



**Tonbridge & Malling
Borough Council Area Activities
Year to date 2018/19**

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Telephone Advice Service:

Our telephone Adviceline service is available Monday to Friday 10am-4pm. Callers speak to trained Advisers who can give advice over the phone and will make face-to-face appointments with generalists or specialists where necessary. This is an extremely convenient way for people to access advice, particularly for those who find it difficult to attend advice sessions, for example due to employment or caring commitments.

In the last year we have supported **1,105 TMBC residents via Adviceline**. This is slightly less than in the previous year (1,125 clients), but broader analysis suggests that some clients are choosing to access drop in face-to-face sessions rather than telephone support, now that this option is available.

Face-to-face Advice Services:

1,464 TMBC residents have received face-to-face advice from CANWK services in the last year.

- Tonbridge Advice Centre, located within Tonbridge Castle

Our main face-to-face advice in Tonbridge can be accessed via an appointment or a drop-in session on the schedule below.

	Rooms Available	Drop-in Session	Appointments
Monday	4 private rooms plus reception desk	10am – 2pm	10am – 2pm (usually 1 booked appointment per week)
Tuesday	3 private rooms plus reception desk	10am – 2pm	10am – 2pm (usually 1 booked appointment per week)
Thursday	Reception desk manned by experienced Adviser	10am – 1pm	Not Available
Friday	3 private rooms plus reception desk	10am – 2pm	10am – 2pm (usually 1 booked appointment per week)

We began offering official drop-in sessions at the Castle in May 2018. Whilst this has presented us with operational challenges (e.g. ensuring we have enough volunteer advisers and appointment spaces to meet demand), it has become an extremely

popular and highly-valued service. Since drop-in sessions began, we have seen a **15-20% increase in the number of clients attending the Castle** compared with the same month in the previous year.

- **Outreaches**

We continue to operate weekly outreach sessions in Aylesford, Larkfield and Snodland.

Client numbers at these outreaches were as follows:

	Grand Total
Tonbridge and Malling Aylesford	31
Tonbridge and Malling Larkfield Libr..	22
Tonbridge and Malling Snodland	26
Grand Total	76

Outreach clients are amongst the most vulnerable, as they cannot reach our main advice centre easily. We have also found that these outreaches are used by people from across the Northern Wards and not just the particular village locations. For example, Larkfield outreach is used by people from 10 different northern wards.

- **Specialist Projects**

In the last year, TMBC residents have benefited from specialist advice and information via the following CANWK projects:

Project	Funder
PATH (Homelessness)	Big Lottery
MISP (Immigration)	Big Lottery
Debt advice and money skills for vulnerable people	Comic Relief
Benefits / Welfare rights specialists	TMBC & Gatwick Foundation
Debt advice	Money Advice Service (MASDAP)
Energy saving and switching advice	Citizens Advice
Budgeting and money skills	LiveWell
HMRC advice	Good Things Foundation
Online digital skills training, including those moving onto Universal Credit. Includes weekly sessions at Tonbridge Jobcentre.	Good Things Foundation
Scams Awareness advice	Kent Police & Crime Commissioner
Smart meters advice for the deaf and hearing impaired	Smart Energy GB

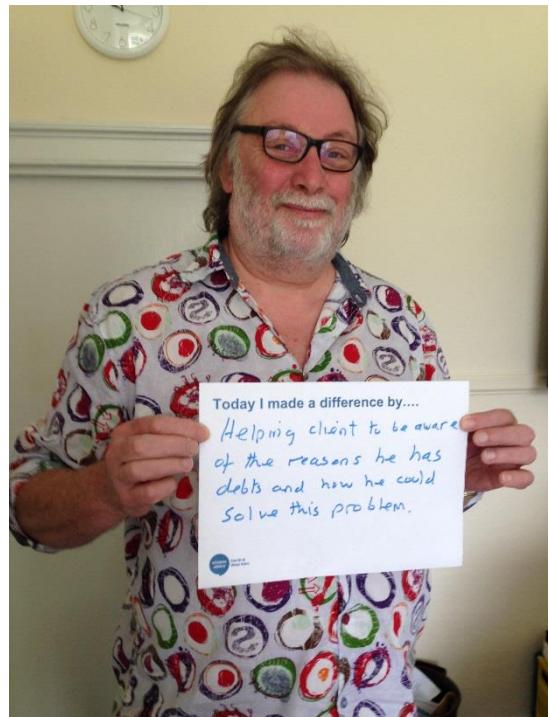
Volunteers

Our services are delivered primarily by trained local volunteers who bring a wealth of skills and experience to our organisation and are committed to delivering high quality advice within Citizens Advice. They are supported by paid staff providing specialist skills, supervision, management and quality assurance etc.

