

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**



Annual Report 2009

Guildford Citizens Advice Bureau – Macmillan Welfare Rights Service



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INTRODUCTION

The Guildford Citizens Advice – Macmillan Welfare Rights was launched in early 2008 with funding by Macmillan for three years. This has recently been extended for a further 15 months, which extends the project to 31 March 2012.

Staff Members

Emma Scanlon
Welfare Rights Adviser

Joan Davies
Welfare Rights Adviser

Cathryn Dunlop
Administrator

Aims of the service

We aim to provide advice, information and advocacy to people affected by cancer in Guildford, Waverley and Surrey Heath.

The advice and assistance is free, independent, confidential and impartial and open to everyone regardless of race, sex, religion, disability, sexuality or nationality.

By working with community organizations and health and social care professionals we aim to inform everyone newly diagnosed with cancer about our service and how to access it. The service has worked to influence government and organizations to bring about change in policies and laws that concern people who are affected by cancer.

Macmillan Welfare Rights Service

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WHO DID WE HELP?

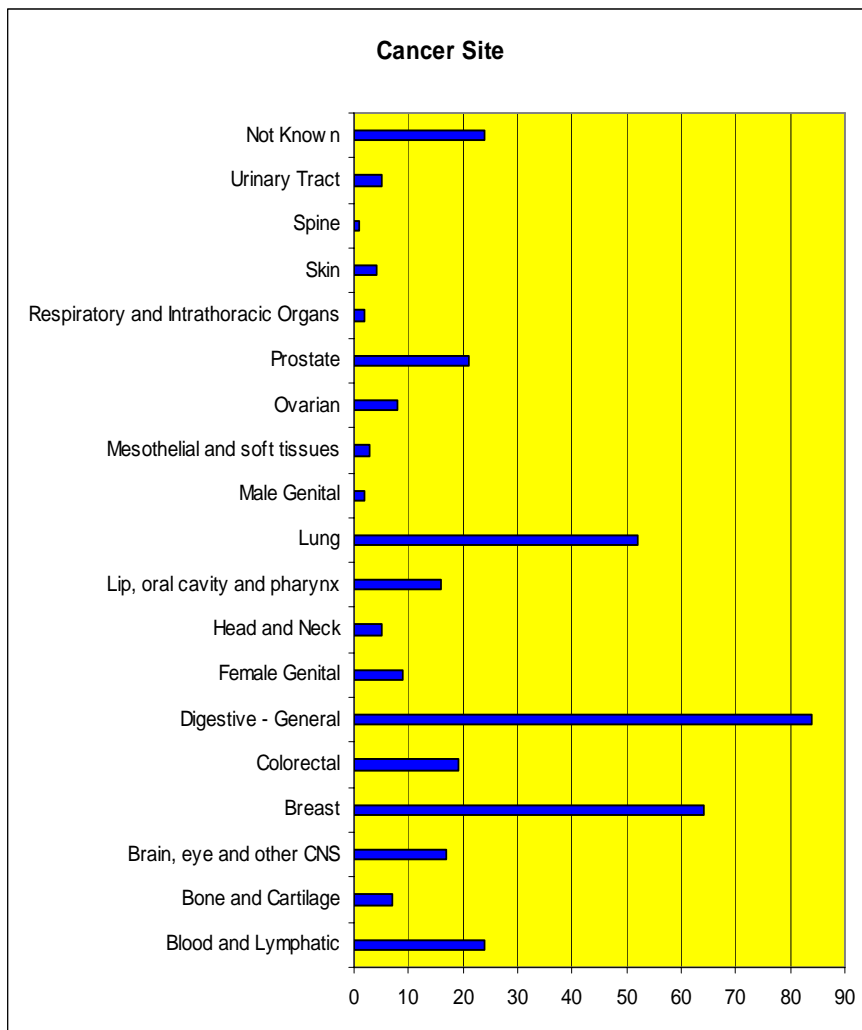
During 2009 we helped **308** clients and their families and their carers.

When people are ill they often need support to sort out their problems.

We had **1126** contacts with those clients and

1214 contacts with 3rd parties on our clients' behalf.

