

**NEED ADVICE
ABOUT BENEFITS**

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

**WE CAN
HELP**

family member
or someone
is living with cancer
struggling to cope
impact, you can

Get in touch

0800 019 6003

macmillan@colchester.gov.uk

www.colchester.gov.uk



Colchester Borough Council Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service Annual Report

Prepared by
Nicola French

1 November 2016 - 31 October 2017



Meet the Team



Nicola French
Macmillan
Welfare Benefits Manager



Charlotte Northcut
Macmillan
Team Leader



Gillian Belsham
Macmillan
Welfare Benefits Officer



Lynn Farthing
Macmillan
Welfare Benefits Officer



Emma Holbrow
Macmillan
Welfare Benefits Officer



Sandra Pearce
Macmillan
Welfare Benefits Officer



Caroline Wales
Macmillan
Welfare Benefits 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 the period 1st November 2016 – 31st October 2017

Executive
Summary

4 new recruits

The service has recruited 4 new members of the team into vacant positions.

2,181 new clients

Total number of recorded new clients during the period was 2181. The three most prevalent cancer types reported to our service were: lung and respiratory, bowel and breast.

£ 5.6 million

The total benefits gained for clients for this period was £5.6 million including over £16k in Macmillan Grants.

AQS certified

The Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service are delighted to have achieved the Advice Quality Standard (AQS) with Recognising Excellence During the last reporting period.

The Essex Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service is hosted by Colchester Borough Council. We 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 has gone through a period of change over recent months, which has seen significant improvements to the way the team work and the service we are able to provide to clients.

The team had an interim manager from March until July when Nicola French took over the role as Macmillan Welfare Benefits Manager. In February two new Welfare Benefits Officers were recruited, with one leaving to go on maternity leave on 1st August. At this time, we were able to recruit a new Welfare Benefits Officer although the team were still one officer short and at the time of reporting we have been working under our required officer quota.

Several positive changes have been introduced to how the team work since July, including an appointment-based service in the acute settings to negate the need for any home visits (as per the MPA requirements), and various in-house technical and process improvements which have benefited the team.

A highlight for the Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service in this reporting period was in obtaining a certification with Recognising Excellence AQS. 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 underwent a number of assessments to review process and policy, these were successfully completed to achieve the AQS certification. It was noted during the process that it is highly unusual for a service to end the on-site audit with no outstanding recommendations, highlighting the standard of services and processes of the Colchester Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service.

The service now 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 we need to understand to better tailor our 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:

- We aim to offer prompt support to clients, responding within 48 hours of initial contact.
- We aim to 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 predominately 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
- Achieve £1million in welfare benefit gains per advisor by November 1st 2018
- 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

The team have been actively working with Macmillan 'Big Green Bus' attending events in Maldon and at the Clacton air show, to raise awareness of the welfare benefits service and what support can be offered to those suffering financial hardship.

Two Welfare Benefits Officers also represented the team at the East of England Macmillan Professionals Conference in November 2017, where 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.



The team hosted their annual Macmillan Coffee Morning at Colchester Borough Council's Rowan House, and raised £267.78 as well as £225 over the Christmas period by selling the festive Macmillan pin badges to Colchester Borough Council staff – the badges proved so popular a waiting list was started!

In November 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.

Cancer Category Type

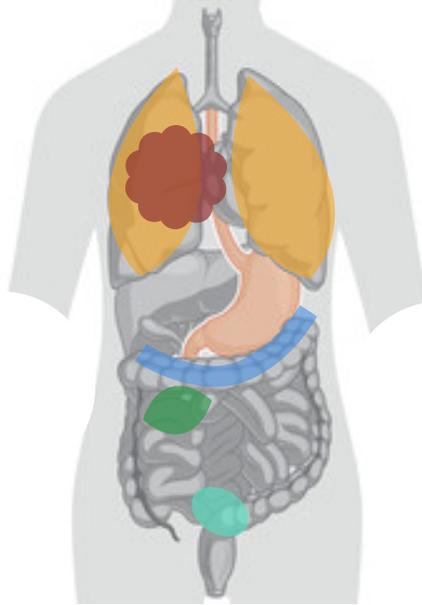
Lung & respiratory - 365

Breast - 232

Bowel - 161

Prostate - 147

Colon & rectal - 107



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.

