

West View Advice  
& Resource Centre Ltd



Serving the Community

# West View Advice & Resource Centre Ltd

Annual Report 2020 to 2021



**Serving the community of Hartlepool  
Delivering advice for over 30 years**

Company Registration No. 2994776 Charity No. 1084632

West View Advice & Resource Centre Limited. A Company Limited by Guarantee, whose registered address is The Community Centre, Miers Avenue, Hartlepool, TS24 9JQ. Incorporated in England and Wales.

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# WEST VIEW ADVICE AND RESOURCE CENTRE

## BACKGROUND

West View Advice & Resource Centre Limited (WVARC) was established in 1983 and is a member of the Advice Service Alliance.

Embedded within the local community and operating from its offices in the West View area of Hartlepool, WVARC is a not-for-profit organisation that has been providing advice and support within the Hartlepool area for more than 30 years and, since August 2016, throughout the North East.

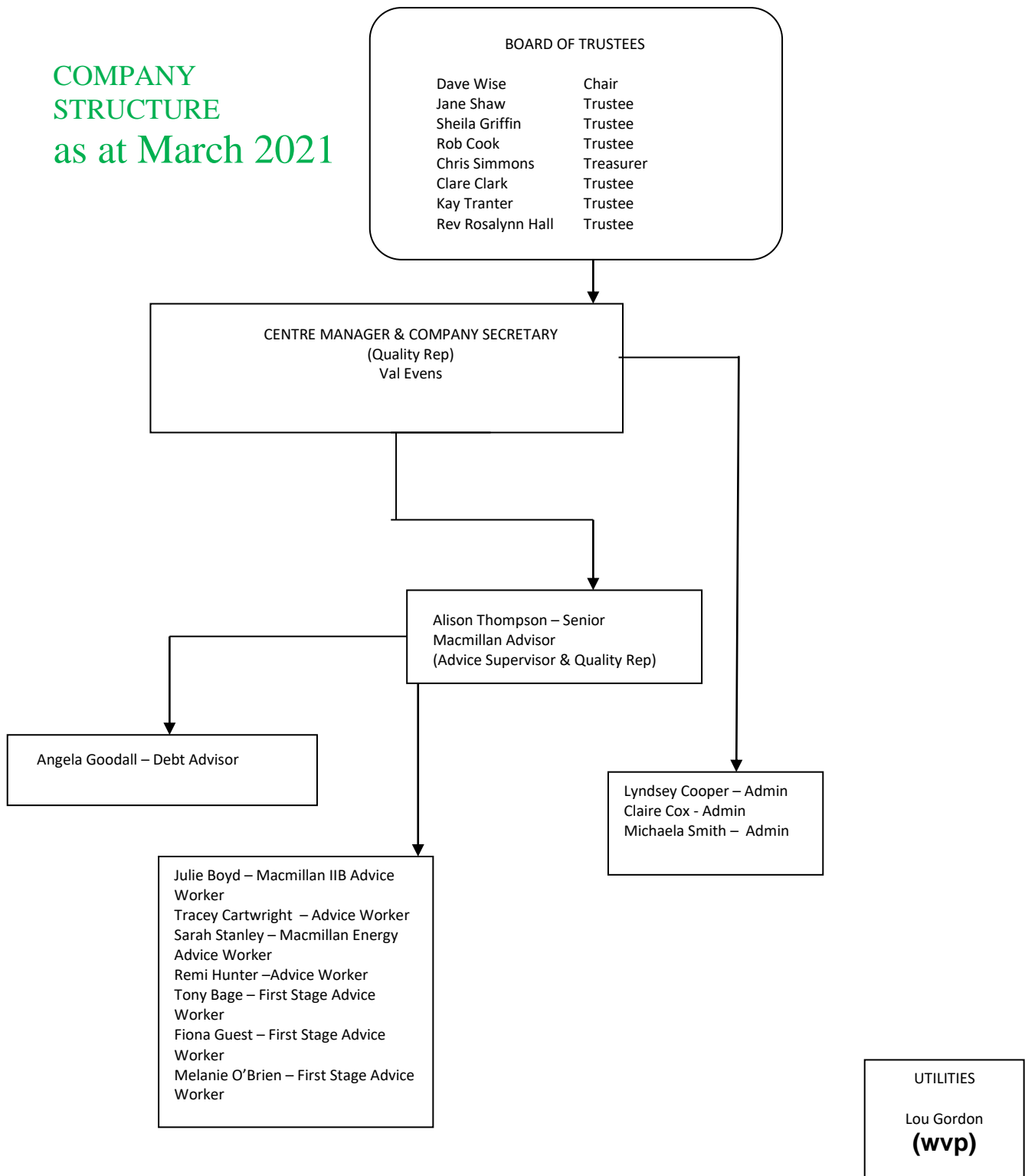
The main business of WVARC is currently to offer welfare benefits advice and support to disadvantaged people within Hartlepool on issues such as debt, housing benefit, energy efficiency, disability benefits and welfare rights. Services are offered via centre based appointments, outreach work and limited home visits for housebound clients.