These clients were affected by a variety of cancers, Breast and General Digestive, including pancreatic, oesophagus, stomach, bowel, renal and liver, being the most prevalent:



WHAT WE DO

We are a problem solving service helping clients to gain benefits and sort any other problems they may face.

We always look to maximise the client's income first, as this is usually the first thing to be affected when a patient is undergoing treatment.

We work closely with the client and their families on an ongoing basis.



"Thank you for your help completing my husband's DLA and ESA forms. He has been granted DLA at the higher level which has made such a difference to our finances and therefore my husband's well-being - meaning he can give the dreadful cancer a real fight."

Client's wife

Case study 1:

Client was referred to us because she had mentioned to her breast nurse that she would be made homeless at the end of the week by her landlord.

Client is 47 and divorced. She has been diagnosed with breast cancer and will start her treatment with surgery in 2 weeks. This diagnosis was at the end of a very tough year for her as she had been made redundant, unable to find work, got into debt and then made bankrupt; she had also injured her leg which meant that she was in a cast and had very limited mobility. All this led to client becoming very depressed.

Her landlord was evicting her illegally but due to her very low self esteem she felt very intimidated by her landlord and unable to defend her rights.

An emergency home visit was made to client and she said she did not know where to start. We were able to assist client by making contact with the appropriate authorities and explaining her situation so that she did not have to do this herself as it was too upsetting for her. We were also able to establish why benefits had not been paid and to rectify this.

We were able to contact the local authority on client's behalf and arrange for client to visit her local authority to see a housing officer who was able to re-home her the next day. This is an exceptionally fast result, because the council were so shocked at her living conditions.

Outcome

Homelessness prevented

Client re-housed

Benefits sorted

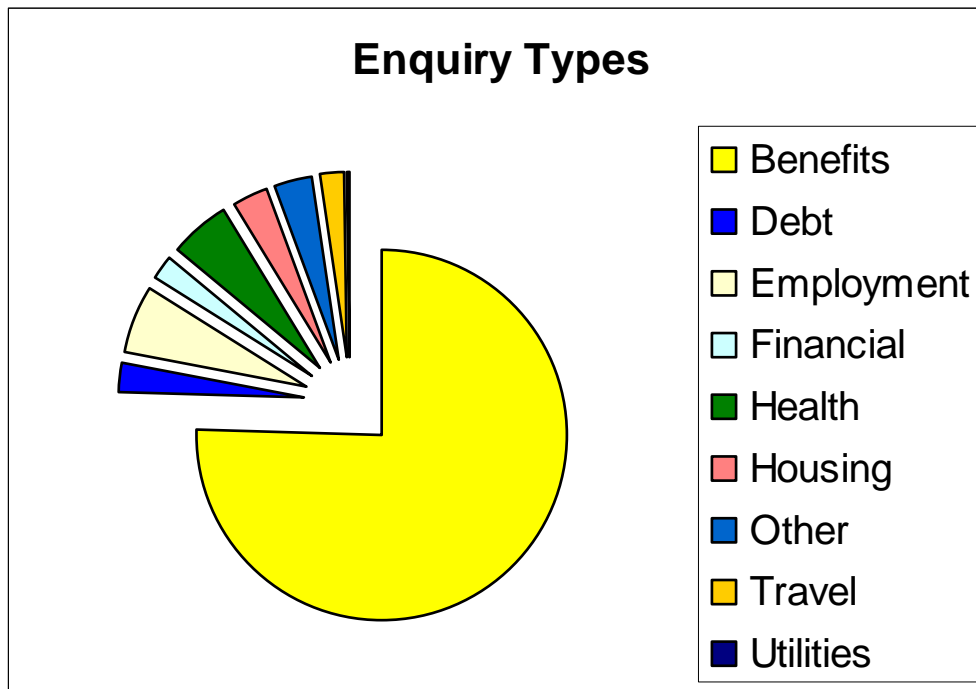
Macmillan Grant £180

Client said she feels that although she has had a cancer diagnosis she is now able to concentrate on her treatment rather than worrying about harassment from her landlord and keeping herself locked in her room.

WHAT KIND OF PROBLEMS?