TMBC residents have been supported by 54 CANWK volunteers in the last year. In addition to those completing CitA advice training, we have also been able to offer opportunities for local people in Tonbridge to develop their skills by volunteering in other areas of the organisation including administration, fundraising, community presentations and digital champions. We work with individual volunteers to ensure that their contributions not only support CANWK, but can also support personal ambitions and interests. In the last year, **nine Tonbridge volunteers have entered paid employment**, either within CANWK or elsewhere.

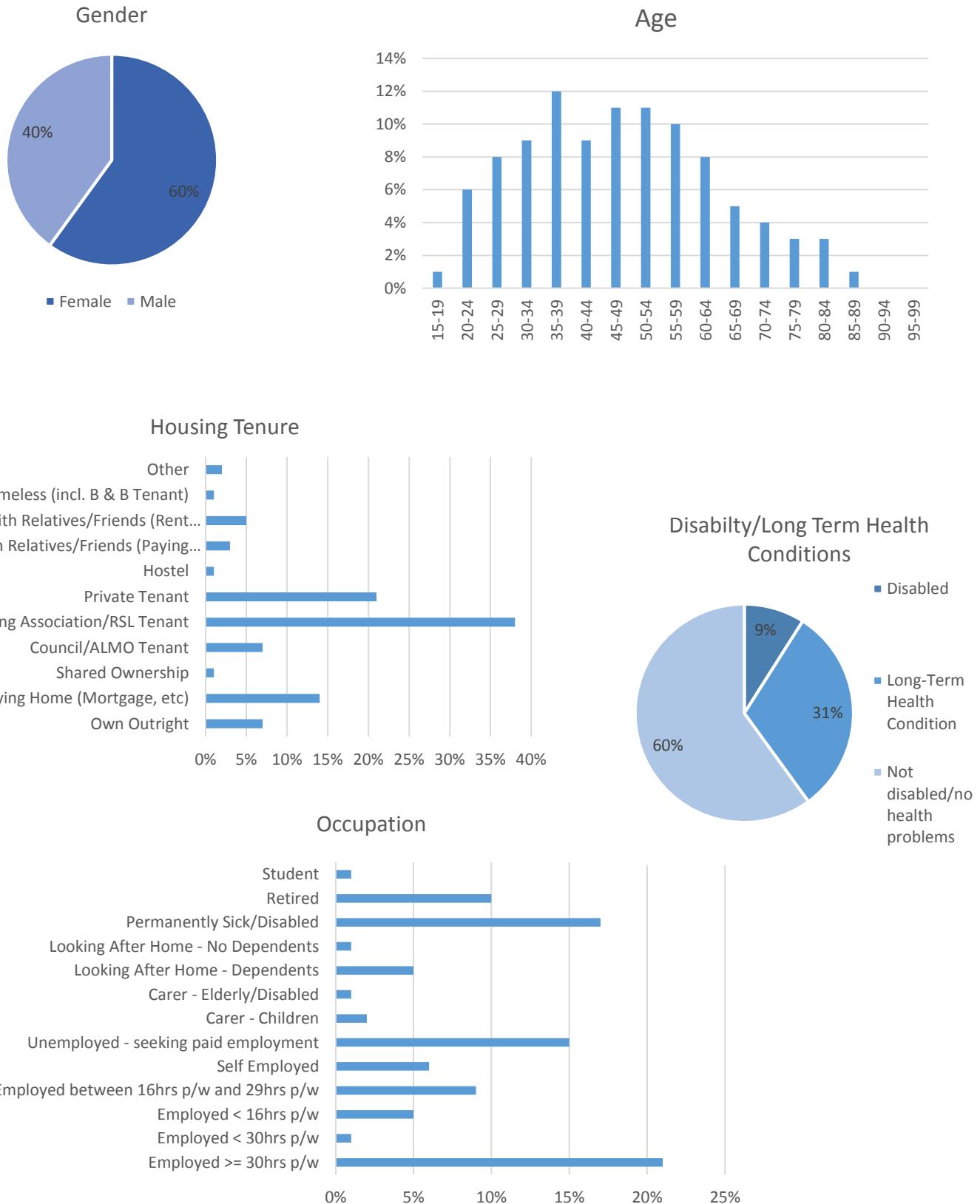
All advice volunteers and staff commit to ongoing training to ensure we continue to provide high quality, relevant advice to local people. During this period, training courses and in-house training topics completed by Tonbridge volunteers and staff include:

- 2x 3month Adviser Training for new volunteers.
- Universal Credit.
- 'Ask Re' Training (encouraging domestic abuse disclosures from clients).
- Employment tribunals.
- Update training on debt, benefits, housing.
- GDPR
- Working with Tom Tugendhat's office to best support clients.



