



# Colchester Borough Council Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service Annual Report

1 November 2017 - 31 December 2018

Prepared by  
Tracy Allen

## Meet the Team



**Nicola French**

Macmillan  
Welfare Benefits Manager



**Tracy Allen**

Interim Macmillan  
Welfare Benefits Manager



**Charlotte Northcut-Keen**

Macmillan  
Team Leader



**Caroline Wales**

Macmillan  
Welfare Benefits Officer



**Gillian Belsham**

Macmillan  
Welfare Benefits Officer



**Lynn Farthing**

Macmillan  
Welfare Benefits Officer



**Emma Holbrow**

Macmillan  
Welfare Benefits Officer



**Sandra Pearse**

Macmillan  
Welfare Benefits Officer



**Carol Nakazwe**

Macmillan  
Technical Support Officer



**Andy Frost**

Macmillan  
Technical Support Officer



**Tracey Wilson**

Macmillan  
Technical Support Officer

**This report provides a summary of the Colchester Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service for 1st November 2017– 31st December 2018\***

## Executive Summary

# 2,476 new clients

Total number of recorded new clients during the period was 2476. The three most prevalent cancer types reported to our service were: lung and respiratory, breast and bowel.

# 1 new recruit

The service has recruited 1 new member of the team into a vacant position.

# £10.1 million

The total benefits gained for clients for this period was £10.1 million including over £65k in Macmillan Grants. Plus an additional £2.6 million was recorded from closing outstanding cases opened prior to this period.

# AQS certified standards

The Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service are delighted to continue to reach the standards set by the Advice Quality Standard (AQS).

\*reporting period changed owing to contract changes with Macmillan.



# Introduction

The Essex Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service is hosted by Colchester Borough Council. They offer expert welfare benefits advice and advocacy to clients affected by cancer, with the aim of maximising their income and improving their lives. The service is always looking for ways to improve delivery and improve the way the team work.

Nicola French started maternity leave during September 2018 and currently there is an Interim Manager in place, Tracy Allen.

A new Technical Support Officer was recruited February 2018 to assist with managing the team's workload to ensure the best possible service delivery.

Several positive changes have been introduced throughout this period, including updating the Macmillan web pages and introducing an online referral form. This has streamlined the way the team work and has made it simpler and easier for clients and their representatives to find out more about the team and make referrals.

The team created a 'Team Charter' to ensure a consistent approach by the whole team. This includes how the team will treat customers and each other, partnership working and what behaviours and attitudes are expected.

A highlight for the Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service in this reporting period was being recognised for their team spirit and collaborative way of working, by being nominated for the LGC 'Team of the Year'. The team were shortlisted and will find out in March 2019 if they have been successful.

The Macmillan Team continue to reach the standards set by the AQS certification with Recognising Excellence. Organisations that hold the standard have demonstrated that they are easily accessible, effectively managed, and employ staff with the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of their clients. The standard covers seven core quality areas that the service was measured against:

**Access to service** – ensures that the service is based on local needs and priorities

**Seamless service** – ensures that clients are signposted and referred to other services that can help

**Running the organisation** – ensures effective management of the organisation and its resources

**People management** – ensures officers possess the skills and knowledge required to meet client needs

**Running the service** – ensures that processes and procedures enable an effective and efficient service

**Meeting client needs** – ensures that clients receive advice relevant to their needs

**Commitment to quality** – requires all AQS members to commit to improving the quality of their service

## The service benefits from:

Inclusion in the AQS directory identifying the service as quality assured

Use of the AQS logo on all materials and publications

Use of the AQS toolkits which may help to further improve services

# Relevant Demographic Profile of the Population Served



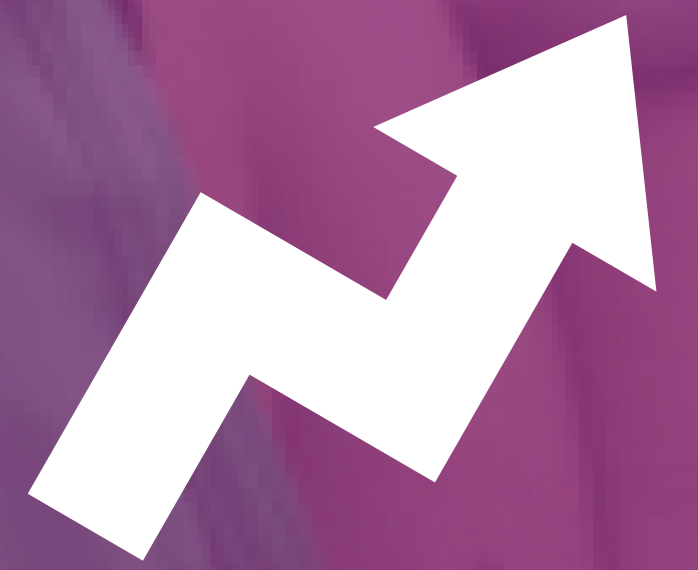
1,393,600  
(Population of Essex as per 2011 census)