Over the year we helped with **1161 problems**.

Over **75%** of these problems were benefit enquiries but a lower income can also give problems at work, paying bills, with the family or housing.



WHAT WE ACHIEVED

A client satisfaction survey revealed that **81.25%** of the clients surveyed believed we could not have given them any more help.

Total financial gain for clients in 2009

£1,095,999



Case study 2:

Client came into the bureau in March as his wife had been diagnosed with cancer. She had had a groundbreaking operation that saved her life.

His main concern was that her SSP was about to run out and he wasn't sure what to do with her credit card debts. Client had also put in a claim for critical illness for his wife but thought that the insurance company were taking a long time and were being difficult. He had taken 9 weeks of work to care for his wife and would continue to need time off, his employers had paid him a full wage up until then but he did not want to take advantage and did not know what would happen if they stopped paying him. How would he pay the mortgage?

A home visit was made to the client, his wife was in hospital at the time but we were able to complete the relevant benefit forms and his wife then checked and signed them.

As her SSP was about to run out we were able to claim employment and support allowance, we did not know her prognosis at this time so we based the claim on her present care needs.

Client was awarded both benefits, which gave a **weekly income of £214.60**, with this amount client could afford the minimum repayments on her credit cards. Along with this we applied for a blue badge which made a big difference to our client as she was not able to walk far.

Clients had put the claim for critical illness in January and had still not heard by the time they contacted the service in March. Our clients felt at this stage that they were unable to pursue the claim due to the strains with coping with the illness. We were able to contact the insurers on their behalf and continue chasing the claim. The company seemed to be asking for information that had already been given. We felt that the information that was being requested was a delay tactic and the only way we would get a decision on the claim would be to take the case to the financial ombudsman service. They helped our case and finally with a lot of calls back and forth, in September, **after nine months our clients were awarded their insurance which amounted to over £83000.00.**

This meant that they could pay off their mortgage and have a little left over to be able to concentrate on treatment and not worry about the bills. His employers had been great throughout this time and allowed the client to work when he could.

FEEDBACK SURVEY

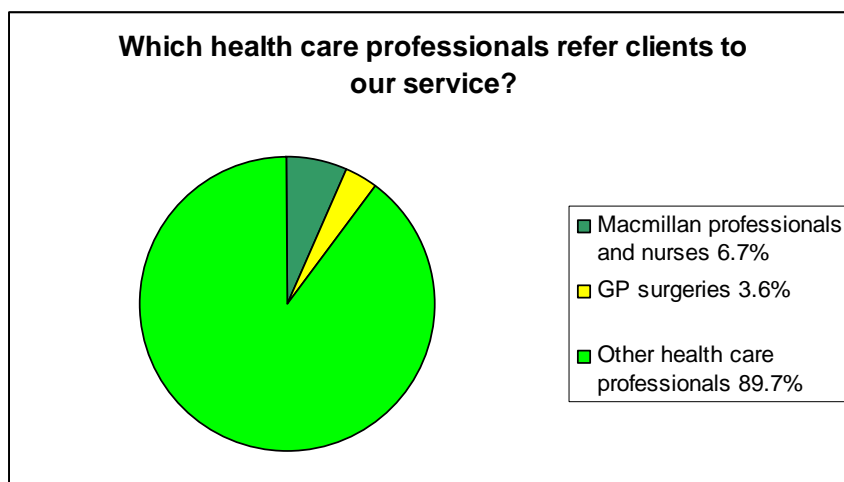
Making a difference

In October 2009 we initiated a short feedback survey amongst our clients and health professionals who often provide referrals to the service.

Client satisfaction appears to be high, with **93.75%** of respondents saying that the advice they received helped them. **62.5%** felt that their physical well being – including diet, travel and socializing, housing, utilities – had improved as a result of the service’s help; and **43.75%** felt that the service had reduced their concern about their finances.

