

# **Surrey Welfare Rights Unit Impact Report 2015/16**

Our value to society: the impact of  
Surrey Welfare Rights Unit in 2015/16

# Why is Surrey Welfare Rights Unit needed?

**Everyone experiences problems – sometimes they can be quickly resolved, other times it's not that simple.**

Welfare Benefit problems are particularly complex and often affect households who are facing multiple disadvantages and/or extremely low income levels.

Welfare Benefits problems can lead to debts, homelessness, loss of other payments, ill health and loss of opportunity.

The current pace and extent of welfare reforms is unprecedented. Contacts to the Unit increased by 47% in 2015/16 compared to the previous year.

**Surrey Welfare Rights Unit is a specialist support organisation that delivers services to over 70 local Surrey services. Our advisers are experts in Social Security law.**

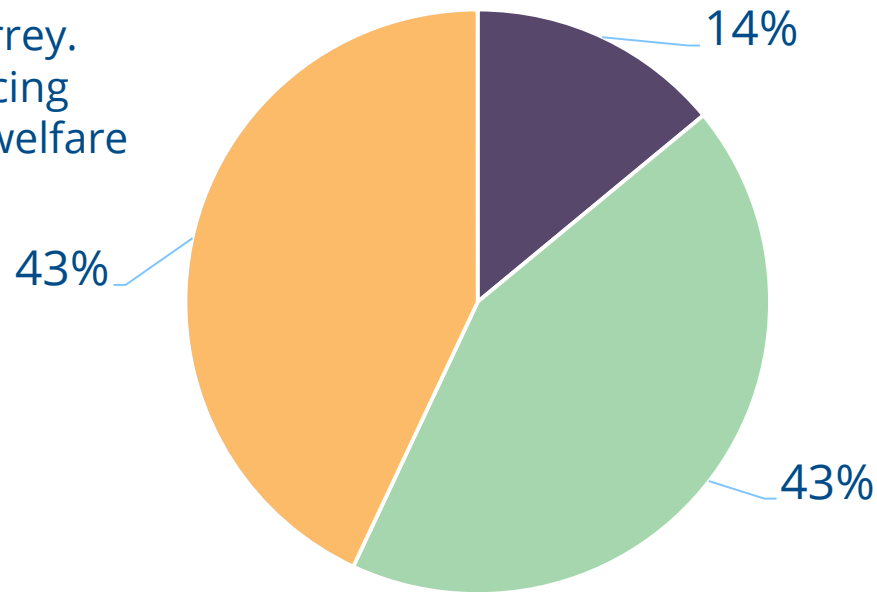
The Advice Line is open Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm. The advice team undertake casework for complex issues including First-tier and Upper tribunals.

The Unit also provides expert support to a number of statutory networks and policy groups including the County Council's Welfare Reform Coordination Group.

We work with local MPs as well as Government committees and advisory groups.

# We helped those most in need

We know from our client profiles that our support reaches the most vulnerable individuals across Surrey. These clients are often experiencing multiple negative impacts from welfare reforms.



