

REVENUE



**MONEY
ADVICE
PLUS**

*Supporting
people to manage
their money effectively*

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A Message from our Chair of Trustees

At the start of 2020 we knew we had a challenging year ahead with the start of new contracts and recruiting and training new staff, but none of us could have predicted what was in store! The pandemic has changed so much in all our lives, including how and where we work at Money Advice Plus. As essential workers, we've carried on working throughout lockdown and the ongoing restrictions.

Many of our clients are extremely vulnerable and our money management service is a lifeline, allowing them to continue living in the community. For others, redundancies and furlough have made money and finding a way to pay rent, bills and buy food an ever-darkening headache. Our advice services have never been more relevant, and the demand has increased accordingly.

Sadly, lockdown also saw a widely publicised increase in domestic abuse, including economic abuse. As detailed on page six the calls to our telephone helpline have gone through the roof. We were really pleased this great project was acknowledged by winning a Third Sector Award.

As a result of all this, we began to look at how and where we worked and delivered our services, in order to ensure the health and safety of both clients and staff. Procedures for delivering cash to clients were drastically altered. Our face-to-face advice services were temporarily switched to digital and telephone, and most of our staff began working from home. This in itself threw up new challenges – where to source quality affordable hardware when everyone else is doing the same; how to ensure staff have good virtual access to everything they need; and how to keep everyone connected and feeling supported during such a scary and lonely time.

Both offices in Eastbourne and Hove continued to be staffed throughout, albeit with vastly fewer people. Covid-19 Secure working has led to many practical challenges to facilitate the necessary social distancing, improved ventilation, constant handwashing and keeping all surfaces as clean as possible. Money Advice Plus staff have risen to the incredible challenge and shown resilience, adaptability, and a spirit of working together through whatever new challenges are presented.

However, we should not forget that Covid-19 has directly impacted both staff and clients. We've experienced a higher than normal death rate amongst clients, and several staff have very sadly experienced multiple bereavements or family members' serious ill-health. We have also had a small number of staff who contracted the virus, and others have had to self-isolate.

Throughout all this Money Advice Plus continues from strength to strength, never failing to deliver services, and continuing to look for new routes to helping those in need.

Finally, we have a new Chief Executive from December 2020 – Karen Perrier. So welcome Karen, and enormous thanks and well-wishes to our outgoing CEO, Margaret Carey, who is leaving us after 20 years with Money Advice Plus.



Nikky Myers

Nikky Myers
Chair of Trustees



Karen Perrier

Karen Perrier
Chief Executive

Who we are & what we do

Money Advice Plus is a registered charity, working both locally in Sussex and nationwide. Our mission is to help people manage their money effectively. We do this by providing money handling and advice services, working in partnership with other agencies. Our independent, confidential and flexible approach is tailored to individuals' needs, allowing us to reach those who find it most difficult to access advice.

Money Advice Plus delivers a range of high quality, specialist money advice and casework services, free at the point of use. We specialise in both telephone and face-to-face advice, enabling us to work nationwide. We work closely with our funders to target the particular needs of specific client groups.

In addition to money advice, our innovative money handling service enables our most vulnerable clients to maintain their independence and autonomy, while safeguarding them from financial mismanagement and financial abuse.



Our Vision

Our vision is a future where everyone can access the advice and support they need to manage their money effectively, enabling people to have more control in their lives and greater peace of mind.



Our Impact

These numbers are for just one year, but the impact on each individual client is immense, and for some, has life changing consequences.

3,893

In 2019-20 we assisted 3,893 people with debt and welfare benefit problems.

2,148

2,148 people received face to face advice and casework in the Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex areas

1,745

1,745 people received telephone advice and casework across the country

The result of this work was to

- Increase clients' benefit income by **£2,351,934**
- Secure at least **£607,823** in one-off payments of benefits for clients
- Obtain **£256,650** in charitable grants, refunds and compensation
- Write off **£1,053,0807** of clients' debts
- Re-schedule at least **£3,860,990** of debts to affordable payments
- Negotiated with creditors to achieve **£58,058** in client payments

*Altogether with charitable payments and other financial outcomes, our clients were better off by a total of **£4,328,273** per year; this is an average of **£1,112 per client**, or £4 for every £1 spent on providing our service.*

2020: Highlights of our Year

Domestic Economic Abuse Project

For 10 years Money Advice Plus has run a specialist casework service providing benefit and debt advice for survivors of domestic abuse. Two years ago, we developed a partnership with Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) and were successful in receiving funding from Department of Cultural Media and Sport ('The Tampon Tax') to continue the casework service and raise awareness of economic abuse through training, via our Domestic Economic Abuse Project



Last year we received additional funding from the Home Office. All funding was due to end on the 31st March 2020, but then on the 23rd March this year the country went in to national lockdown and while our service has always been oversubscribed, the amount of people now trying to access support was unprecedented. The partnership was issued funding from the Home Office and we adapted our national casework service into the Financial Support Line for Victims of Domestic Abuse. The service provides one off advice, with the aim to allow those who contact

us to move forward with increased economic safety using resources developed in partnership with SEA to provide self-help.