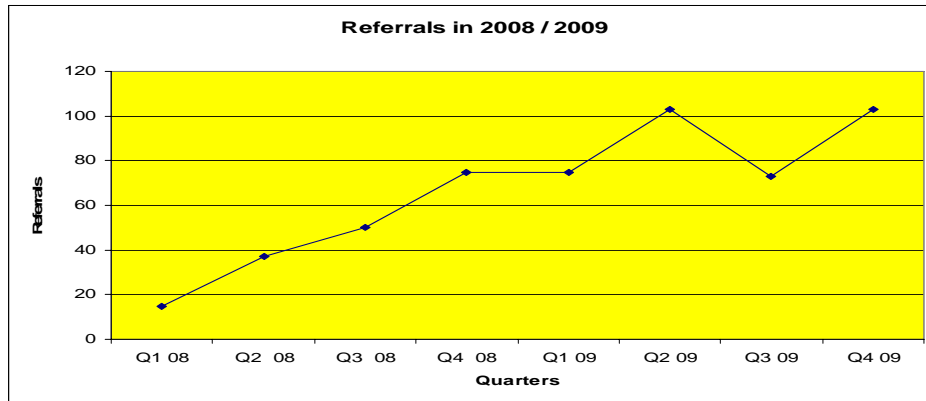


75% of the health professionals who responded to the survey felt that the service had allowed them to spend less time sorting out patients’ financial problems, which presumably helped to relieve some of the pressure on hospital staff.

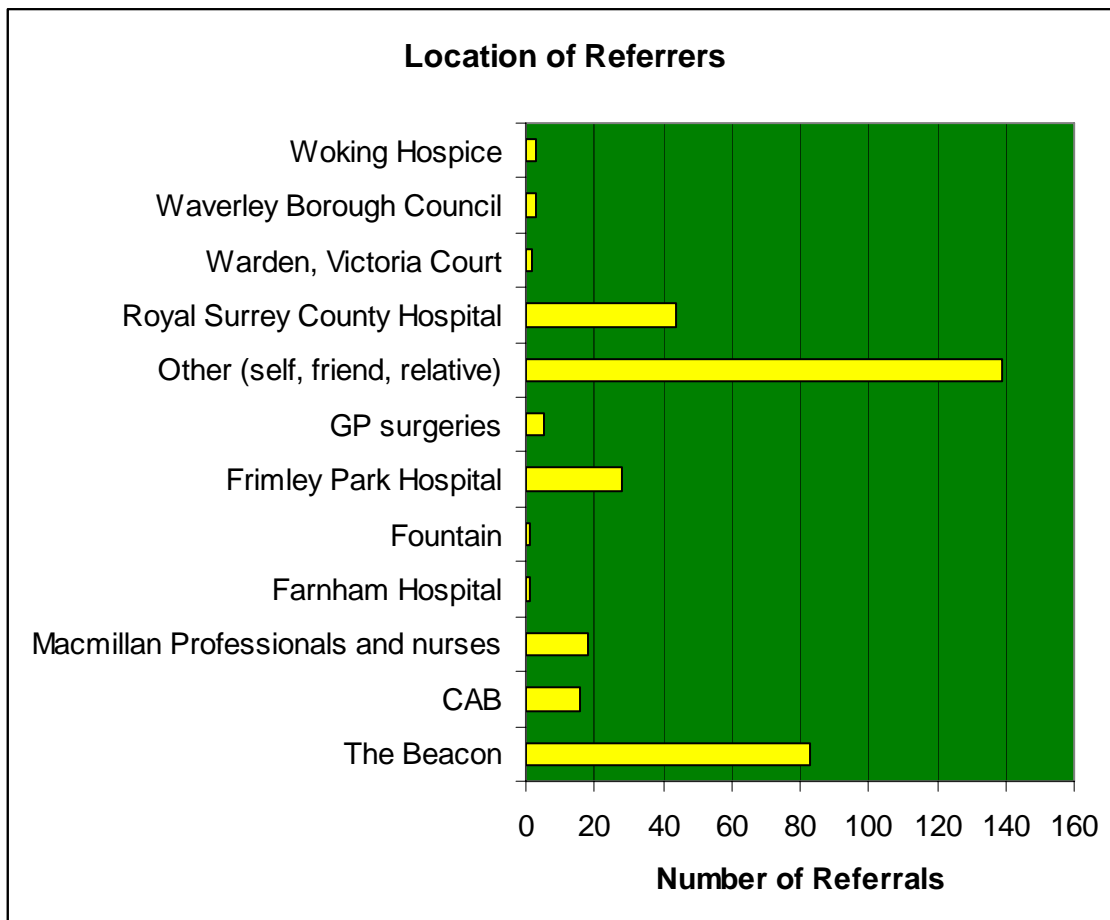


HOW DID WE GET OUR CLIENTS?