■ Disabled ■ Long-term health condition ■ No health problem

# Who we helped

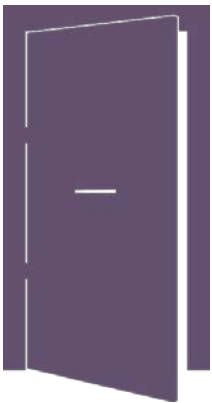
62% were female



74% were white British



40% were social housing tenants



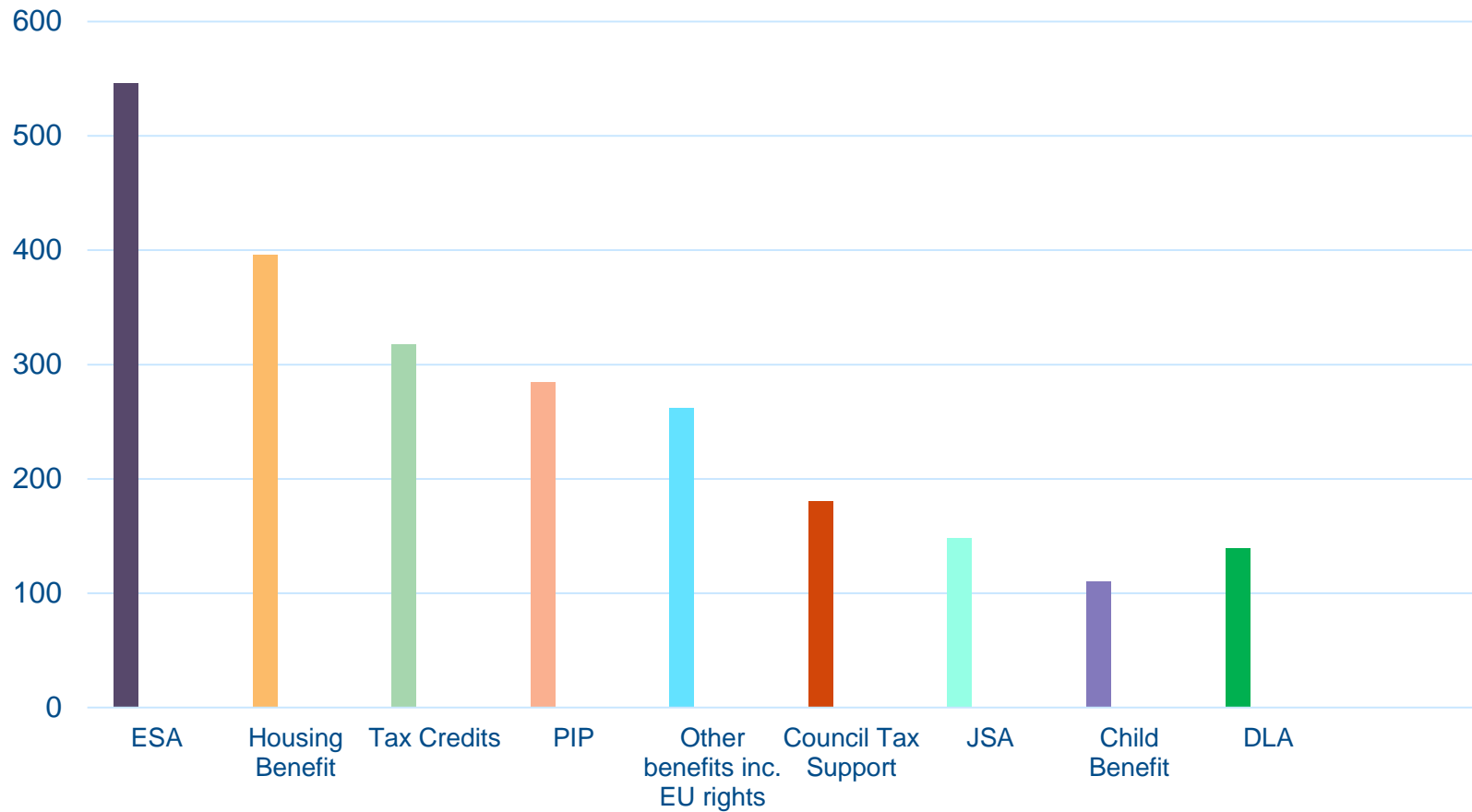
21% were private tenants



4% were homeless

# What we advised on

## Top Ten Issues



# Value of our advice provision

Advice helps to prevent poor outcomes for individuals and families.

We can put a financial value on our advice:

- Keeping people in employment or helping them back to work
- Preventing housing evictions and statutory homelessness
- Reducing the demand for mental health and GP services
- Improved client mental wellbeing and family relationships
- Some of the financial outcomes accruing directly to individuals – this income is spent locally, benefiting local communities.

## Savings to local and national government (fiscal benefits)



**£112,854**

reduction in health service demand, local authority homelessness and out-of-work benefits

## Wider economic and social benefits (public value)



**£1,076,943**

improvements in health, well-being, participation and productivity

## Benefits to the individual (financial outcomes)



**£3,273,679**

income gained through benefits and debts written-off and consumer problems resolved

# Benefits to individuals also benefit society



## **£3.27m in benefits to individuals**

income gained through benefits and debts written-off and other problems resolved

**Maximising available income ensures people can get on with their lives – preventing more critical and costly intervention by the state.**

It helps reduce financial difficulty, promotes inclusion and benefits the economy.

