

Information, Advice & Guidance project



The Information Advice and guidance service has been very busy over the past 12 months and has seen 629 clients and helped to secure over £230,000 worth of benefits for local families.

With the cost of living crisis and the historic poverty and benefit dependency due to poor health and a lack of skills we have experienced historically in Holy Trinity, we feel this is a vital service and one we know from the consultation is highly valued within the local community.

The project is targeted at those living in the top 10% of deprived communities in the country, but given that all who access this service have to need we do not turn anyone away who has language as a barrier to IAG. Despite the good work over many years, St Peter's Ward in Tameside Greater Manchester remains a poor and racially divided community. We understand the needs of our community and believe we are targeting our support to those that need it most. Evidence suggests this is a much-needed and valued service.

The service not only helps with claims it offers support on a range of information needs from a simple translation of a letter to a more complex PIP application all must understand their right and responsibilities as they navigate the benefits system.

Due to Covid, we have seen many more people of working age having to access the benefits system due to reduced hours and the loss of employment.

We would like to thank the Council for Social aid for funding this project and the Big Lotteries reaching Communities for their continued support in bringing services to the people of Holy Trinity.

Thank you for reading

Carl Kelsall
PPP Project and Centre Manager

Our vision is to create a sustainable, affordable, local asset to create a strong and cohesive community, connecting people to tackle problems and bringing people together. Our Asset Based "Grow our own" philosophy is the best approach to developing active citizenship that encourages participation in the decisions historically made by services without the involvement of the local community.

Project activities include assistance with a range of welfare applications (attendance allowance, working income support, housing, childcare), unemployment and health care support. Our top five caseloads are Personal Independence Plan (PIP), Tax Credit, Child Benefit, Council Tax and Universal Credit. We also assist with doctors' letters/appointments, school applications, appeals and anything relevant to the needs of our local community. This service is provided to those that may otherwise be excluded from mainstream support due to language barriers. We believe our ability to communicate using the same mother-tongue also enables us to connect on a deeper level within the community we serve. Establishing a strong relationship that is built on trust also allows us to provide meaningful guidance on other issues of family life. Practical applications of this advantage include interpreter support and EU Settlement forms.

The project will also contribute to the Parish of the Good Shepherd's mission to have a Christian presence in every community. HTCCC will continue to walk in the footsteps of Christ by providing loving service to those in need and promote social justice and inclusion.

We believe access to information is a key pillar of tackling poverty, and a strong relationship between the disadvantaged and service providers is best facilitated where people feel most comfortable, accepted and empowered. Our project delivers client-centred advice in the heart of the community through our 'Community, Language, Information and Advice Guidance Service', for those who would otherwise face language barriers to mainstream services. It lives alongside our Big Lottery project to empower local people through an Asset Based Community Development approach. To tackle deep-seated poverty, we must empower local people and give them a voice to be heard.



Tayyaba Mirza,
IAG Officer, HTCCC

Case Studies

Case Study 1

A service user came to the centre because she received a letter stating that her housing benefit payments stopped and a separate benefit recovery letter of an overpayment of £18,727. I told her about the overpayment amount and this made her upset and distressed. She asked if she could get help as she cannot pay it back. I read the letter in detail and checked if the income used to calculate her Housing benefit award is accurate. I checked all the information on the letter and with her and she confirmed the income is correct.

Also, asked her about her non-dependent children if they are living with her and their income details as there were two non-dependents on the claim. There was a highest non-dependent weekly deduction as she did not supply his income details. She told me that there is one non-dependent living with her and other non-dependent is not living with her and she reported this when he no longer lives with her. I phoned Housing Benefit department regarding an-overpayment and the department stated she failed to supply the information (income and address detail) about her non-dependent after reporting the changes and this is the reason an-overpayment occurred.

I asked her to bring some evidence as I can write a mandatory reconsideration letter to reconsider the decision based on the following evidence; child benefit, child tax credits, school-college letters and his address details as the decision could be reconsidered and she does not have to pay any monies back. I wrote a mandatory reconsideration letter with all the information given by her and the reasons why she disagrees with the decision and enclosed supporting evidence.