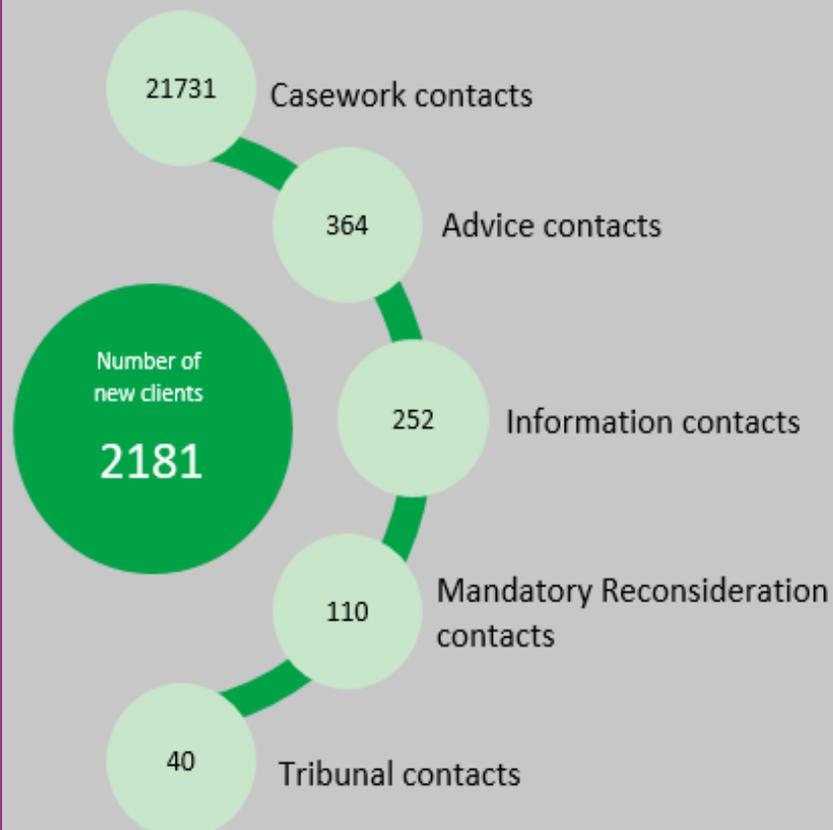
For reference the following definitions of these levels are provided by Macmillan:

Information - Providing 'basic' information such as 'this is the number for a blue badge form'

Advice - Providing 'detailed' advice such as completing a benefit check and advising they should claim a certain benefit.

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

Tribunal - Representation for an appeal.