18% smokers (as of 2014 - Health & Wellbeing report 2016)



5,286 per 100,000 - under 75 mortality rate from cancer (2012-14 - Health & Wellbeing report 2016)



Life Expectancy at age 65 - 21.3 years (women), 19.2 years (men) (Health & Wellbeing report 2016)



The area covered by the team is large and diverse in makeup. We cover 11 Local Authority areas across Essex, namely:

**Basildon District Council**  
**Braintree District Council**  
**Brentwood Borough Council**  
**Castle Point Borough Council**  
**Chelmsford City Council**  
**Colchester Borough Council**

**Maldon District Council**  
**Rochford District Council**  
**Southend on Sea Council**  
**Tendring District Council**  
**Thurrock Council**

The demographic profile of the client base creates a rather complicated picture, but one which needs to be understood to better tailor the service for future provision. Essex has areas of relative affluence, but also areas of abject poverty.

Chelmsford and Colchester are the biggest urban areas in Essex. In comparison with the population of England, Essex has more older people (19% are over 65 years, compared with the overall England value of 17%). In 2015, the population of 65+ year olds was estimated to be c276,529. By 2030 the population of 65+ year olds is estimated to grow by c103,650 to 380,179. By 2031, Essex will have to absorb an extra 324,000 residents in total.

Economic divide and impact on life expectancy;  
Although quality of life for most Essex residents is good, some areas of Essex are very deprived.

Smoking is the single biggest cause of preventable illness and early death. Braintree, Tendring and Basildon have the highest prevalence. Overall in Essex it is estimated that 25.1% of the 20% most deprived communities smoke compared to only 17.5% in the remaining 80% of the population. The prevalence is estimated to be as high as 33.6% in one of the most deprived communities of Tendring.

Cancer mortality and prevalence;  
While there have been marked reductions in cancer mortality rates across Essex, these have been far less than those seen in heart disease.

Higher mortality rates from Cancer are associated with deprivation, with Harlow (142.8) and Tendring (129.9) (both significantly different from England) having the highest rates. Brentwood (89.3), Uttlesford (98.2), Rochford (105.4) and Chelmsford (107.9) have the lowest mortality rates from cancer, which are significantly lower than England. Across Essex, the highest mortality rates (2008/10) are in cancers associated with the lungs (22 per 100,000), colo-rectal area, (9.29) breast (26.5) and the prostate (25.08). The lung cancer rate in men (43.2) is nearly twice that of women (26.36). (STATS PER 10,000)



## Service Aim, Objectives & Expected Outcomes

The service aims to provide free, confidential, independent and impartial welfare benefits advice to people affected by cancer. Acting in conjunction with clinicians and other supportive services to offer a holistic approach to client care.

We promote client empowerment and self-management of client circumstances by managing the majority of cases over the phone and signposting to other Macmillan services where appropriate.

### **Colchester Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service aims to:**

- Offer prompt support to clients, responding within 48 hours of initial contact.
- Alleviate poverty through client income maximisation by offering expert triage and welfare benefit advice and advocacy.
- Mitigate the financial impact of a cancer diagnosis and support the delivery of first class cancer care and deliver a specialist income maximisation service for people affected by cancer at the point of diagnosis, active treatment, palliative care and end of life.
- Provide information, advice and casework (up to and including representation).
- Provide a service that is delivered face to face in acute settings, but support is available through multiple channels including telephone and email.
- Integrate with the Macmillan Support Line (MSL) to offer a holistic service to people affected by cancer, in particular making direct referrals to the Financial Intervention Team.

### **Objectives:**

- To continue to provide a formal face to face service at Southend, Basildon, Colchester and Chelmsford hospitals and to increase awareness of the service within these acute settings.
- To maintain the Advice Quality Standard compliance.
- Complete 400 cases per advisor per year achieving £1million in welfare benefit gains each.
- For each Welfare Benefit Officer to achieve at least 2 MSL referrals each month.
- To work to maintain and strengthen our relationships with other Macmillan professionals.

