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CHAI is a registered charity (SC027594)
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Acknowledgments

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Thanks to CHAI staff and volunteers for their hard work., to the Board of directors for the support and to our clients, for placing their trust in us.



Community Help and Advice Initiative

ANNUAL REPORT

2018-19



Aims and Objectives

- To relieve poverty in the community areas serviced by the agency
- To provide assistance in the interest of social welfare, with the specific objective of improving conditions of life of residents in the community
- To provide practical help to sections of the community in need
- To provide information, advice and support to the community

Directors' Report

The year to 31 March 2019 was dominated by a move in premises which caused significant disruption to planning and finances over the year – a year which also saw significant changes to our funding landscape, and our involvement in several new tendering exercises.

Advice Service: The new Integrated Edinburgh Joint Board (City of Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian) invited applications to a new Grants Programme. Our application to the 'Income Maximisation' strand was accepted and we were invited, with Citizens Advice Edinburgh and Granton Information Centre, to co-produce a new 3 year plan for Advice provision for the City. We also developed a key partnership with Children 1st – Maximise! – bringing Advice, Family Support and Employability Support into 6 Schools in the South-East of the City. Funded by NHS Lothian, Capital City Partnership and Pupil Equity Funding from the participating schools, this model was conceived as a 'test of change', to see how targeting families in poverty can impact their lives and the attainment of their children. The impact of the project was positive and we were invited to address the recently established Edinburgh Poverty Commission on the model.

Our **Housing Support Service** continued to partner with Four Square in the delivery of a homelessness prevention support service in the South-West of Edinburgh. Our Tenancy Support Services with Melville Housing Association and Almond Housing Association also continued successfully throughout the year. Our **Employability and Support Service** was successful in securing ongoing funding for the 3 year period from 2019 to 2022. The project continued to focus successfully on achieving employability outcomes in support of the City's 'Joined up for Jobs' strategy and, and we continued to operate the Youth focused '**Activity Agreement Hub**' for the South-West of the City – assisting school leavers to find positive destinations.

One of our long standing projects - The Furniture Recycling Service – finally came to a planned end in September 2018 as the partnership with Remade Edinburgh concluded.

Overall this year was one of renewal and we can now look forward to 2 – 3 years of stability in our funding for our core services – operating from our new premises.

Activity Agreement

In 2018-19 we supported **34** young people living in South-West Edinburgh who have left school without any positive destination. **19** of them have achieved sustained progression:

1 found and sustained a job **7** into training

10 into education **1** other destinations

Case Study:

A young woman we are working with left school due to bullying. She had been working towards qualifications but her mental health spiralled out of control due to the bullying. The school was supportive and allowed her private space to do her work away from the perpetrators but nevertheless her health diminished to the point her anxiety was so severe she could not leave the house. Her mother is a single parent who also has mental health difficulties as well as some alcohol issues and so the young woman struggled to find supportive adults at this point.

SDS referred her to us and with some one-to-one support she started to access the group. She was a very active participant and quickly came to realise she did not want to lose out on all the work she had done towards her qualifications. We helped her re-engage with the school and to work out a plan to allow her to come back and re-engage to finish her course work and submit it. She has shown amazing resilience and determination, as many of the young people she had difficulties with are still attending school but the school help her manage times away from this group and she has decided this will not hold her back.

Other Services

We have assisted our clients with **109** applications to Charitable Trusts for additional support, with a total of **£23,905** being awarded to them.

CHAI is a referral agency to food banks and in 2018-19 we made **143** referrals for food support.

furnish new tenancy and Support Worker applied to the Scottish Welfare Fund for a Community Care Grant and to the Edinburgh and Lothian Trust Fund for funds for furnishings and white goods. Client was also introduced to local services to help combat social isolation.

Outcome: client is now settled in her new home. Her health is beginning to improve and she is participating in community activities. She has made social contacts in her new area and is invited out; she reports feeling much more settled and optimistic about the future.

Employability Support Service

In 2018-19 our Employability Support Service assisted **137** individuals in South West Edinburgh finding a job and developing life skills. Positive outcomes of this support include:

17 found and sustained jobs

10 went into training **9** studied for a qualification

7 volunteering **4** education **1** work placement

Case study

Client attended advice drop in at CHAI and requested help to find work. Client was from Romania, he was very distraught as his 3-month allowance of JSA had recently ended and he was desperate to find work. Client's English was very limited, he was living in temporary accommodation and had no money so was walking many miles each day to try to find employment.

Development Worker (DW) updated client's CV, searched for and applied for suitable positions. She successfully helped client apply for £150 grant from Edinburgh Trust to get some living expenses in the short term as the client had no money to live on. At the next appointment DW contacted the EICC on client's behalf to see if they were looking for kitchen staff and forwarded a copy of his updated CV. Client was invited to attend an interview at the beginning of the following week. DW did some interview prep with the client, printed maps to ensure the client knew where to go and was able to provide some bus tickets to get there. Client was successful at interview and invited to start work following an induction process. Client was relieved to start working as he was able to regain some financial stability and reduce the stress that he was under.