Understanding that one off advice and self-help is not right for everyone, we have continued to provide a more in-depth casework service as resources allow. Recognising there was a shortage of long-term support, Money Advice Plus and Surviving Economic Abuse developed a partnership with Step Change, delivering training on economic abuse, providing advice and support to their vulnerable person's team, and taking referrals from them if this was the most appropriate course of action.

In October this year the Financial Support Line for Victims of Domestic Abuse won best Charity Partnership from the Third Sector awards.



**The Financial Support Line
for Victims of Domestic Abuse**

Run in partnership between SEA and MAP



“This is a vital preventative service for the council which maintains people in their own homes, prevents eviction, protects people from financial exploitation and reduces the risk of stress & mental health issues due to debt”

- Brighton & Hove Council

Our Money Management Service

Money Advice Plus has been running in one guise or another since 1871. We are proud of our history and we have been working with people affected by poverty in Brighton & Hove since before debt and benefit advice had professional standards, and before the formation of local authority social services. Our money management service has developed from these roots as a practical and holistic response to the needs we found. Of course, through time, we have been responsive to the changing climate, to professional best practice, and in many cases have worked alongside national partners, using our wealth of experience to help shape those standards. It is still quite a unique service, and there are no other organisations working in the way that we do with such a wide range of clients, with the specialisms that we have.

If people need practical help organising their money, we help with this through our money handling service. The aim of this is to enable people to remain independent in their own homes, and we are experienced in supporting people, in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act, to make their own decisions wherever possible.

People may be unable to manage their own money for different reasons, whether for reasons of mental capacity (someone with mental illness, or dementia, for example), addiction problems and substance misuse, or a physical disability which means that they cannot independently and safely get to the cashpoint. Our support is flexible and person centred – this means that people are encouraged and supported to do as much for themselves as they can, and that there is no standard support-plan; each client receives a different service depending on their individual needs.

Our block contract for Money Support Work was recommissioned by Brighton & Hove City Council in 2019. As mentioned, our service is not a usual one for local authorities to commission, and that this was considered is testament to the Council’s recognition of the importance and value of what we do.

The retendering process gave us the opportunity to consider the strengths of our service, and how it could be improved and developed, and we came up with a new project plan to build on those strengths. We were successful and have secured funding to continue our important work for a further five years. The commission allowed for a larger, expanding service, which has given us security to add developments to the service such as offering prepaid debit cards to clients, and an enhanced training programme for staff.

What does the service offer?

- ***We deliver cash in their own homes to people who can’t get out to the bank***
- ***We pay bills for people who find it difficult to remember what needs to be paid***
- ***We help people stick to their budgets by administering all their payments for them, and enabling them access to their spending money***
- ***We’re able to act as appointee and deputy for people unable to deal with their finances themselves***

Case Study Julie's Story



Julie rang the Financial Support Line regarding her partner, who was becoming more and more abusive and controlling towards her. Her partner had started swearing in her face and withholding his financial information. He froze their joint bank account, which she used to pay her credit cards from. The credit cards were in her sole name, but she was using them to buy food and clothes for the family and pay the joint mortgage on the family home. Julie was worried how she would keep up the repayments now that financial support had stopped. She was also concerned about her credit rating and how this would be affected if she didn't make minimum payments.

A lot of issues were raised on this call, such as budgeting, Credit Reference Agencies, the use of credit and store cards, as well as how she could get support with a financial settlement, and injunction to keep her safe and an Occupation Order to live in the family home. We also discussed the joint mortgage and what her rights and responsibilities would be if the perpetrator stopped paying this. We discussed Julie's further issues that might arise as part of the economic abuse, and we signposted her to a legal specialist and mortgage specialist to seek further support. Julie is now armed with knowledge about potential problems which may arise and is drawing up her own budget based on her sole income, in case the perpetrator withdraws all financial support to punish her further.

What is Economic Abuse?

Money Advice Plus delivers specialist money advice (debts and benefits) by telephone for anyone who has experienced or is experiencing domestic abuse. Individuals can access this service wherever they live in England and Wales. We will consider the safety of the client throughout the process of giving money advice.