The number of referrals has risen over the past two years, both through word of mouth and publicity which has developed a wider awareness with agencies and the community:

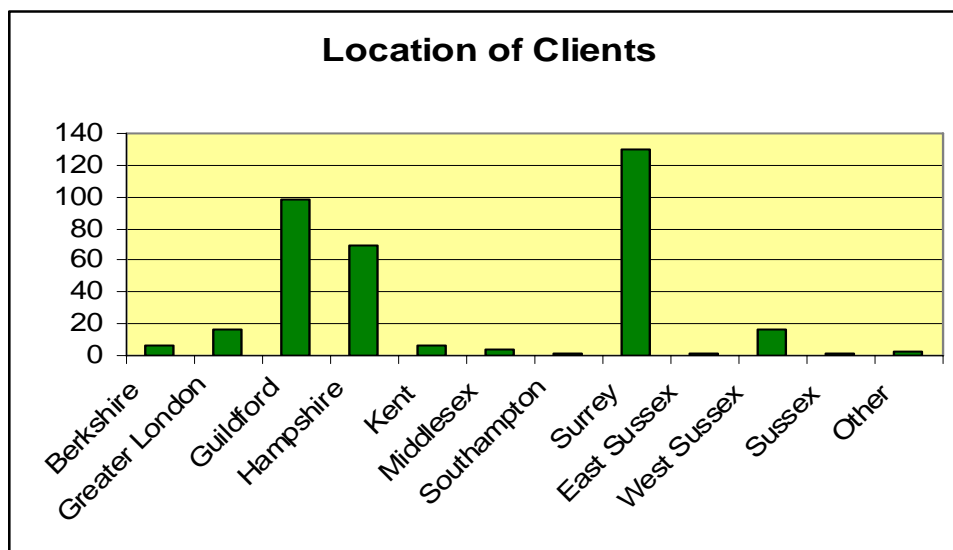


Referrals came from a large number of organisations:



WHERE OUR CLIENTS LIVE

We cover Guildford, Waverley and Surrey Heath, within which are the Royal Surrey County Hospital, Frimley Park Hospital and 3 private hospitals.



We looked at where our 2009 clients are coming to us from: 27.8% of our clients came to us from Guildford, with a further 65% coming from the wider Surrey area. We also had 19.6% of our clients from Hampshire, 4.8% from the Greater London area and 4.5% from West Sussex. There was a small percentage from other areas such as Middlesex, Kent and Sussex

WHAT ARE THE COSTS?

The annual cost of our service is £56 349. Throughout 2009 we saw 308 clients, this is the equivalent to a cost of £182.95 per person.

The gain for our clients for the year 2009 has been **£1,095,999**. This is an average gain of **£3558** per person.

For each £1 of funding the service generates £19.45.

HOPES AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The last two years have shown that there is an ongoing need for welfare rights advice and assistance for people and their families and carers in our area.

Our service has had to run on a reduced capacity since September when one of our advisers was badly hurt in an accident while on holiday. This has impacted on our ability to offer home visits and consequently it has been necessary to contact clients by phone. We hope that a new adviser will be appointed in the near future.



We will continue to make links with social and healthcare professionals, and continue to cultivate and maintain links with other Macmillan and Citizens Advice Bureau Welfare Rights professionals both locally and nationally.

We are committed to continuing to listen to feedback from our clients on what they need from us.

THANK YOU

We would like to thank all those who have supported us over the past two years.

- All those involved in the Steering Group
- The staff at The Beacon, Frimley Park Hospital, Royal Surrey County Hospital, Woking Hospice and all nurses who have worked with us to provide this service
- Guildford Citizens Advice Bureau management team, volunteers and Trustee Board for supporting our Service