After 4-6 weeks' time she received another award letter but there was no information about an overpayment and I phoned housing benefit and the department confirmed she no longer has to pay this money. She was very happy with the service as she could not believe that the overpayment could be waived off after submitting the documents. She appreciates the service facilities and recommends it to others.

Case Study 2

A service user received NHS dental charge notices and came for help. I read the letters and phoned NHS dental charge checking services. The confirmed some details with her and told her that she needs to pay the charges because she was not eligible for free of charge dental treatment.

I told the department about her circumstances as she was on Universal Credit claim for the last two years and since then she always ticked the box for Universal Credit that makes her eligible for free dental treatment as she has no other income.

Her circumstances changed as her husband joined her and she was advised to submit a new Universal Credit claim by her work coach. She was awaiting for a decision when she attended her treatment appointments and this is the reason she ticked on Universal Credit box.

The charges were removed and she was advised that next time she will have to pay if she ticks the box knowingly when she is not eligible for free dental treatment. I told her she can receive treatment free of charge if their monthly net earnings are less than £935 otherwise needs to pay for the charges. She was happy as the dental charges and penalties were removed and appreciated the help.

Yearly Report

HTCCC Annual	April 21 to March 22
Total number of clients this year	629
Ethnic breakdown of clients supported:	
Asian/Bangladeshi	63
Asian/Pakistani	532
Asian/Other/Indian	34
Clients ages:	
20 - 30	103
30 - 40	141
40 - 50	155
60 - 70	80
70 - 80	26
Where our clients come from:	
Ashton-under-Lyne	467
Hyde	71
Mossley	29
Stalybridge	12
Denton	46
Oldham	1
Manchester	3
Number of male clients	281
Number of female clients	348
Languages our client speak	Urdu Bengali Nepali Hindi
Reasons for taking up languages support service	Language barrier, lack of understanding to the benefit system, current situation COVID 19 and Habitual Residence Test

HTCCC Annual	April 21 to March 22
Types of benefits claimed/Enquiries/Advice and Information or others:	
Working age benefits:	
Universal Credit claims/new-existing/Advice/Information/decision letters/report income-change of circumstances/mandatory reconsideration/under-overpayment/work capability forms-letters	425
Child Benefit-Child Tax Credits & Working /new-existing/updates/information/reduced payments Change of Circumstances/renewal/child care costs	103
Housing Benefit & council tax support/bills/Change of Circumstances/letters/over-under payments/mandatory reconsideration	138
Housing:	
Housing Application/form/letter/Advice/information/requests/Eviction Notice/placing bids/Enquiries/complaints	66
Employment and support allowance:	
ESA/existing-new claims/information/advice/letters	3
Government grants:	
Self-Employment Grant/information/claim/advice/letters/Household Support Fund/information/application/advice/letters	9
Pension age and over benefits:	
State Pension - Pension Credit/request/additional-forms/information/advice/Mandatory Reconsideration/Change of Circumstances	54
Disability benefits:	
Attendance Allowance-Personal Independence - Payment Disability Living Allowance - Carer's Allowance	81
PIP-AA-DLA -CA/new-existing claims/information/letters/forms/Mandatory Reconsideration	
Maternity-Marriage-Bereavement benefits-Grants and benefit checks:	
MA-Sure Start Maternity Grant-MA/letters/forms/information/claims	20

HTCCC Annual	April 21 to March 22
Types of benefits claimed/Enquiries/Advice and Information or others:	
National Insurance Number/applications/additional-information/advice/letters	27
Medical:	
GP-dental registration forms/Exemption Certificates/information/form filling/advice/letters/NHS	32
Energy:	
Utility bills-Warm Home Discount-cold weather payments	38
Immigration:	
EU settlement Scheme/residence card/information/applications/share codes/passport forms filling	27
School & College:	
Primary-Secondary admission forms filling/online/free school meal application/college bursary/student finance/letter/information/advice/payments/recovery	27
Travel:	
Concessionary travel bus pass/blue badge/DVLA form/filling/information/advice/application	9

Holy Trinity Church and Community Centre

Bringing people together, to empower them to create a strong and cohesive community.