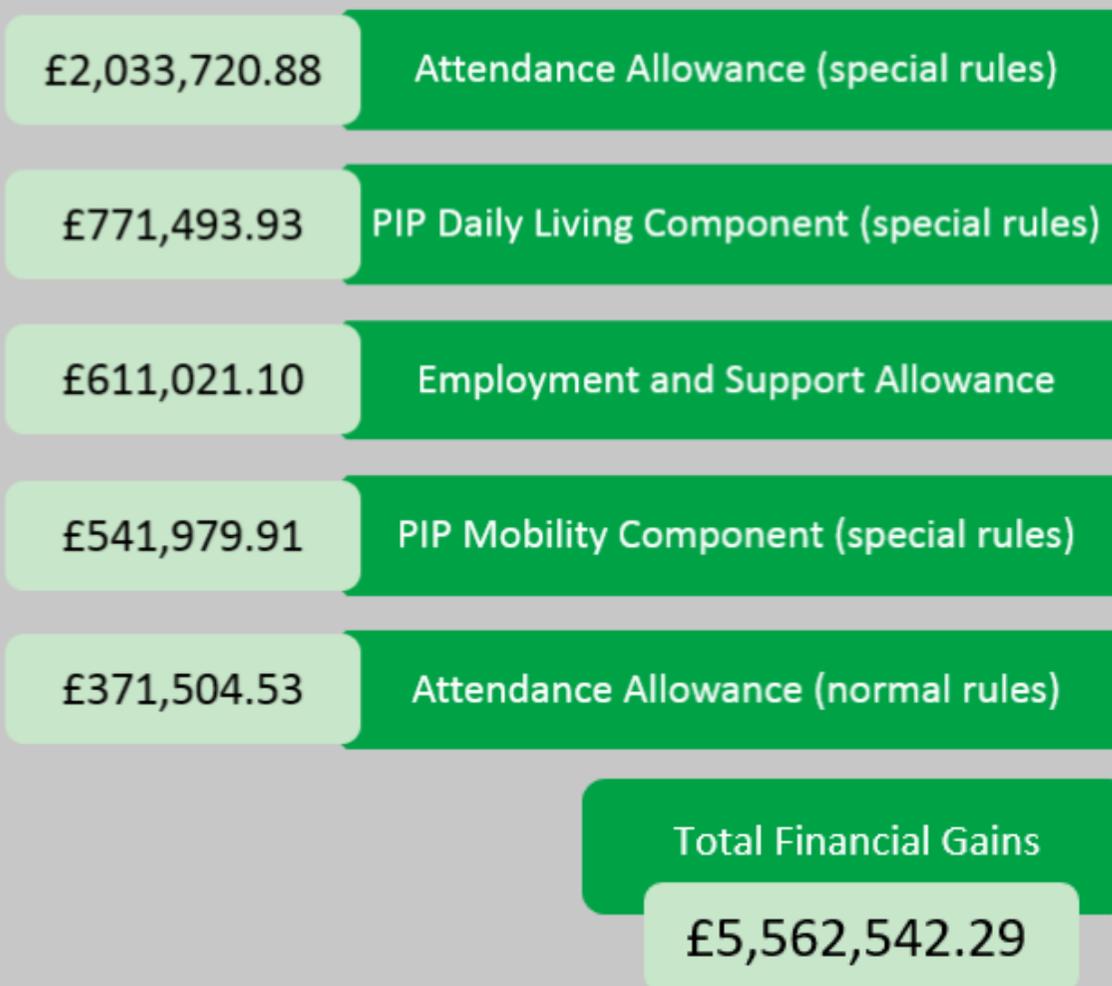
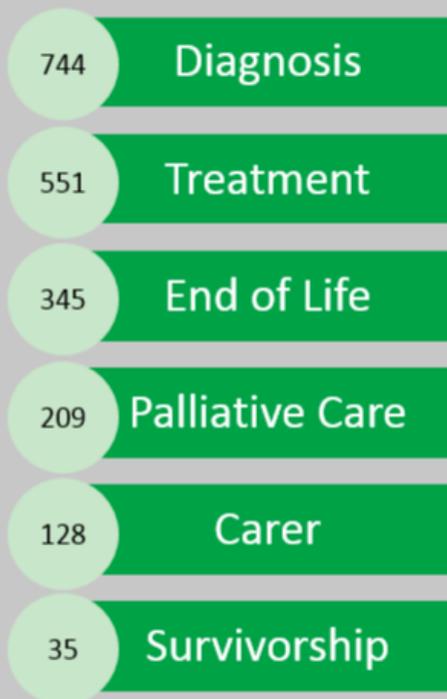
83 MSL referrals

Whilst finding out about our 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.