Economic abuse can manifest in a variety of ways. Often a partner is made to take out loans and/or credit, thus incurring large debts in their own name. They can be prevented from working, claiming benefits, or benefits are put into the abusers name only. They are made to account for every penny and not allowed to spend money on themselves or the children. They are made to hand over all financial control with the abuser controlling their bank account, thus creating financial dependency, isolating them and making it difficult to leave. Alternatively, an abuser may not take control of access to financial resources but refuses to contribute to costs through exploiting their partner. This creates financial instability which can also reduce available income and the ability to make decisions.

The aim of the casework is to help empower victim-survivors of domestic abuse, support them to become independent, how to manage their finances once they have regained control and become confident about dealing with their money and debt issues, increasing financial stability.

We offer a bespoke service to each individual.

Our Clients Have Their Say...

"My partner and I received advice and support from one of Money Advice Plus workers. One of the things I most appreciated about the support we received was that it was caring without being judgemental or patronising. My finances were in a real mess when I first met with the worker but she calmly sorted everything out and empowered me to finally take back control. Thank you so much."

- Money Advice Plus Client

Our clients are at the centre of what we do, the service and support we provide through the many different projects. To make that possible it is important that clients tell us how they felt after accessing Money Advice Plus and how their lives have changed. For us, in turn, clients' feedback shapes how we organise and deliver our services.

During 2020 each client whose support and advice comes to an end received an easy-read exit questionnaire. A total of 766 questionnaires were sent out and 91 were completed and returned to us, a response rate of 12%.

What our clients told us was:

- **96% of clients were satisfied with our services and support**
- **100% of clients knew who to talk to about immigration queries**
- **92% of clients felt more confident in accessing help if needed in the future**
- **83% of clients felt less stressed and anxious and 83% felt their wellbeing improved**
- **81% of clients felt they knew more about benefits available to them**
- **73% of clients felt in control of their debts**

Every year, in addition to our exit questionnaire, we also organise a clients' survey where we focus specifically on a certain area of our work. For the 2020 survey we decided to highlight the Equality Act 2010 and its protected characteristics (age, gender, gender reassignment, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, marriage status, pregnancy and maternity/paternity). We wanted to make sure that all our projects were available to everyone respecting their individual needs, dignity, independence and equal opportunity. We set up to evaluate how accessible our premises and services were.

We sent out a total of 711 easy-read questionnaires to clients from 13 different projects; 109 questionnaires were completed and returned to us, a response rate of 16%.

- **80% of respondents told us that they felt Money Advice Plus treated them fairly.**
- **70% of respondents told us that they are happy with the way our services and support are provided.**

Suggestions and ideas on how to further improve what we do were passed to Money Advice Plus Board of Trustees.

You can find out more about what our clients said about Money Advice Plus on our website.

Our Finances

A Financial Review 2019-2020 by our Treasurer, Robert Philips

The year ended 31st March 2020 was the first year in the charity's history that its total income exceeded £1.2 million. Total income at £1,218,301 increased by 12% compared with the previous year's figure of £1,088,065. Money Advice services income totalling £641,311 accounted for the bulk of the increased income while Money Management Services income increased by a small amount and totaled £567,891.

