



Sent by email

8 October 2020

Dear Elaine Foxon,

Supporting the people of Thurlaston through Covid-19 and beyond

I hope you and all at Thurlaston Parish Council are keeping well in these uncertain times. Despite lockdown and social distancing restrictions, Citizens Advice LeicesterShire continues to support local residents during the pandemic.

The global coronavirus outbreak has had an unprecedented impact across Leicestershire, with first the national lockdown and then the continued (and ongoing) local lockdown in Leicester, which also affected parts of Blaby and Oadby & Wigston. Across the county, in just over six months, our lives and communities have been reshaped, with significant impacts for work, education, access to community services; even the way we interact with loved ones.

Throughout this national crisis, Citizens Advice LeicesterShire has continued to provide the **free, confidential, impartial and independent advice** that our clients rely on to solve their problems. During the six months since the first lockdown began, we have helped almost 13,000 local people with more than 24,000 issues. Many were a direct result of the pandemic, including:

- redundancy, furlough and self-employment issues;
- claiming benefits and Universal Credit;
- debt;
- relationship breakdown;
- neighbour disputes.

Maria is a single mother of three school-aged children. The youngest has special education needs and is awaiting diagnosis. When lockdown began Maria was furloughed from her job as a sales assistant. However, in June she was told that she needed to be at work the following Monday. She had no childcare, therefore she was unable to work the hours required by her employer.*

Maria asked to remain on furlough, but instead was offered unpaid parental leave. She contacted Citizens Advice LeicesterShire by telephone and was supported to write to her employer, formally requesting to remain on furlough. The adviser then conducted a benefits check. This confirmed that if her employer refused then she could claim Universal Credit and would be eligible for support to apply from our Help to Claim service.

The adviser also helped Maria to make a claim for Disability Living Allowance to access additional support for her youngest child.

*Not the client's real name.

Serving Leicester City and the districts of Blaby, Harborough, Hinckley & Bosworth, Melton, North West Leicestershire and Oadby & Wigston.

Citizens Advice LeicesterShire is a local charity. Charity registration number 1135081. Company limited by guarantee. Registered number 07186736 England. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority FRN: 617648. Registered office: Clarence House, 46 Humberstone Gate, LE1 3PJ

For details of our complaints process please write to us or email contact@citizensadviceleicestershire.org



As the local lockdowns continue, we have changed the way we work to ensure that we can keep supporting our communities. Many of our local branches are unsuitable for social distancing, and the recent increase in national covid-19 cases have been largely attributed to people meeting indoors. Sadly it is not yet safe to restart providing face-to-face advice.

Instead, we are taking steps to adapt to the current reality and continuing to offer our clients the individualised service they need. These developments have already had some positive outcomes for Thurlaston residents and additional improvements continue to be made. Operating solely on a remote basis has enabled us to increase the overall availability of advice, with equal access for all on the telephone and by email. This means that residents of rural areas are no longer disadvantaged by distance from face-to-face services.

Further initiatives introduced so far include:

- Increased adviser capacity on Adviceline and email advice responses;
- Online training for new and existing volunteers to provide advice remotely;

Furthermore, we will be introducing additional improvements over the winter:

- Online video advice appointments through Attend Anywhere;
- County Adviceline (0300 330 2111) will become free to call.

Please see the attached leaflet for current information about how to access our services. Please do share this information with your parishioners. If you would like to receive paper copies of the attached leaflet for local distribution, please let me know.

The future is still uncertain, and the UK has yet to feel the full economic ramifications of the 2020 pandemic. We need to continue to adapt and respond to ensure we can meet the changing needs of local residents. **If you are able to make a donation to support our services, you will be directly contributing to supporting residents of communities like Thurlaston through these unprecedented times.**

If you are able to support us this year, we would be grateful if the donation could be made by BACS transfer if possible, as we do not have regular access to post at the moment.

The Co-operative Bank
Sort Code: 08-92-99
Account Number: 65395776

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information about service developments and covid-19.

With best wishes,



Richard Evans

Chief Executive

richard.evans@citizensadviceleicestershire.org

Serving Leicester City and the districts of Blaby, Harborough, Hinckley & Bosworth, Melton, North West Leicestershire and Oadby & Wigston.

Citizens Advice LeicesterShire is a local charity. Charity registration number 1135081. Company limited by guarantee. Registered number 07186736 England. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority FRN: 617648. Registered office: Clarence House, 46 Humberstone Gate, LE1 3PJ

For details of our complaints process please write to us or email contact@citizensadviceleicestershire.org