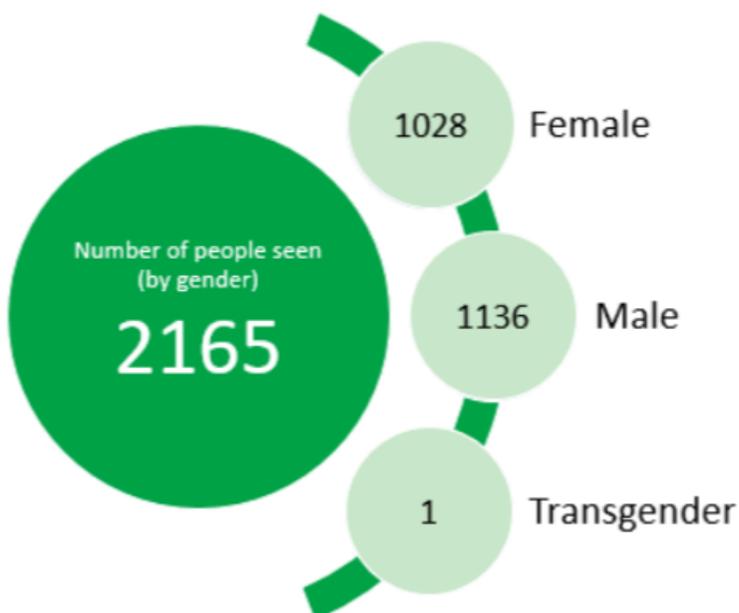
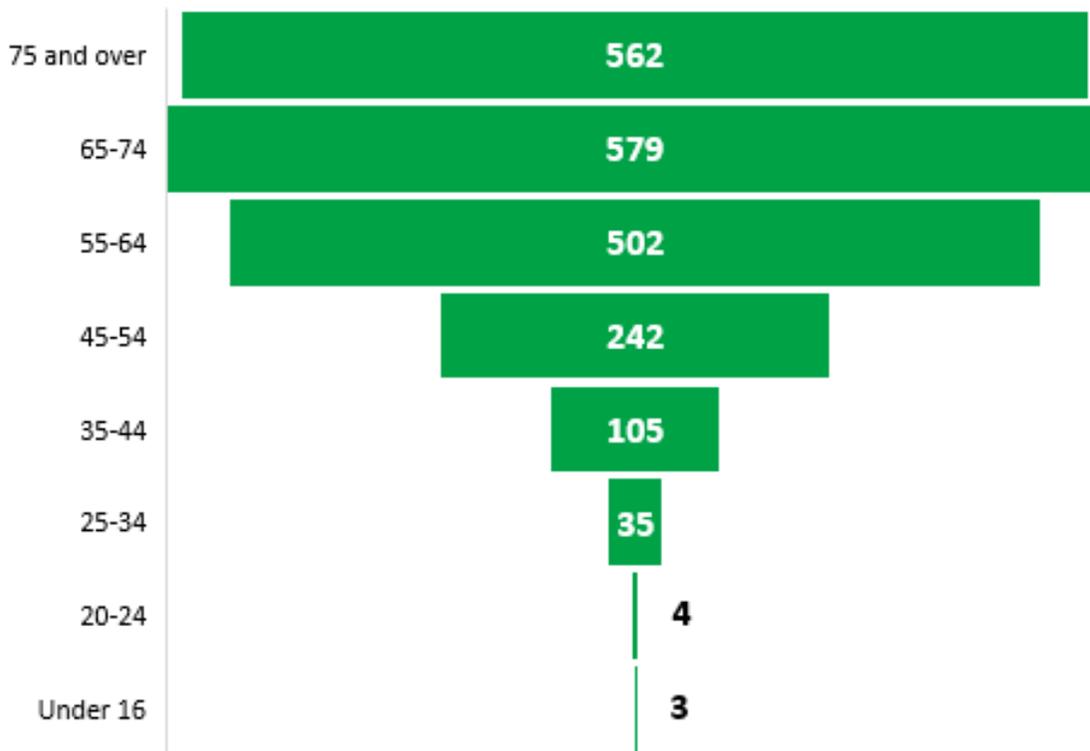
Over the course of the reporting period, the team made 83 referrals to the team.

On this page you will see visuals showing the stage at which we see our clients, as well as a visual showing the Top 5 financial gains between November 2016 and October 2017.

As has been the focus, the first chart shows that the majority of clients seen (34.1%) were at the Diagnosis stage.



Customer Demographics



This series of visuals display the demographic data for clients seen between November 2016 and October 2017.

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

Of the clients seen by the service, and whose ethnicity was recorded, 81.8% of clients described themselves as White.

80.2% of the clients seen, whose ages were recorded, were aged 55 years and over.

Staff development this year included two new Welfare Benefits Officers attending courses on ESA and PIP as well as a development course on 'Challenging Decisions.'

The whole team received comprehensive training to help prepare them for the roll out of Universal Credit.

Members of the team have attended the Macmillan Community of Practice events, that allow us to meet and liaise with our 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, and gives them a chance to network with staff from a variety of backgrounds, and share ideas for better working practices across the UK.

Future Development

We are currently recruiting an additional Technical Support Officer to help manage the workload of the team and to ensure we are able to continue to provide the best possible service with the widest reach possible to our clients in the north, south and east of Essex.

We have trialed and now plan to roll out appointments in all of the acute settings to take the place of the previous home visits undertaken by the officers, this should mean that unless an exceptional case we would not offer home visits. With the recruitment of a third Technical Support Officer in place of an additional Welfare Benefits Officer, we plan to review how the team work in order to streamline and look for efficiencies within the wider team to enable us to deliver the best service possible for our clients.