Due to the government's austerity measures, West View Community Centre was under threat of closure and in 2012, in partnership with West View Project, WVARC moved its services to West View Community Centre. This was to operate and manage an accessible community centre within the Brus ward, (now known as De Bruce due to changes in the ward boundaries) securing existing community services and developing new activities for the benefit of the residents.

The Centre aims to continue to provide for the residents of Hartlepool a resource centre service which is sustainable in the long-term, focusing on the needs of the area. The Centre remains committed to providing a free, confidential and impartial service and aims to be as inclusive as is possible within the local community.

The principal funders for the organisation are Hartlepool Borough Council, Macmillan Cancer Support, Trusthouse Foundation, Virgin Money Foundation, Northern TUC Asbestos Support and Campaign Group, Hadrian Trust, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and West View Project CIC HAOP lottery funding.

**COMPANY  
STRUCTURE  
as at March 2021**



## MANAGERS REPORT

### Overview of all of the services and work carried out this year

Once again we are producing a shortened version of our Annual Report, due to the continued impact of Coronavirus. I will say this is the year that I can honestly say 'We did it and we are still doing it!' What a year, we've been through 3 lockdowns and Tier 2 & 3 restrictions, but I must say overall the staff morale has remained positive and health wise, we have up to now managed to keep Coronavirus Covid 19 out of the Centre. A couple of members of staff contracted the virus through the Christmas period, but fortunately they were not the extremely severe cases.

It has to be noted that coming into and going out of lockdown on several occasions has had a massive impact on our services. Whilst we have managed to keep the Advice service going through telephone advice and staff working from home, we obviously have not been able to host the community groups that normally use our Centre. Despite this we have still assisted over 3000 people apply for over 10 million pounds in benefit applications.

I must once again thank the staff for adapting to delivering advice via the telephone, from their own homes and thanks to the skeleton staff that remained on site to ensure that the organisation could still deliver our services to our clients. Who would have thought when I wrote those thanks last year, I would be repeating them this year.

During the summer when the restrictions eased a little we were able to have some face to face appointments, this is something we are looking forward to reconvening this year. I am pleased to report that most of our staff have now had their first vaccination, we are just waiting for the 'younger' members of staff to be invited for their first vaccination and we do expect all will have had at least their first vaccination by the end of July.

We are really looking forward to being able to have our groups back into the Centre, hopefully not too long in the future. We have kept in regular touch with our Cancer Support Group, and we delivered care packages to them at Christmas. Dean Cartwright, has kept in touch with the Parkinsons group and the Chair exercise group, who are all looking forward to getting back to their regular exercise groups.

Our first big day for having the public in the Centre, will be the local election on 6<sup>th</sup> May, all will be conducted following strict safety measures and following government guidance.

## OUTCOMES OVERVIEW

### **Macmillan Energy Advice**

As with all of our Macmillan Services numbers have been affected by the Pandemic and the effect this had on the NHS for our referrals. Home visits and Healthy Home checks could not be carried out this year however we still provided Energy Efficiency Advice and made savings of £65571 for our clients.

➤ Energy Efficiency Advice by Telephone	306
➤ Tariff Switch	104
➤ Warm Home Discounts	122

- Charis and Macmillan Grants 36
- New Boiler Installed 31

#### **Macmillan Benefits Advice - Hartlepool & North Tees**

- 706 Telephone/Email Advice Appointments
- 30 Face to Face in-centre Appointments
- ❖ Total confirmed as gained in benefit income (regular ongoing payments) £770,938.00
- ❖ Total gained through one off payments (grants, compensation and arrears, etc) £381,594.00
- ❖ Total projected gains (applied for but not yet confirmed as awarded) £2,376,452.00