Client Profiles

TMBC residents of all CANWK services in the last year:



Client Geography	Clients	% Clients
Aylesford North and Walderslade	71	3%
Aylesford South	105	5%
Borough Green and Long Mill	131	6%
Burham and Woudham	34	2%
Cage Green	104	5%
Castle	83	4%
Ditton	55	3%
Downs and Mereworth	44	2%
East Malling	88	4%
Hadlow and East Peckham	127	6%
Higham	85	4%
Hildenborough	63	3%
Judd	121	6%
Kings Hill	101	5%
Larkfield North	99	5%
Larkfield South	65	3%
Medway	186	9%
Snodland East and Ham Hill	113	5%
Snodland West and Holborough Lakes	78	4%
Trench	151	7%
Vauxhall	97	5%
Wateringbury	24	1%
West Malling and Leybourne	75	3%
Wrotham, Ightham and Stansted	54	3%
	2,154	100%

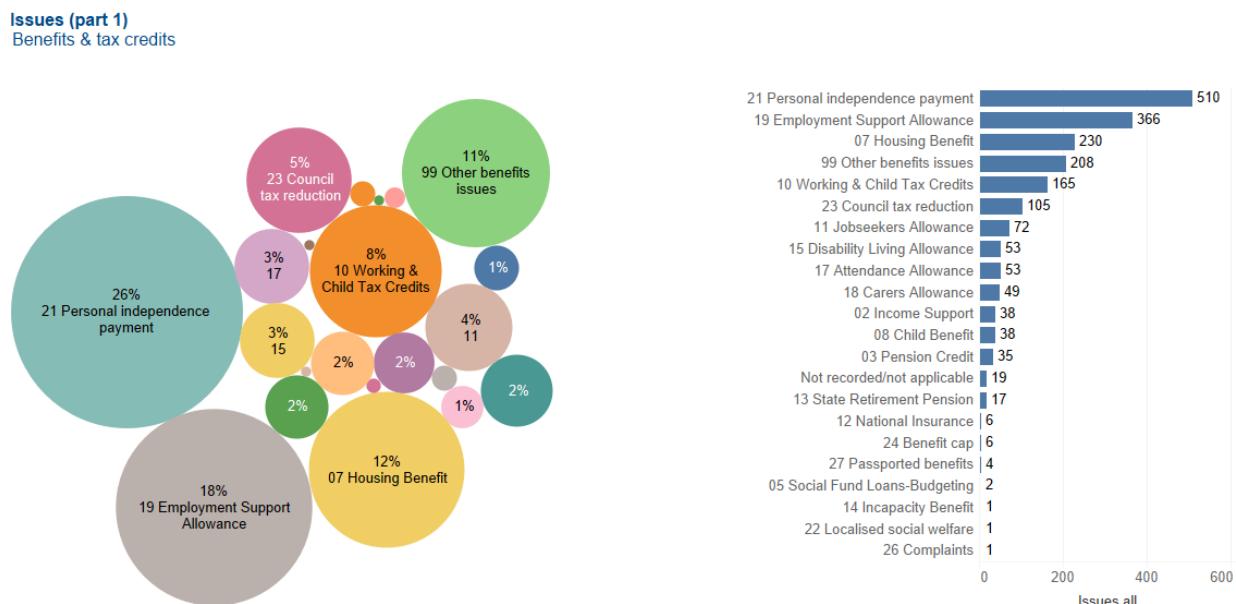
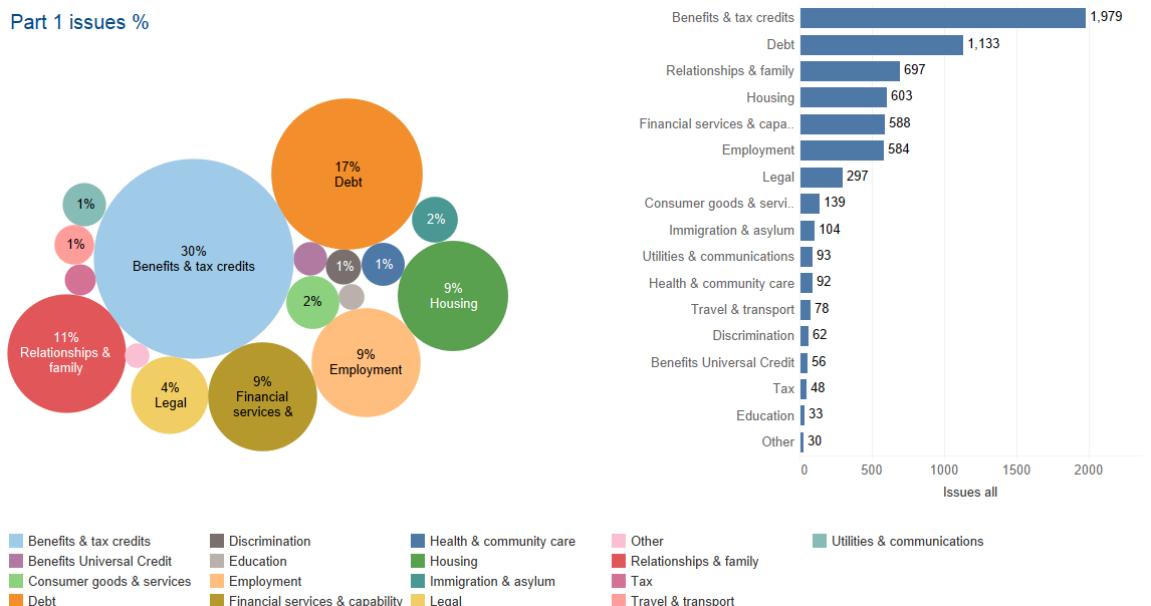
Issue counts for TMBC resident clients:

	2017-18			Q1			2018-19			Q3			Grand Total
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
Benefits & tax credits	229	166	185	167	192	154	157	153	159	194	182	119	1,979
Benefits Universal Credit	2	1	2		3	1		9	3	1	7	27	56
Consumer goods & services	15	11	22	8	12	15	13	8	10	8	16	9	139
Debt	186	115	125	122	123	66	103	80	70	71	129	67	1,133
Discrimination	7	3	8	4		9	4		5	15	2	5	62
Education	5	3	1	3	2	5		8	2	2		3	33
Employment	57	41	54	49	39	50	52	44	61	49	66	30	584
Financial services & capability	62	59	46	35	46	33	65	61	46	49	55	44	588
Health & community care	10	6	3	5	9	11	9	13	7	8	6	8	92
Housing	78	58	44	44	50	56	59	57	39	52	45	35	603
Immigration & asylum	5	2	5	11	3	25	19	6	7	9	12	2	104
Legal	32	35	24	23	33	28	31	16	18	23	24	17	297
Other	2	2	3		3	2	2	1	4	3	1	8	30
Relationships & family	69	59	74	75	72	52	66	59	43	65	53	23	697
Tax	1	2	6	3	2	7	8	6	5	3	3	2	48
Travel & transport	16	5	6	3	7	3	3	6	8	5	10	8	78
Utilities & communications	7	4	8	6	5	3	6	4	9	14	19	10	93
Grand Total	783	572	616	558	601	520	597	531	496	571	630	417	6,616

Issues

TMBC residents sought the support of CANWK services for 6,616 issues in the last year. **The most prevalent problems faced by TMBC residents were around benefits, debt, housing and employment.**

Within the issue of benefits, problems with disability/employment related benefits and housing benefits were the most prevalent. Since Tonbridge and Malling moved onto full service Universal Credit in November 2018 we have seen a steady increase in clients seeking assistance. We now offer a Universal Support service from our Tonbridge office, to assist any individual making a claim. Although demand before Christmas was fairly low, we have seen an increase in new claimants since the New Year. We anticipate demand for this service to grow rapidly over the coming year and have been upskilling our Advisers in preparation.



Outcomes

Due to the nature of our work, we do not always get to know the outcomes of our advice, because once a problem is resolved, clients tend to move on quickly. However, of those clients who have kept in contact, **our advice and support has resulted in over £370,000 in financial outcomes for 101 TMBC residents this year** and many more positive results for client's housing, health and wellbeing, life prospects etc.