Enrico Boeris - 09/11/1949

Cancer Type: Primary bowel, now liver, lungs and spine

Diagnosed: January 2013

Treatment received: Two operations

"You read many stories in newspapers and magazines and there can't be many people who don't know someone with cancer these days BUT it's a totally different story when it's you that is diagnosed with it. Other than worrying about how it's going to affect you, how you will cope with chemo/radiotherapy and if you'll survive it, there's the worry of having to give up work and countless journeys back and forwards to Broomfield Hospital."

"It was so hard knowing where to start, but as soon as Lisa Villers (CNC) at Chemo told us about Macmillan and we were lucky enough to speak to Lynn (Macmillan Welfare Benefits Officer) it was like having a weight lifted from my shoulders. She arranged for me to claim PIP and a Blue Badge for parking."

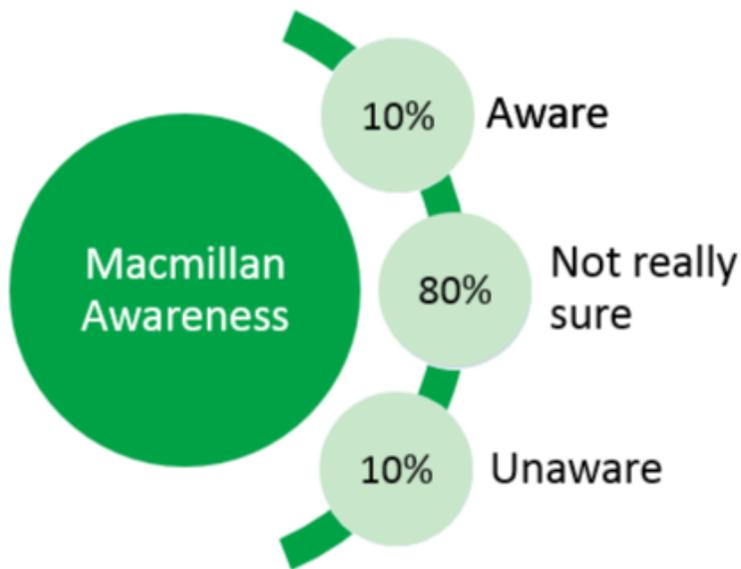
"Knowing there is always someone at the end of the phone makes so much difference..."

The Welfare Benefits Officer first assisted the client in October 2014 with a full benefit check and advice was given to the client about his options. The officer made enquires with the client's nurse and established that he was eligible to claim benefits under the special rules for terminally ill people. The officer made a claim for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) on the client's behalf and also assisted with a blue badge application. The client was re-referred in 2017 when both PIP and the blue badge were due to expire. The officer made enquiries with the hospital again to obtain a second DS1500 and successfully applied for PIP and a blue badge for a second time.

Impact of Service



Owing to staffing resources and changes in management during the reporting year, there has not been a significant amount of client feedback collected. From a small sample of the feedback collated, the responses were overwhelmingly positive towards the service.



The visual above displays answers to the first question around how aware the client was about Macmillan and the Benefits Advice Service

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

Every response received in the sample shows that they rated the member of staff's knowledge as Impressive.

All clients included in the sample strongly agreed that the communications were clear and easy to understand.

Every respondent also indicated that the support they received from the Macmillan Welfare Benefits team exceeded their expectations.

All clients in the sample strongly agreed that the service was considerate of their needs.

Importantly, all respondents said they were highly likely to recommend the service to others.

User Feedback

"Invaluable"

"I don't see how much more you can do short of finding a cure for this dreadful illness"

"Actually you contacted us in the first place & we are so glad you did"

"We wouldn't hesitate to recommend your services to anyone unfortunate enough to find themselves in that position"

Over the next 12 months;

- We will be endeavouring to deliver the service from a predominantly hospital setting in line with the national Macmillan Benefits advice service redesign.
- We will prioritise raising awareness of our service within the acute settings, providing awareness sessions for all CNS staff and other Macmillan professionals based within the Information Centres, ensuring newly diagnosed patients can access our service.
- We will continue to strive to seek efficiencies and growth opportunities to safeguard the future of the service for the years to come.
- 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 our clients.
- The service will continue to meet the standards set by the Advice Quality Standard (AQS) - the mark of quality that recognises excellence in advice given by an organisation in the social welfare arena.
- We will work with our Macmillan colleagues to ensure we feedback any improvements or suggestions which can help those affected by cancer.

Appendices