### **Outcomes associated with the successful delivery of the Colchester Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service include:**

- Households have increased income
- Increase in client confidence in accessing services that may help prevent a hospital admission
- Reduction in social isolation and the promotion of independence
- Prevention of homelessness
- Help to maintain family stability
- Reduction in stress-related problems
- Debts managed and increased ability to pay priority bills (e.g. rent and council tax)



## Other Service Activity

Two Welfare Benefits Officers represented the team at the East of England Macmillan Professionals Conference in November 2017. They attended workshops and staffed a stall to promote the welfare benefit service to other Macmillan professionals who may not have been aware of how their patients can access advice.

Also in November 2017 the team hosted an event at Colchester Hospital with the Macmillan information pod to promote Carers' Rights Day. They shared literature and spoke to members of the public who act as carers for people with cancer.



The team hosted their annual Macmillan Coffee Morning at Colchester Borough Council's Rowan House on 27 September 2018 and raised £381.54. They also raised £313 over the Christmas period by selling festive Macmillan pin badges to Colchester Borough Council staff.

The team have been actively working with the Macmillan 'Big Green Bus', attending events in Colchester during May and November 2018. This helps to raise awareness of the welfare benefits service and what support can be offered to those suffering financial hardship.

Throughout the year the team have attended forums with job centre plus and other welfare rights colleagues. They also provided presentations on the service they offer to support groups and CNS staff through hospices and hospitals.