Advice Service

CHAI successfully applied to Edinburgh Integration Joint Board Grant Program to continue to provide Income Maximisation and Welfare/Debt Advice Services to communities in Edinburgh. Our advice work also includes specific services embedded in schools, GP practices and the drugs & alcohol recovery hubs. These projects make a key contribution to addressing the health inequalities that arise from poverty and living with debt. In 2017-18:

2492 individuals advised

4348 appointments attended **7603** advice issues dealt with

163 clients represented at FT tribunal → **75%** success rate

£6,079,350 financial gains

Case study

The client's social worker contacted Maximise! for advice regarding her client's income and benefits. Maximise! met with the client and her social worker at her son's high school for a benefit check. The client is a lone parent with 3 children aged 12, 11 and 9. The client was very upset at the appointment because her dad who she cared for and was living with had recently passed away. It became evident that the client suffered from severe anxiety and depression, causing difficulties mixing with others and dealing with her own correspondence. She was receiving Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Employment and Support Allowance (WRAG), Housing Benefit and Carers Allowance for her late dad. Maximise! were able to advise the client that her Carers Allowance would continue for 8 weeks following her dad's death. The adviser helped the client contact DWP to inform them of her dad's passing and confirmed the payments would continue for 8 weeks.

The Adviser discussed Personal Independence Payment with the client and the criteria needed to be eligible. The client decided to start this application and the advice worker helped her phone DWP to complete the paperwork. The advice worker received permission from the client to collect supporting medical evidence from her GP and Social Worker. This information was posted to DWP to add weight to the client's claim. The application was successful, and the client was awarded the Standard Rate Daily Living Component and the Standard Rate Mobility Component. Payments were also backdated. Then, the Adviser assisted the client in contacting DWP to apply to the Severe Disability Premium on her Employment and Support allowance.

The social worker discussed concerns around her son's development and the additional care needs he required from his mum. The advice worker arranged another appointment with the client to discuss Disability Living Allowance for her son. The application was successful, and the son was awarded Middle Rate Care and Low Rate Mobility for Disability Living Allowance. Then the adviser helped the client reclaim Carers Allowance for her son. She was also advised her Tax Credits would increase because she was now eligible for the Disabled Child Element due to her son's Disability Living Allowance. The adviser also discovered the client's Housing Benefit had been suspended following the client's dad passing away. Maximise! contacted Income and Revenue to confirm the client's circumstances and income. The Housing Benefit was reinstated and backdated with this information, so the rent arrears were cleared.

From the help of Maximise! the client has increased her annual income by **£19,993**.

EHAP & Housing Advice

CHAI continue to lead the Edinburgh Housing Advice Partnership, delivering advice and representation to tenants and home-owners across Edinburgh and Midlothian. A key element is court representation:

307 individuals represented in court

1061 court hearings

In 2018-19 CHAI also delivered housing advice to tenants in the private rented sector, a one-year project funded by the Bank of Scotland Foundation. Clients were supported to avoid eviction and to sustain their tenancies.

85 clients advised → **32%** improved budgeting skills

£36,931 financial gains

Case study:

The client presented for assistance with an application he had made to the First-Tier Tribunal for Scotland for the tribunal to assess a fair market rent. He had received a notice from his landlords that they were to increase the rent substantially, to which he objected. We were able to guide the client through the process successfully. With our help he withdrew his application but only after receiving vital clarification from his landlords over his lease. That meant that we were able to assist the client in negotiating with the landlords by showing that the increase in rent was unlawful under the tenancy agreement. Consequently, the client was able to remain in his tenancy at his original rent and take time to find a new home in which he would be happier. We also advised the client as to a flaw in the landlords' practice, and assisted the client to make a new application to the Tribunal over his tenancy deposit. The tribunal awarded the maximum penalty against the landlord, ordering them to pay the client three times the amount of his tenancy deposit.

Housing Support Service

Since 2018, after a tender exercise, we have been delivering Housing Support Service in the South-West Edinburgh only, in partnership with Four Square. The purpose of the service is to prevent homelessness and support people sustaining their tenancies. We have also been able to secure 3 more years of tenancy sustainment and money advice work with tenants at Melville Housing Association and Almond Housing Association.

110 clients supported **53** tenancies sustained at Almond HA

49 tenancies sustained at Melville HA

Case study

Background: Tenant was referred to Housing Support Team for assistance with property disrepair issues. The property was found to be in a very poor condition, there had been a historical leak that had caused substantial damage to the property. There were low levels of cleanliness/hygiene throughout the property. Client was in very poor physical health, and her mental health was quite low. On visiting, the Support Worker was concerned about client's health and overall general wellbeing should she continue to reside in the property in its current condition.

Actions: After negotiations with landlord the Tenant was re-housed as soon as a suitable property became available and moved to a more manageable 1-bedroom bungalow. Financial help was given from landlord to