## **Our value is greater:**

Maximising clients' income has further beneficial effects including:

- for individuals' families,
- benefiting health and well-being,
- contributing to local communities and economies
- giving choice and independence to people to sort out their own issues
- providing the information people need when making decisions to move into work, change jobs or increase their paid hours
- Promoting individuals other rights such as accessing social care, employers' duties and help with childcare costs

# Our value is likely to be greater

We also add value through:

- Our training courses, ensuring that the advice sector in Surrey is competent, informed and delivering quality advice
- Our research and campaigns work that adds value not just for our clients but for all clients affected by welfare reform
- Our direct contact with hundreds of local people. Information and advice empowers people and helps them sort out their own benefit issues. We delivered many talks and workshops to Surrey residents, answering their questions and providing up-to-date information on all the welfare changes



# What our clients said.....



“Fantastic news J has been awarded higher rate mobility..... This means he can go out to groups etc. and his life will be changed”

“Your advice is very much appreciated and such in depth information. Thank you.”

“We have received excellent feedback on your speech from Carers who found it very informative and they found the information on welfare reforms very useful.”

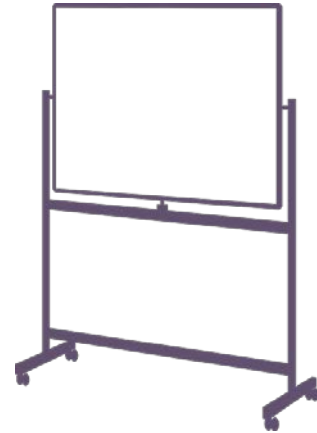
“The feedback from delegates was overwhelmingly positive about your presentation and all those “who expressed a preference” found it the most useful part of the day.”

“Without you I would never have been able to cope with all the mess I was in. You have worked so hard to help me out over the past year.”

“A huge thank you for everything.”

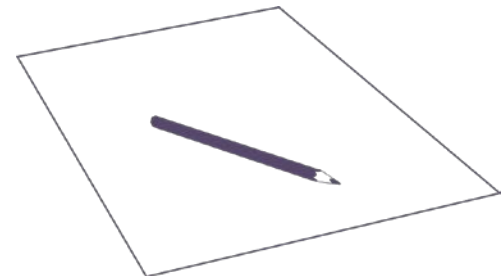
# Our training activity

28 SWRU courses delivered  
341 local advice workers trained



19 commissioned courses delivered  
372 local staff and volunteers trained

3 courses delivered outside Surrey  
51 advisers trained



# Advising Surrey Residents

We delivered many talks and workshops to Surrey residents at the invitation of a wide group of organisations and teams including:

Carer Support Guildford

Carer Support Woking

Action for Carers (Surrey)

