover both face-to-face and digital channels. In the meantime, we would therefore like to link up with local contacts/community group leaders that can direct vulnerable clients to our service so that we can provide advice and support directly.

Please let us know of any group leaders in your ward that have contact with their vulnerable group members, or pass on our contact details to them.

We can help with welfare benefits, money/debt worries, employment, redundancy, housing, relationship issues. **For a limited period, we currently have a support package for vulnerable residents with prepayment meters who are struggling to pay their bills.** Our specialist teams for Energy, Debt and those affected by cancer have separate direct telephone contact numbers.

I enclose our Covid-19 Impact Report. Statistics from our database for Bassetlaw have been gathered from the Covid -19 period 1st March - 25th June 2020 and compared to the same period in 2019.

Although the number of our client enquiries has increased during the Covid-19 period, we are concerned that there is an average of 58% less people contacting us from certain areas with high levels of deprivation.

We have identified the barriers to digital channels being taken up due to a number of contributing factors, including the following, we're looking at ways we can overcome these barriers:

- Low income, therefore limitations for internet access, telephone charges
- Lack of interest in using technology
- Limited knowledge and capabilities to using technology
- Language barriers
- Difficulties for those with hearing/speech problems
- illness/long-term health issues
- Elderly, socially isolated

Our Impact Report also has details of how to contact us for advice and support.

Should you have any queries or suggestions, group leaders to contact, please don't hesitate to contact me or if for a specific enquiry relating to a client, please complete the 'email advice form' on our website: <https://www.bassetlawcab.org.uk/advice>

Karen Whitlam
Chief Executive
21st July, 2020