#### **Macmillan Industrial Injuries Advice - TUC / Macmillan Asbestos Support and Campaign Group**

- 284 Telephone/Email Advice Appointments
- 14 Face to Face in-centre Appointments
- ❖ Total confirmed as gained in benefit income (regular ongoing payments) £759,071.00
- ❖ Total gained through one off payments (grants, compensation and arrears, etc) £1,673,162.00
- ❖ Total projected gains (applied for but not yet confirmed as awarded) £2,359,575.00

#### **Welfare Benefits – Hartlepool**

- 2386 Telephone/Email Advice Appointments
- 103 Face to Face in-centre Appointments
- ❖ Total confirmed as gained in benefit income (regular ongoing payments) £1,591,471.44
- ❖ Total gained through one off payments (grants, compensation and arrears, etc) £1,518,956.24
- ❖ Total projected gains (applied for but not yet confirmed as awarded) £5,322,518.32

#### **Debt Advice – Hartlepool**

The Centre was able to continue to offer debt advice to our clients during the past financial year by adapting our service and completing appointments by telephone and email as the debt advisor was working from home as per the government guidelines.

Clients were able to email documents to the Debt Advisor and thanks to a skeleton staff continuing to keep the Centre running they were also able to send documents by post and drop off box. These were then scanned and emailed to the Debt Advisor.

350 telephone appointments were completing assisting 104 clients who were struggling to manage £869,399.64 of debt.

1 Bankruptcy Order was made.

3 Debt Relief Orders were applied for and granted.

101 Payment Arrangements were obtained.

In almost all cases the clients also had benefit issues and housing issues which also needed to be addressed.

On the whole creditor debt recovery action reduced dramatically because of the lockdowns and the government advice on working from home, preventing bailiff action, and preventing evictions from being carried out. We expect there to be a significant demand on the service once all the restrictions are lifted and we are looking forward to resuming face to face contact with our clients when it is safe to do so.

Despite Covid we have helped over 3000 individuals with appointments and applied for over £9 million of financial support, having reported as confirmed financial gains of approximately £5 million and projected gains of £7.2 million not yet reported.

Valerie A Evens  
Macmillan Centre Manager  
April 2021

## WHAT SERVICES DO WE OFFER?

We provide free, confidential and impartial advice to help the people of Hartlepool resolve their problems. We are equipped to deal with issues spanning from debt to housing to welfare benefits.

### **Areas of Advice covered**

Welfare Benefits  
Housing Benefits  
Form Filling  
Calculations  
Home visits for Macmillan

Disability Benefits  
Debt  
Family/Personal  
Employment  
Energy Efficiency & Tariff Switching

**Hours and Times of Availability – Check our Facebook page or website for the latest information**

**Advice Appointments are offered on a face to face, telephone or video link most appropriate to the clients needs.**



## THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

West View Advice & Resource Centre is a charity and relies on funding to make a difference to the lives of individuals, families and communities.

We thank the following for their support during 2020/2021 enabling us to keep going throughout the global pandemic, without your continued support the impact on our clients would have been devastating.

Hartlepool Borough Council, Macmillan Cancer Support, Trusthouse Foundation, Virgin Foundation, Hadrian Trust, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Kilmarnock Road Children & Young People Family Resource Centre, Hospital of God at Greatham and Northern TUC Asbestos Campaign and Support Group, West View Project (HAOP), Community Development Foundation, Charity Aid Foundation.

## ORGANISATIONAL DETAILS.

FULL POSTAL ADDRESS West View Advice & Resource Centre Limited  
The Community Centre, Miers Avenue  
Hartlepool, TS24 9JQ

COMPANY NUMBER. 2994776

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER. 1084632

TELEPHONE NUMBER. 01429 271275

APPOINTMENTS LINE 01429 271294

FAX NUMBER. 01429 423007

E-MAIL Reception@wvarc30.org.uk

WEBSITE ADDRESS <http://www.wvarc30.org.uk>

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Mr D Wise	Chairperson
Mr C Simmons	Treasurer
Mrs J Shaw	Trustee
Mrs S Griffin	Trustee
Mr R Cook	Trustee
Mrs C Clark	Trustee
Mrs K Tranter	Trustee
Rev R Hall	Trustee

CENTRE MANAGER & SECRETARY Mrs Valerie A Evens

### STAFF MEMBERS DURING 2020/2021

Alison Thompson	Senior Macmillan Advice Worker
Julie Boyd	Macmillan Industrial Injuries Benefits Advice Worker
Lou Gordon	Cleaner
Lindsay McGregor	Projects Support Worker (deceased June 2020)
Michaela Smith	Administrator
Lyndsey Cooper	Administrator
Claire Cox	Administrator
Sarah Stanley	Macmillan Energy Advice Worker
Tracey Cartwright	Benefits Advice Worker
Remi Hunter	Benefits Advice Worker
Tony Bage	Income Maximisation Advice Worker
Fiona Guest	First Stage Advice Worker
Melanie O'Brien	First Stage Advice Worker

