

# MONEY ADVICE TRUST

BUSINESS  
DEBTLINE

NATIONAL  
DEBTLINE

WISER  
ADVISER

## Our outcomes in 2020

### Helping people to tackle their debts



**161,500**  
people helped in 2020



**120,560**  
by phone



**41,000**  
by webchat



**1.86m visits**  
to our advice websites



**9 in 10**  
clients' debts reduce or stabilise



**9 in 10**  
are more confident managing  
their money



**3 in 4**  
report a positive impact on  
emotional or mental health

### Training the free money advice sector



**23,860**  
training places provided to debt  
advisers in 920 organisations



**85%**  
of free money advice agencies  
in the UK access Wiseradviser  
training

### Training for creditors on vulnerability



**3,280**  
staff trained in 30 creditor  
organisations

### Influencing policy and practice



**35**  
consultation and policy  
responses



**5**  
priorities progressed through our  
influencing strategy



**1,300**  
items of media coverage

# Helping people to tackle their debts

NATIONAL DEBTLINE

In 2020, National Debtline helped 94,030 people on the phone. We helped a further 28,630 people through our webchat service. In addition there were 1.4 million visits to the National Debtline website.

## 1. We help people find their next steps

Our advisers help people with a range of different problems by taking them through the options available based on their circumstances. A typical caller will have between one and five debts.



95%

of callers are clear on their next steps after our advice



95%

of webchat users are clear on their next steps

## 2. People are empowered to take action



97%

of callers followed all or some of the advice we gave



93%

of callers are more likely to open all or some of their post

## 3. Debts reduce and wellbeing improves



9 in 10

callers say their debts reduced or stabilised



3 in 4

callers saw a positive impact on their emotional and mental wellbeing

“The best thing we did was getting in touch with National Debtline. We know it will take a long time to clear all our debts, but it’s nice seeing the amount go down each month.”

National Debtline caller

“Before I contacted National Debtline, I felt under all kinds of pressure and I had no idea what to do about it. I will always be grateful for the understanding way that they dealt with my problems.”

National Debtline caller

# Supporting small business owners

**BUSINESS  
DEBTLINE**

Business Debtline helped 26,530 small business owners and self-employed people over the phone and 12,370 via webchat. In addition there were 475,800 visits to the Business Debtline website.

## 1. We help small business owners find their next steps

Business Debtline is the UK's only dedicated free debt advice service for people who are self-employed and other small business owners. Our advisers help small business owners with a range of problems relating to their business and personal finances, which are often intertwined.



**96%**

of callers are clear on their next steps after our advice



**96%**

of webchat users are clear on their next steps

## 2. People are empowered to take action



**96%**

of callers followed all or some of our advice



**86%**

of callers made contact with their creditors after our advice

## 3. Debts reduce and wellbeing improves



**9 in 10**

callers saw their business debts reduce or stabilise



**8 in 10**

callers feel better at business budgeting

**“Business Debtline’s positive attitude and clear advice coupled with practical help with budgeting was a significant factor in me being able to deal with issues and put my life back on track.”**

Business Debtline caller

**“Business Debtline gave me clarity, hope, and confidence at a time when I had absolutely none. I am incredibly grateful and would advise anyone to simply talk to you as soon as they are in difficulty.”**

Business Debtline caller

# Training the money advice sector

WISER  
ADVISER

In 2020, Wiseradviser provided 23,860 training places to 3,370 advisers in 920 free-to-client agencies across the UK.

In addition to our delivery of Wiseradviser in England and Wales, we continued to work in partnership with Money Advice Scotland, Citizens Advice Scotland and Advice NI to ensure Wiseradviser training is available to advisers right across the UK.

## 1. We train advisers to improve their knowledge

We provide free face-to-face and online training on the most important subjects for debt advisers. Courses and content are developed by our team of learning and subject matter experts using insight from advisers registered with Wiseradviser.



99%

of advisers said our training improved their knowledge



90%

of advisers were enabled to share knowledge with colleagues

## 2. Advisers apply their learning



97%

of advisers say our training helped them to do their job



95%

felt better at helping people deal with their debt problems

## 3. Outcomes for people in debt improve



9 in 10

advisers were helped to improve outcomes for their clients



9 in 10

were helped to meet or exceed clients' expectations

**“I have always used Wiseradviser for training and updating skills.** I have used the chat forums and think it's great to be able to access info from other debt advisers and moderators.”

Wiseradviser user

**“I have found the courses very good** and Wiseradviser has adapted well to the changing landscape of Covid.”

Wiseradviser user

# Improving support for vulnerable customers

Our team of vulnerability experts work across a range of sectors including financial services, water, energy and retail. In 2020, we delivered training to 3,280 staff in 30 creditor organisations to help them improve how they work with people in vulnerable circumstances.

We have now trained more than 25,540 staff in 300 creditor organisations.

The income generated from our training and consultancy work is re-invested into our frontline advice services and helps us to continue to deliver free, independent debt advice.

## 1. We draw on the best expertise and sector knowledge

Our training and consultancy draws on the expertise of our Vulnerability Lead Consultant Chris Fitch and our wider team of experts with experience across a range of creditor sectors.

Based at the University of Bristol's Personal Finance Research Centre, Chris is the UK's leading authority on customer vulnerability and has co-authored several key publications including 'Vulnerability: a guide for debt collection' and 'Vulnerability: a guide for lending'.

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## 2. We improve creditor policies and staff understanding



**99%**  
of learners rated their tutor as good or excellent



**98%**  
of users rated their knowledge as very good or excellent after our e-learning

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## 3. Support for customers in vulnerable circumstances improves

**"I thought that this was the best piece of training that was provided by the bank for vulnerable customers.** I think it will be something that would be beneficial to everyone in a customer facing role."

[Vulnerability training attendee](#)

**"The sessions have allowed our adviser teams to sit back and evaluate their approaches to vulnerability** and resulted in them feeling empowered to suggest changes to our current processes."

[Vulnerability training attendee](#)

# Influencing policy and practice

**We use what we learn from our debt advice services to bring about changes to policy and practice for the benefit of people in financial difficulty.**

In 2020 we made more progress on our key influencing priorities.

## Shaping the response to Covid-19



In the wake of Covid-19 we helped secure a statutory ban on bailiff visits, as well as new public health guidance when visits resumed. We also helped shape the FCA's Covid-19 guidance for firms, and changes to the IVA Protocol.

## Improving government debt collection



We published our 'Levelling up' report, based on the extensive evidence we submitted to the Cabinet Office on the need to improve fairness in government debt collection. We helped develop a new Vulnerability Toolkit for use by public sector bodies.

## Making Breathing Space effective



We secured several operational improvements to Breathing Space, as part of our work to ensure the success of this important new scheme. We also worked with the Money and Pensions Service to develop Breathing Space training for money advisers.

## Furthering the vulnerability agenda



We helped bring about improvements to the FCA's new vulnerability guidance. We also produced a guide to inclusive design in essential services, in partnership with Fair By Design, and guidance on GDPR and vulnerability with the Money Advice Liaison Group.

## Shaping understanding of problem debt



During the year we responded to 35 policy consultations from the FCA, other regulators and government departments to advocate for the interests of people in debt, sharing our evidence and insight with policy and decision makers.

## Promoting the Trust and its services



We raised public awareness of free debt advice and problems affecting the people we help by securing 1,300 items of media coverage in outlets with an average monthly reach of 8.5 million people.