# Activity Analysis

## Cancer Category Type

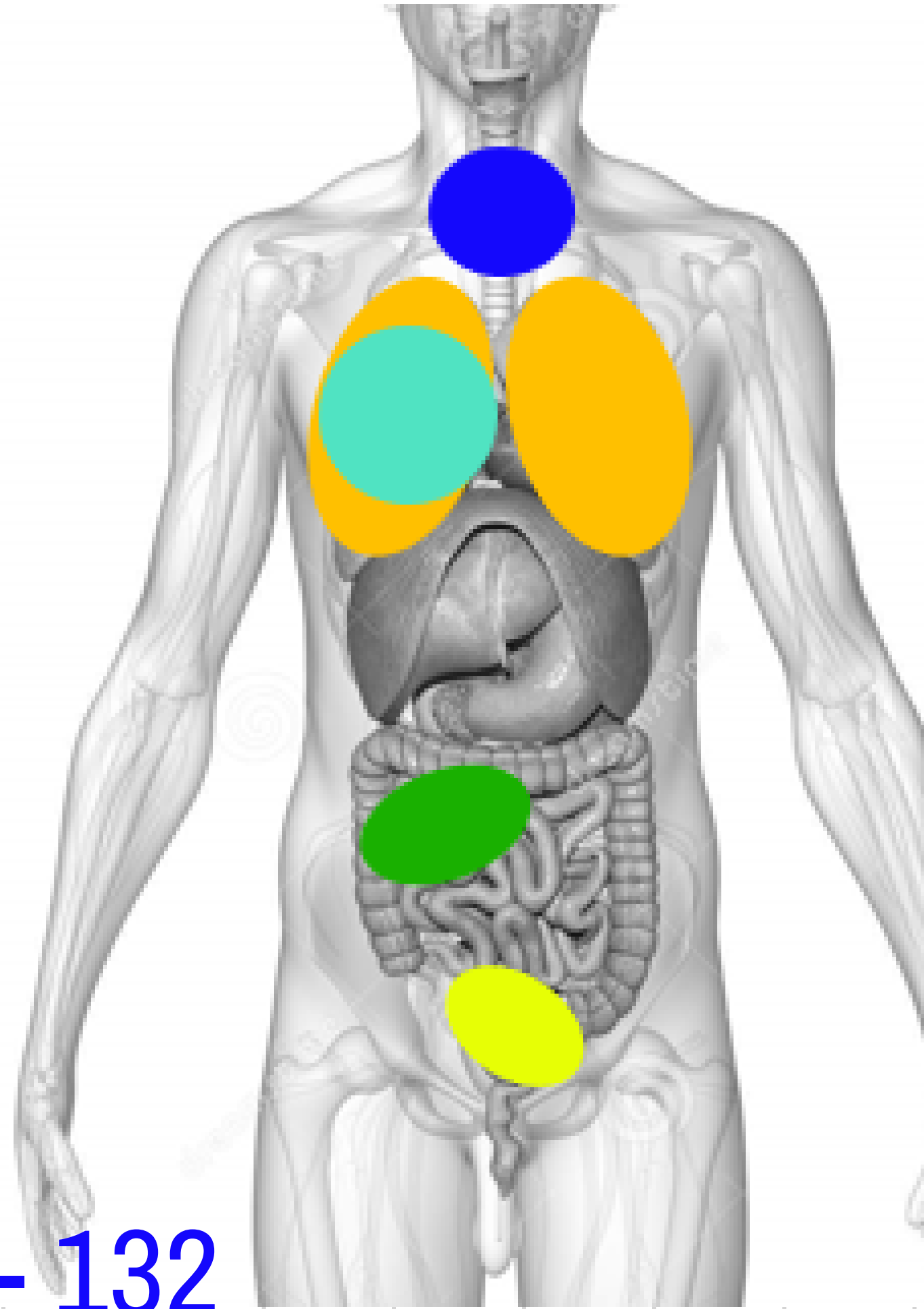
Lung & respiratory - 459

Breast - 278

Bowel - 168

Prostate - 164

Oesophageal (windpipe) - 132



This visual displays the 5 most common types of cancer reported by clients seen in the reporting period

## Interventions, Pathways & Financial Gains

In this section, these charts explore the level of assistance provided by the team.

Firstly, the visual to the right displays the number of contacts received at various levels of intervention.

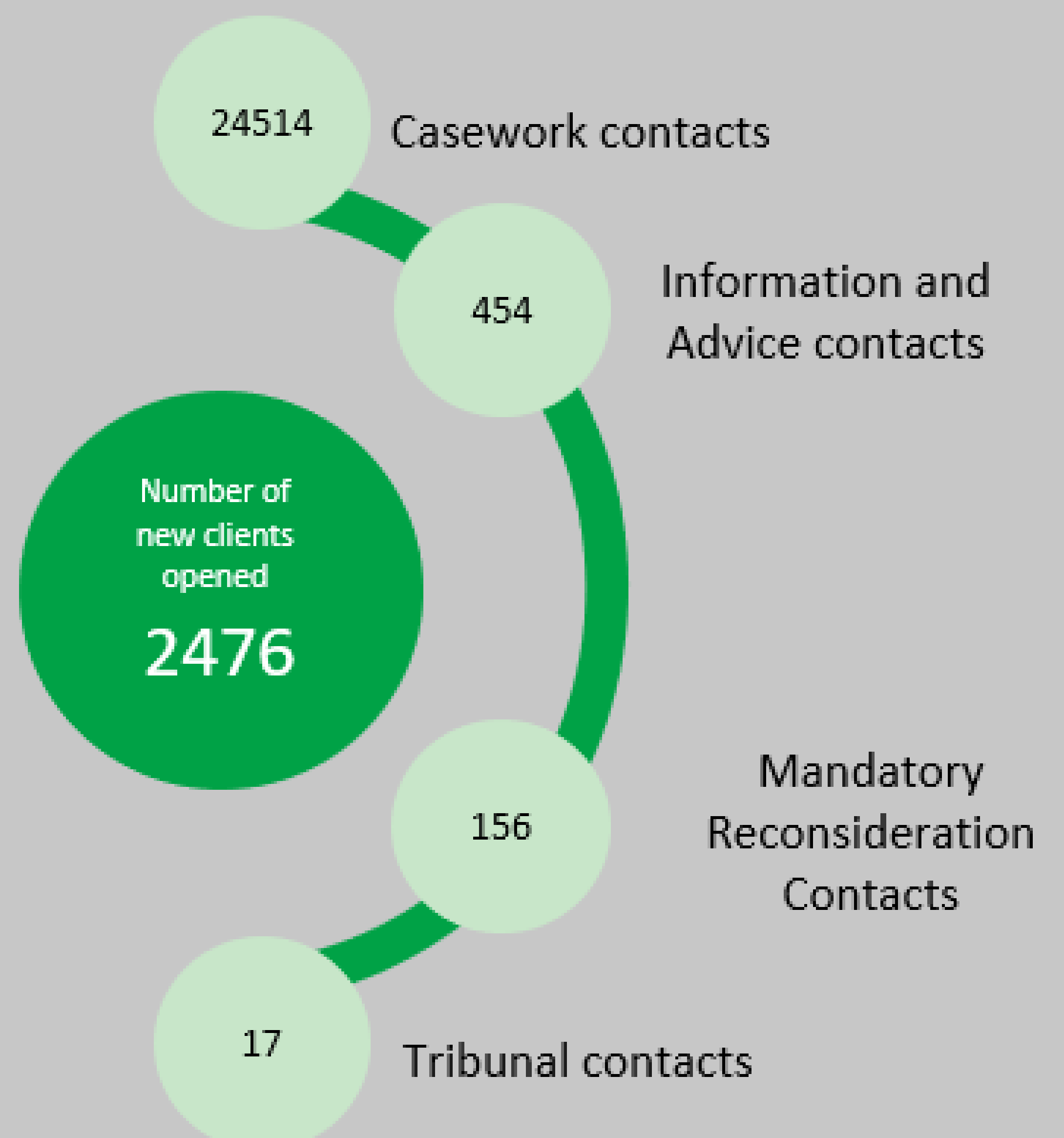
For reference the following definitions of these levels are provided by Macmillan:

**Information & Advice** - Providing basic advice and signposting where necessary, such as if a client is out of catchment area or if they need the phone number for blue badge forms.

**Casework** – Working with a client on tasks such as completing a claim form or writing to their doctor.

**Tribunal** – Representation for an appeal.

**Mandatory Reconsideration** - This is the number of client contacts regarding a challenge to a benefit decision.



Referrals to  
MSL

87

Whilst finding out about clients needs, often situations come to light where the team will refer the client to experts in their fields. This could include services such as: debt advice, mortgages, insurances and pensions, among many others.

Over the course of the reporting period, the team made 87 referrals to the team.

On this page you will see visuals showing the stage at which clients are first seen, as well as a visual showing the Top 5 financial gains between November 2017 and December 2018.

The visual to the right demonstrates that 37.6% of clients were seen during treatment.

931

Treatment

660

Diagnosis

493

Palliative Care

138

Carer

124

End of Life

### Top 5 Welfare Benefits

£3,082,552.35

Attendance Allowance (special rules)

£2,309,742.59

Personal Independence Payment  
(special rules)

£1,608,729.57

Employment and Support Allowance

£1,119,222.98

Personal Independence Payment  
(normal rules)

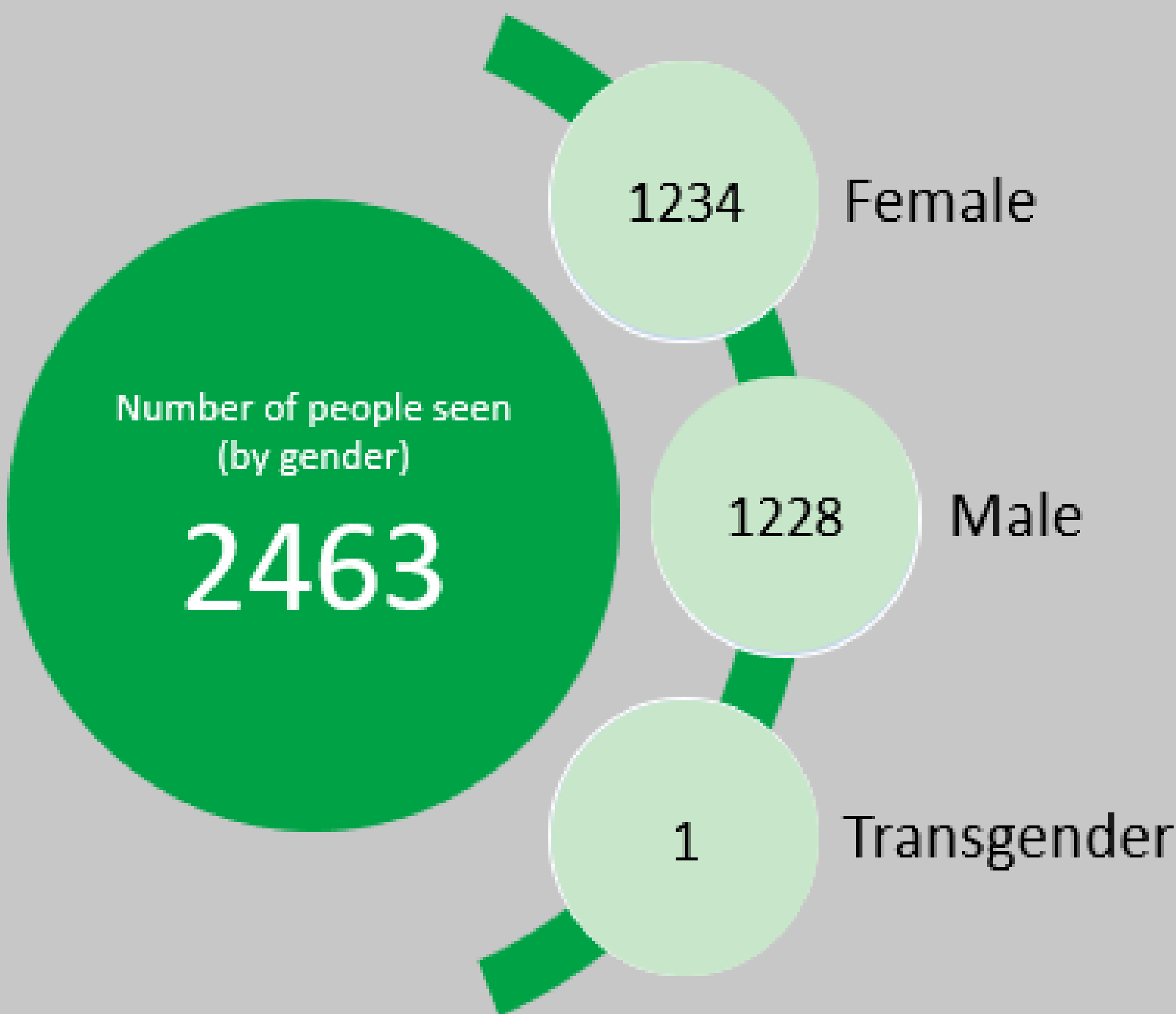
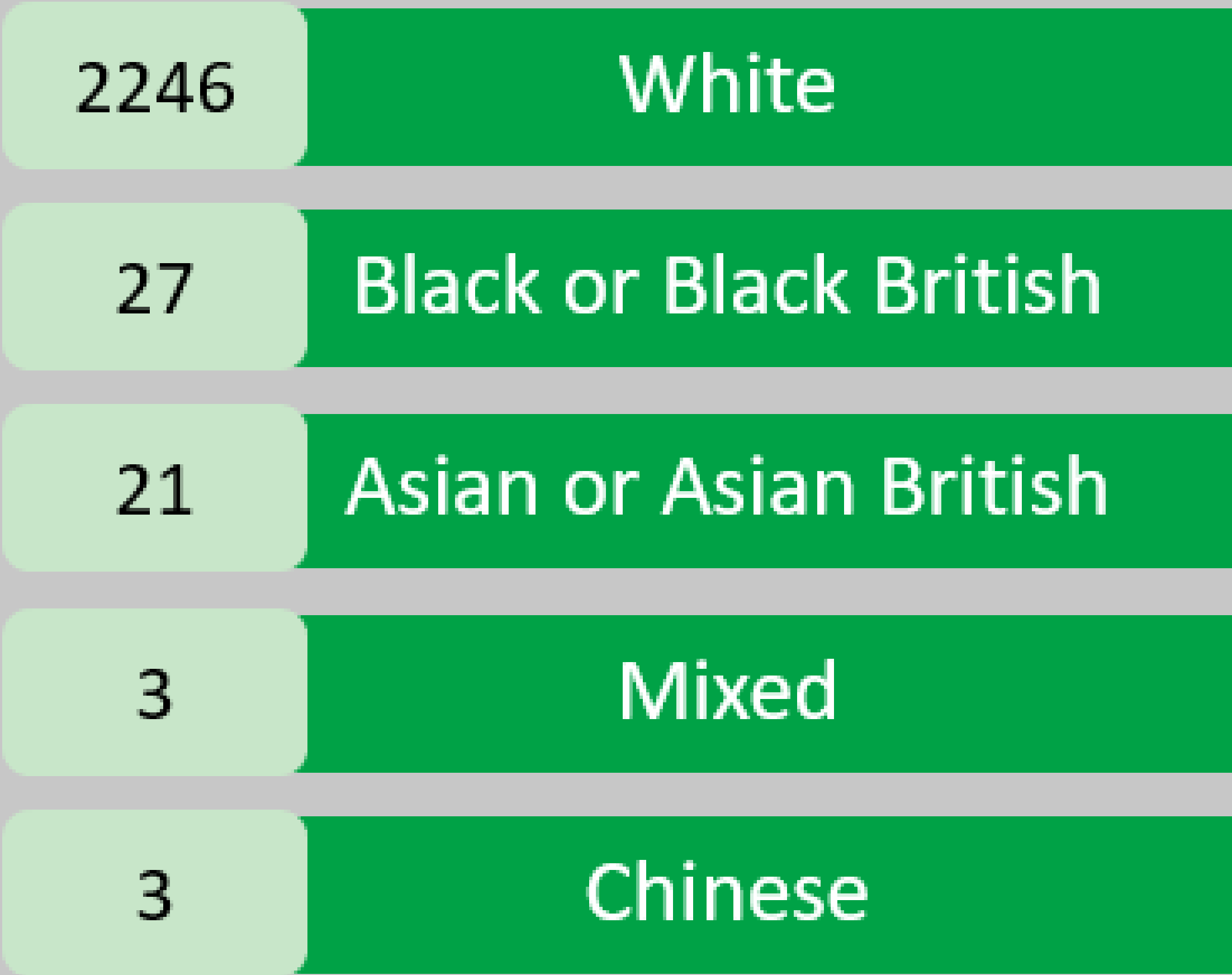
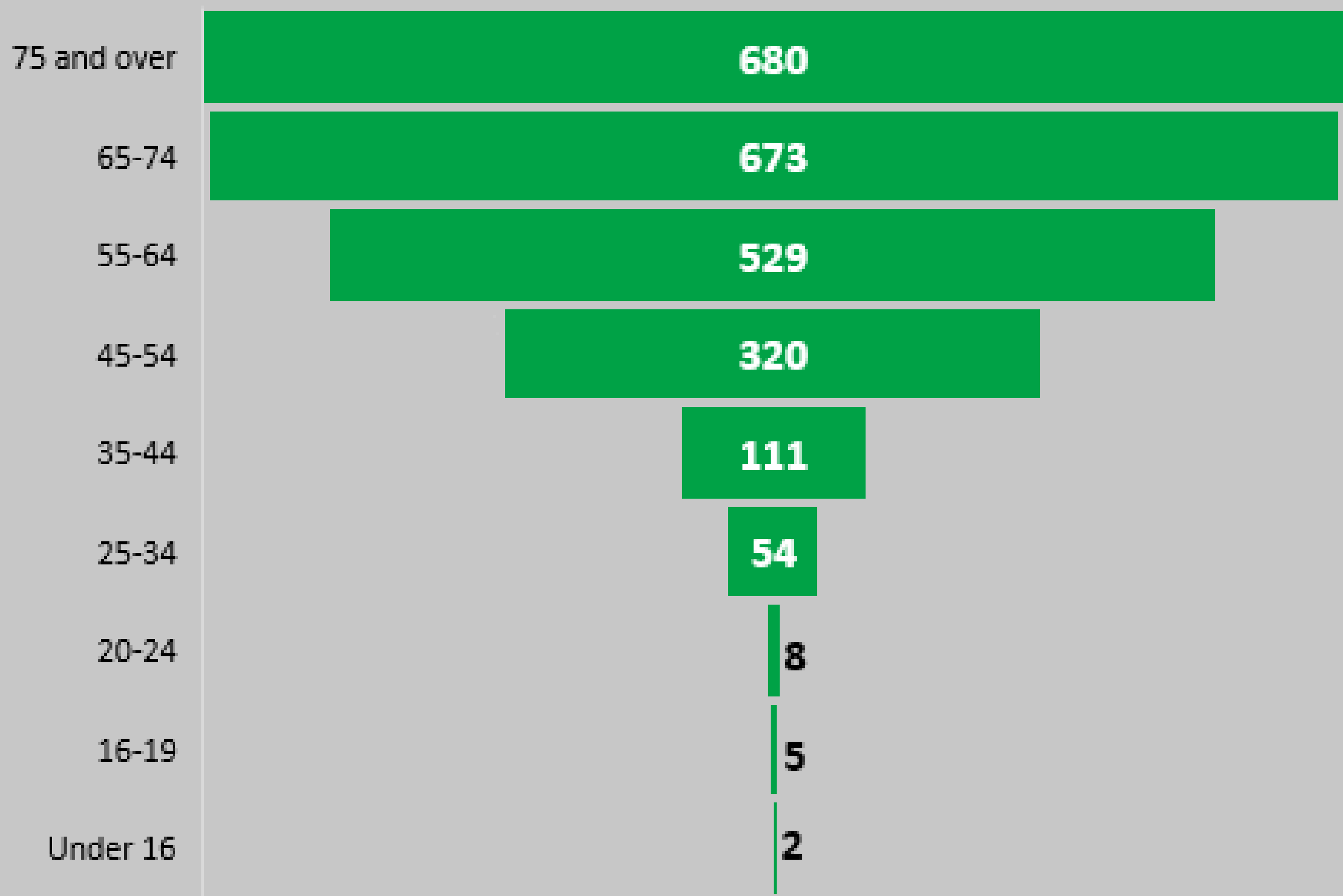
£1,068,265.77