## ANNUAL REVIEW OF ADVICE

### ANNUAL REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDITING APRIL 2020- MARCH 2021

	No. Files Audited (Audit Meeting)	No of files Randomly Reviewed	No. Corrective Actions Issued	Advisor Initials CARS Issued	No. Corrective Actions Outstanding	Audit Files + Random Total Files	Common Theme	Notes
Apr-20	0	41	11	RJH, JAB, TC, AG	0	41	Outcomes, ID Confirmed/Consent	Just started telephone Advice
May-20	0	17	0	N/A	0	17	N/A	N/A
Jun-20	19	13	17	AG, JAB, AB, RJH	0	32	CF1, ID/Verbal Consent	1 Re-issued
Jul-20	0	2	2	AB	0	2	Outcomes	
Aug-20	0	43	18	AB, TC, RJH, JAB	0	43	Verbal Consent	4 re-issued
Sep-20	20	31	11	AB, RJH, AG, AT	0	51	Consent	1 Re-issue
Oct-20	0	57	31	M'OB, FG, RJH, AB, TC	8	57	Consent, outcomes	4 Re-issued
Nov-20	0	18	11	FG, MO'B	12	18	CF1, Outcomes, Advice	100% on forms/full staff development day
Dec-20	23	16	16	JAB, MO'B, TC, FG, RJH, TB, AT	1	39	Outcomes	2 re-issued
Jan-21	0	25	20	RJH, FG, MO'B, TC, TB	3	25	ID Confirmation	- 6 re-issued
Feb-21	17	16	22	RJH, FG, MO'B, TC, TB, AT	3	33	ID Confirmation insufficiently covered in notes, Advice insufficient content	Email instructions issued to confirm process of confirming
Mar-21	0	21	15	TB, RJH, TC, FG, MO'B,	7	21	Advice insufficient content, & level of Advice inaccurate	Additional Information at

	No of Supervised Workers (100% 50% 25%)	No. Files Reviewed	No. Corrective Actions Issued	Common Theme (e.g CARS per Advisor)	No Corrective Actions Outstanding
Apr-20	1 x 100%	21	0	None	0
May-20	1 x 100%	15	0	None	0
Jun-20	1 x 50%	13	7	cf1, outcomes.	0
Jul-20	1 x 50%	2	2	outcomes	0
Aug-20	2 x 100% 1 x 50%	29	10	ID, Consent	0
Sep-20	2 x 100%	24	0	None	0
Oct-20	2 x 100%	41	23	Expand case notes	3
Nov-20	2 x 50%	17	11	CF1, outcomes, advice	7
Dec-20	2 x 50%	14	11	Outcomes	0
Jan-21	2* 50%	21	15	Outcomes ID Confirmation	1
Feb-21	2* 50%	15	10	ID Confirmation insufficiently covered in notes, Advice insufficient content	0
Mar-21	0	0	0		0

Total Files Reviewed	379
Corrective Actions Issued	174
Corrective Actions completed	162
Common Theme or Corrective Action	Varied

Annual Review Carried out	29-1-21	Signed	<i>Alison Thompson</i>	Alison Thompson Advice Supervisor
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## Client Satisfaction Survey Results

### Customer Service in Summary

When asked how long was the wait from requesting the appointment to your actual appointment date? **82% said they were seen in less than 1 - 2 weeks.**

98% clients said our reception staff communicated clearly.

Our clients rated the service as excellent and gave us ★★★★★

We asked the clients how they felt about their general well-being, prior to receiving advice and support on average 18% reported their general well-being as **Very Good**, however after receiving advice and support **82%** reported their general well-being as **Very Good/Excellent**.

When asked how has this advice/support helped, our clients reported:

- 55% Income likely to improve

- 64% Feel happier
- 72% Worry less about money
- 73 % Feel more able to cope

*Comments include:*

*'Just please keep it up – You guys are a GREAT help!'*

*'Just amazing can live my life without dread, don't know what I would have done without the service!'*

*'I would recommend this service to anyone I feel needs help. They were so understanding and prompt with their invaluable advice. I was unaware of the benefits I was entitled to and was nervous to ask, but they made me feel relieved and comfortable.'*



## Serving the Community

Produced In-house by V Evens April 2021