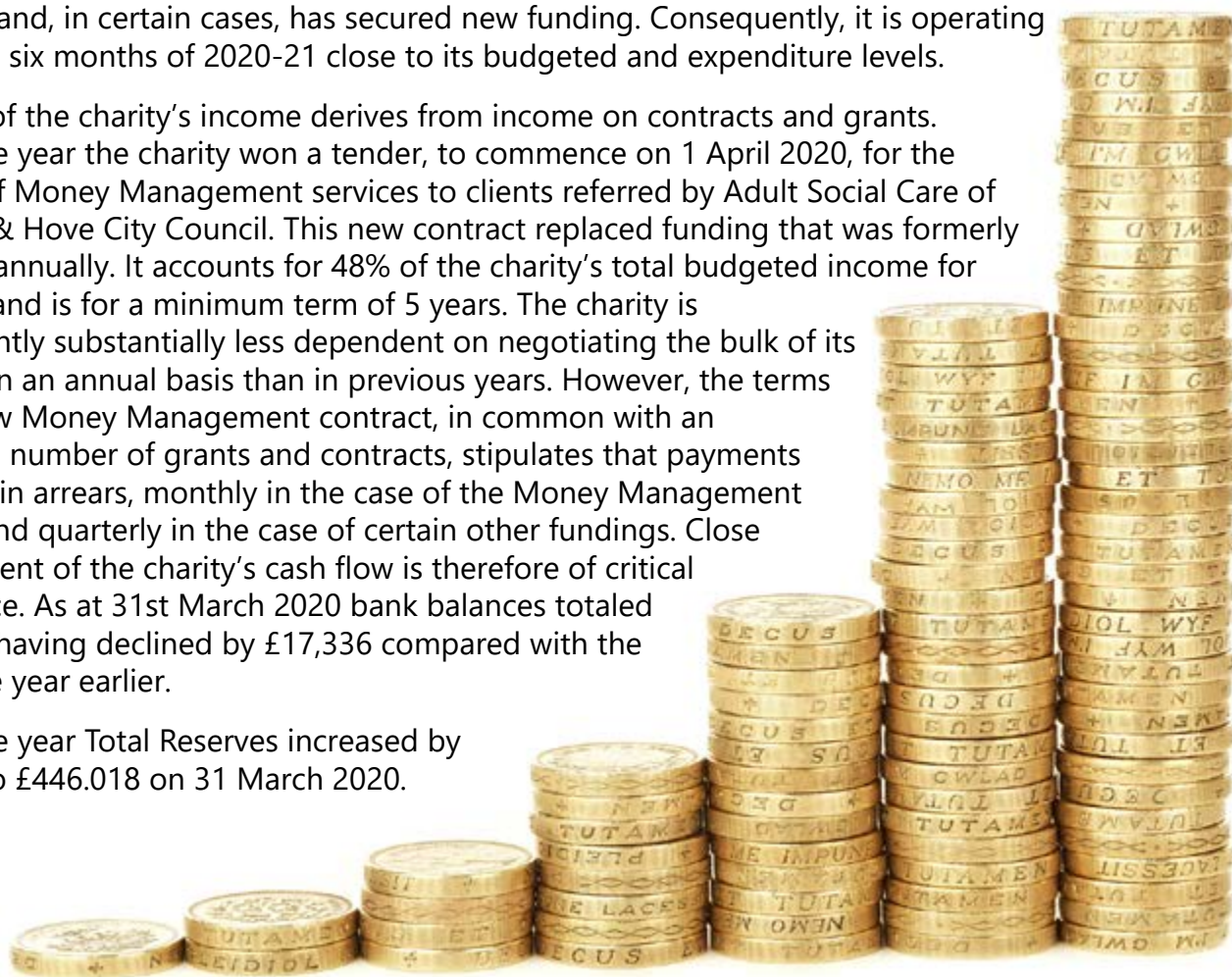
Other income comprised £3,373 from donations and legacies, £2,344 from training and membership and £3,562 from investment income.

Total expenditure amounted to £1,186,158. This represented a 9% increase on the previous year's figure of £1,091,041. Staff remuneration and associated expenses accounted for the bulk of the charity's expenditure and amounted to £1,043,091 representing a 11% increase on the previous year's figure on account of increased staffing levels. Other costs at £143,067 decreased by 4% on account of rigorous controls on expenditure. The charity continues to seek to ensure that all projects are funded on a full cost recovery basis.

Since April 2020, and throughout pandemic to date, the charity has maintained all its grants and contracts and, in certain cases, has secured new funding. Consequently, it is operating in the first six months of 2020-21 close to its budgeted and expenditure levels.

The bulk of the charity's income derives from income on contracts and grants. During the year the charity won a tender, to commence on 1 April 2020, for the delivery of Money Management services to clients referred by Adult Social Care of Brighton & Hove City Council. This new contract replaced funding that was formerly reviewed annually. It accounts for 48% of the charity's total budgeted income for 2020-21, and is for a minimum term of 5 years. The charity is consequently substantially less dependent on negotiating the bulk of its funding on an annual basis than in previous years. However, the terms of this new Money Management contract, in common with an increasing number of grants and contracts, stipulates that payments are made in arrears, monthly in the case of the Money Management funding and quarterly in the case of certain other fundings. Close management of the charity's cash flow is therefore of critical importance. As at 31st March 2020 bank balances totaled £333,620 having declined by £17,336 compared with the figure one year earlier.

During the year Total Reserves increased by £31,706 to £446,018 on 31 March 2020.



Our Funders



We'd once again like to thank our wonderful funders and partner for making the work we do possible! You can see their logos on this page.