Attendance Allowance (normal rules)

Total Financial Gains

£10,113,355.29

# Customer Demographics



This series of visuals display the demographic data for clients seen between November 2017 and December 2018.

There has been a fairly even split between male and female clients seen in this period.

Of the clients seen by the service, 95% of clients described themselves as White.

78.8% of the clients seen, whose ages were recorded, were aged 55 years and over. This is 1.4% lower than the last reporting period.

(Please note this is a breakdown of information provided to us, in some cases people may not divulge this information)



## Learning & Development

Staff development this year included all Welfare Benefits Officers attending courses to update their knowledge and expertise. The recognised courses included ESA, PIP, Universal Credit, Benefits for Older People and People from Abroad, as well as a development course on 'Challenging Decisions.'

Members of the team attended Macmillan Community of Practice events, these enable liaison with Macmillan colleagues on a regular basis. These conversations give the team direct input into the future of the national welfare benefits advice provision for Macmillan. This gives them a chance to network with staff from a variety of backgrounds, and share ideas for better working practices across the UK.

The priority for personal and team development over this period has been to increase emotional resilience and well-being in order to better support those affected with cancer.

The whole team attended an away day which included a talk from a Macmillan Councillor on resilience and a team building session. An outcome from the day was establishing a team action plan and the Team Charter.

Later in the year the whole team took part in a training course on listening and responding and improving communication between the team and clients.

Throughout the year the team have individually attended courses on emotional well-being, mental health awareness and building resilience.





## Case Studies / Service User Stories

### Service User Case Study

**Cancer Type: Brain Tumour (Glioblastoma Multiforme)**

**Diagnosed: January 2018**

**Treatment received: Surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy**

"I developed a head ache and after a week or so and a couple of doctor visits I was taken to A&E and told I had a brain tumour. I was taken to Queens Hospital where I had surgery and found out later I had GBM stage 4. I've had radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Being self employed this had a big impact on our income. The fatigue is the hardest part, however I have also lost some vision and the feeling in my fingers"

"The Macmillan Team helped me with the financial bits which has taken the pressure off my wife and in turn me. I've never had benefits before and was unaware of the paper work or where to go. They arranged for the PIP forms to be sent out. They met with us and helped us by filling out the necessary paperwork. They explained what the questions were asking and they followed up to check if we had heard back. They told us to call if we needed any help in the future."

The Welfare Benefits Officer first assisted the client in February 2018 with a full benefit check and advice on the options available, this helped to alleviate the client's financial concerns. The officer then met with the client and assisted with a making a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim on their behalf. The PIP application was successful and by July 2018 the client was awarded their PIP payment backdated to February 2018. The client was very pleased with this positive outcome and the professional advice provided by the team who kept in touch every step of the way.



## Impact of Service

Throughout the reporting period, a customer survey was undertaken to ascertain how customers felt about the service provided.  
The results of this are detailed below.



■ Impressive  
■ Fairly Impressive

**98% of respondents  
found the knowledge  
of the staff  
IMPRESSIVE**

All of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied with the level of service from the Macmillan Welfare Benefits team.

As demonstrated by the visual to the left, 98% of respondents rated the member of staff's knowledge as Impressive.

91% of respondents strongly agreed that the communications were clear and easy to understand.

83% of respondents indicated that the support they received from the Macmillan Welfare Benefits team exceeded their expectations.

91% of respondents strongly agreed that the service was considerate of their needs.

Importantly, 97% of respondents said they were highly likely to recommend the service to others.

## User Feedback





## Future Plans & Targets

### Over the next 12 months;

- Concentrate on improving communication between the team and clients. The whole team will attend a course on assertiveness and presentation skills. There will also be a continuation of mental health awareness and the team will take part in a compassion fatigue course in February 2019.
- Create a more targeted approach to accessing new clients to ensure support for those most in need, based on demographics.
- Review the service delivered from hospital settings and other outreach locations to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the clients.
- Prioritise raising awareness of the service within the acute settings. Providing sessions for all CNS staff and other Macmillan professionals based within the Information Centres to ensure newly diagnosed patients can access the service.
- Staff will keep up to date with the changing welfare benefits landscape to ensure that their quality of advice remains excellent, especially in light of the considerable changes Universal Credit will bring to clients.
- Complete the AQS (Advice Quality Service) review in Spring 2019, ensuring the service continues to meet the required standards.
- Work with Macmillan colleagues to ensure we feedback any improvements or suggestions which can help those affected by cancer.