Guildford Advice Services Conference

North West Surrey Carers Conference

Spelthorne Sure Start Information Bus

Spelthorne Home Start

Surrey Coalition AGM

Surrey and Borders NHS Trust – Mental Health and Young People event

Citizens Advice Mole Valley

Let's Talk North West

Asda, Sheerwater

Epsom Carers Event

Burhill Childrens Centre

Valuing People – East Surrey

Valuing People - South West Surrey

Health and Wellbeing event for cancer patients – CCG Event

Face 2 Face Parent Carers Group, Reigate

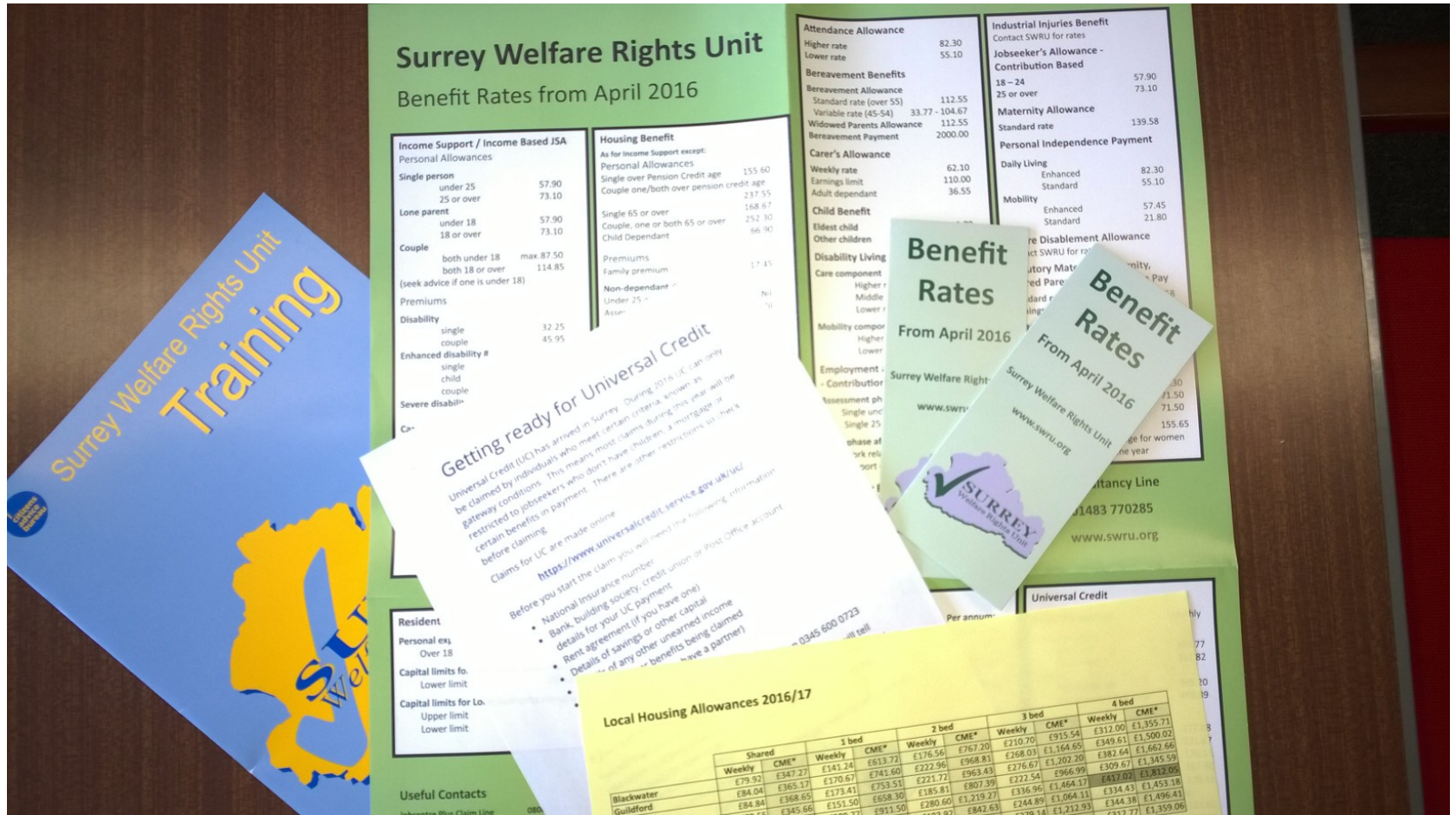
Valuing People Partnership Board

Surrey Choices

Surrey and Borders NHS Trust – Wellbeing event for people with a learning disability

Surrey Vision Action Group

# Supporting the advice sector



# We use four key variables

We have identified some of the main areas we can evidence we have a positive impact, and used a Treasury-approved cost benefit tool to estimate the value of our work.

## Affected Population

Number of people receiving advice about a specific issue



## Impact

Taken from NOIR  
Impact of advice on specific outcome



## Deadweight

What would have happened anyway without advice



## Optimism Bias

Accounting for best practice, timeliness and independence of research



# Who we are

## **Staff**

Maggie Ashall – Training Administrator  
Linda Bowman – Families Caseworker  
Sarah Fell – Welfare Rights Adviser  
Helen Haws – Welfare Rights Adviser  
Carol Gibbs – Welfare Rights Adviser  
Maureen Prendergast – Welfare Rights  
Adviser  
Ray Savage – Finance Administrator  
Maria Zealey – Unit Manager

## **Trustees**

Margaret Hurcombe - Chair  
David Booth - Treasurer  
Alison Cox - Secretary  
Sandra Bolton  
Jane Bourgeois  
Roger Hurcombe  
Dudley Beal  
Anne Haigh

## **We would like to thank:**

Surrey County Council  
Woking Borough Council  
Tandridge Borough Council  
Elmbridge Borough Council  
Guildford Borough Council

Surrey Welfare Rights Unit aims to provide the advice people need for the problems they face and improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

We provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.

Surrey Welfare Rights Unit  
Company number: 3335128  
Charity number: 1062826  
FCA number: FRN 617760  
OISC Registered  
Advice Quality Standards in  
Welfare Benefits Casework  
and Telephone Support