Moving Forward

Our incoming Chief Executive, Karen Perrier, looks ahead to 2021 and beyond

Having worked in the advice sector for 17 years, I thought I had seen and experienced everything. I should have known better. With the announcement by the World Health Organisation that the outbreak of Covid-19 was a global pandemic, challenges arrived like never before, and everyone, clients, staff, trustees and partners have rallied together to support each other. This has been a year of change for Money Advice Plus. On the 23rd March the UK government introduced emergency measures to fight the spread of the virus, including a national lockdown and social distancing. Overnight service delivery changed and staff responded to remote working. The phrase, "You're on mute" became the new "hello" as staff became acquainted with

Microsoft Teams and the odd Zoom call. The one-way system in the office reminded me of school days long gone.



We have always known our staff were amazing, providing a critical service, and maybe for the first time this was acknowledged by others. The work provided to vulnerable people was a vital service and staff became designated essential workers. All of our services continued, including the delivery of cash to elderly or disabled people in sheltered schemes, supported housing, or their own homes. No staff were furloughed, but the majority switched to working from home, with a small contingent keeping both the Brighton and Eastbourne offices open. Our successful telephone advice services in Eastbourne helped the transition from face-to-face to telephone advice throughout the organisation. The expansion of the cloud-based client management system supported the transition.

Our second change of the year came when our Chief Executive announced her retirement in July. Margaret has been part of Money Advice





Plus for 20 years, serving her last three as Chief Executive.

With all the changes we have still experienced successes: the recommissioning of services from Brighton and Hove City Council; the development of the financial support line for victims of domestic abuse and this service winning an award; and supporting several thousand people in financial need in these challenging times.

The focus in 2020 – 2021 must be on continuing to deliver services in a safe way for all. Any development will be driven by the immediate needs of clients, potential clients, staff and trustees.

We then look towards the future post-Coronavirus. As with everyone else, we are

hoping to return to “normal operations” and aim to publish a three-year strategy in April 2021. This strategy will of course take into consideration the massive changes we have seen in service delivery, including remote working, and the increased use of both the telephone and digital communications to give advice. It will seek to embrace and understand the impact the work we do has on staff wellbeing. We will contribute to the work currently being undertaken across the sector regarding the whole approach to advice. As the emergency measures lessen, we will look to assess what may be needed in our communities and continue to strengthen and develop partnerships as a way of increasing what we can offer, and the number of people we are able to help.



Our Trustees

Money Advice Plus could not operate without our fantastic Board of Trustees, and during 2020 we're very pleased to announce three new and talented additions. Olivia, Phil and Gemma (see photos, below) bring a depth of experience and skills to enhance those of existing Trustees. They come from backgrounds in Re-insurance, Finance, Public Relations and Communications. More information on each of them can be found on our website at:

www.moneyadviceplus.org.uk/meet-the-team

Nikky Myers continues as Chair, alongside Stewart Beamont, Terry Mase, Jonathan Hyman and Asif Chaudhery. They are all incredibly committed to the organisation and the work we do for those in need.

We'd like to thank Robert Phillips, who has served for 8 years, most recently as Treasurer before stepping down in October 2020; as well as Andrew Berry, who served from 2017 until resigning in May 2020.



Acknowledgements

Money Advice Plus sincerely thanks all the people without whom our work would not be possible.

Our dedicated board of trustees who donate their time and expertise: Nikky Myers (Chair), Stewart Beamont (Vice Chair), Robert Phillips (Treasurer), Terry Mase, Jonathan Hyman, Andrew Berry, Asif Chaudhery, Olivia Hobson, Gemma Dunn and Phil Hall.

Money Advice Plus is supported by a team of wonderful volunteers. Our thanks to Martin O'Donnell (of Etiqa), Lisa Robertson, Jan Kesper, Nita French, Ana Fernandez, Jane Wright and Mark Schnabel.

This year we particularly want to offer a huge thanks to our outgoing Chief Exec, Margaret, for all her work and commitment to Money Advice Plus. We wish her all the best with future plans, and look forward to that post-Coronavirus get together!

A big thank you to all the service users who have contributed to improving the service.

Lastly, thank you to our Patrons, David Lepper, Caroline Lucas MP, Stephen Lloyd, and Peter Kyle MP. They have all been extremely supportive and helpful in the work we do.

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CONTACT US

BRIGHTON & HOVE OFFICE

Tisbury Road Offices
Hove Town Hall
Tisbury Road
Hove
BN3 3BQ
01273 664 000
info@moneyadviceplus.org.uk
Open Mon-Fri 9am-1pm & 2-5pm

EASTBOURNE OFFICE

182-184 Terminus Road
Eastbourne
BN21 3BB
01323 635 999
advice@moneyadviceplus.org.uk
Open Mon-Thurs 9am-5pm &
Fri 9am-4pm

Or find us online at

moneyadviceplus.org.uk

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