Financial outcomes summary

	Number of outcomes	Client count	Amount	Average per outcome	Average per client
Income gain	56	48	£185,719	£3,316	£3,869
Re-imbursements, services, loans	6	5	£2,275	£379	£455
Debts written off	29	15	£174,491	£6,017	£11,633
Repayments rescheduled	3	3	£25	£8	£8
Other	78	49	£10,708	£137	£219
Grand Total	172	101			

Issues (part 1)

	Income gain				
	Number of outcomes	Client count	Amount	Average per outcome	Average per client
Benefits & tax credits	41	37	£171,754	£4,189	£4,642
Employment	3	3	£11,149	£3,716	£3,716
Financial services & capability	8	5	£68	£9	£14
Housing	1	1	£2,478	£2,478	£2,478
Other	1	1	£150	£150	£150
Travel & transport	1	1	£120	£120	£120
Utilities & communications	1	1	£0	£0	£0
Grand Total	56	48	£185,719	£3,316	£3,869

	Debts written off				
	Number of outcomes	Client count	Amount	Average per outcome	Average per client
Debt	29	15	£174,491	£6,017	£11,633
Grand Total	29	15	£174,491	£6,017	£11,633

Advice Together Partnership

CANWK is the founder member and administrator of the Advice Together Partnership; a group of 30 advice organisations across North and West Kent. Advice Together is a forum for partnership working, sharing ideas and good practices. Along with regular meetings and a quarterly newsletter, we have a shared online secure referral system which enables every organisation to directly refer a client to other suitable support services without risk of the client falling through gaps or failing to get in touch themselves.

Many Advice Together partner organisations operate in Tonbridge and Malling, including Age UK Sevenoaks & Tonbridge, Age Concern Malling, Porchlight, Crosslight, West Kent Mind, Carers First and DAVSS. **Over the last year, 142 TMBC residents have been referred between Advice Together partner agencies.** CANWK has been involved in 91 of these cases, either as the referrer or recipient agency.



In the last year we have redeveloped our Advice Together website; making it easier for frontline staff to find suitable partner organisations to make referrals to and enabling us to communicate more effectively with partners and members of the public.

In addition to voluntary sector advice organisations, Sevenoaks District Council, the Probation Service and West Kent Housing have joined Advice Together in the last year and are using our online referral system to make and receive client referrals with voluntary sector partners. Advice Together membership is open to any agency involved in advice giving in the area.

CANWK also produces an annual 'Festive Openings & Emergency Contacts' information guide for Tonbridge and Malling, giving local residents information of the opening hours for key community services over the festive period. This is shared on social media, email and via partners, and is always well received by the community.



Client Case Study

A client attended the Tonbridge drop in service in December 2018 seeking assistance with a current employment issue. The client is a single male in his thirties with a private tenancy in Hadlow.

He had been working for a food production company in East Grinstead for 9 years, but the company had been bought by a private equity company earlier in the year and merged with another company with a larger, more modern factory in West Sussex. Following the news that the East Grinstead factory was to close, the client had accepted the role at the West Sussex site, however found the travel costs and changes to working conditions would have a significant negative financial impact. His employer made various offers of financial assistance to limit the impact of the move, however these offers never materialised. In the meantime he had bought a car on the basis of the offers made (needed to get to work) and was now concerned about how he could pay for this on top of existing financial commitments. The client was feeling extremely stressed by his situation. He felt his best option was to leave the company, but was not sure if he could afford to do so or if he would be entitled to redundancy pay.

Our volunteer Adviser met with the client to get a full case history and advise the client of his options. Following this discussion we advised the clients that he had rights under TUPE regulations and had a potential case for unfair constructive dismissal. We drafted a letter to the client to send to his employer outlining his grievances. We continued to support the client though several appointments; guiding him through the different stages of his grievance process and the reactions he was experiencing at work. The company did not cooperate initially and throughout this we explained the client's options, drafting correspondence and giving him the opportunity to take his case further.

Eventually we were extremely pleased to hear that the client was successful in dealing with his employer and had been offered a financial settlement and redundancy totalling almost £11,000. This offer was acceptable to the client; enabling him to clear debts accrued by the changes put in place by his employer and giving him a financial cushion whilst he searches for new employment. The client was extremely relieved to find a solution to his problem and have the opportunity to move on with his life. We received the following email from him following his final appointment:

Thank you so much for all your help. It's been a great help - every bit of advice was correct and allowed me to finally get out of a really difficult position. I went back to the Company and felt that I had the confidence to push for more and the Company reviewed my offer and increased it by a little over extra £2,000.

Thank you so much for everything. I hope you can help many others get the correct advice. Many thanks.