

Citizens Advice Newcastle

- helping vulnerable customers

Shona Alexander
Chief Executive

**citizens
advice**

Newcastle



Citizens Advice Newcastle is a local charity, set up in 1939, providing advice to local people.

- We provide the advice people need for the problems they face.
- We campaign to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.



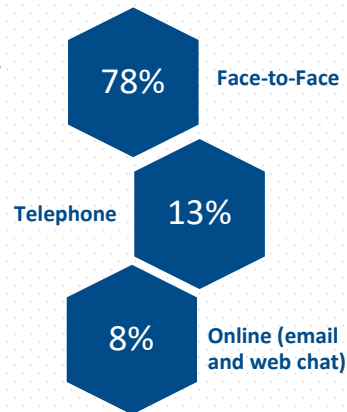
Citizens Advice Newcastle Powergrid Care



Powergrid Care

Energy issues advised

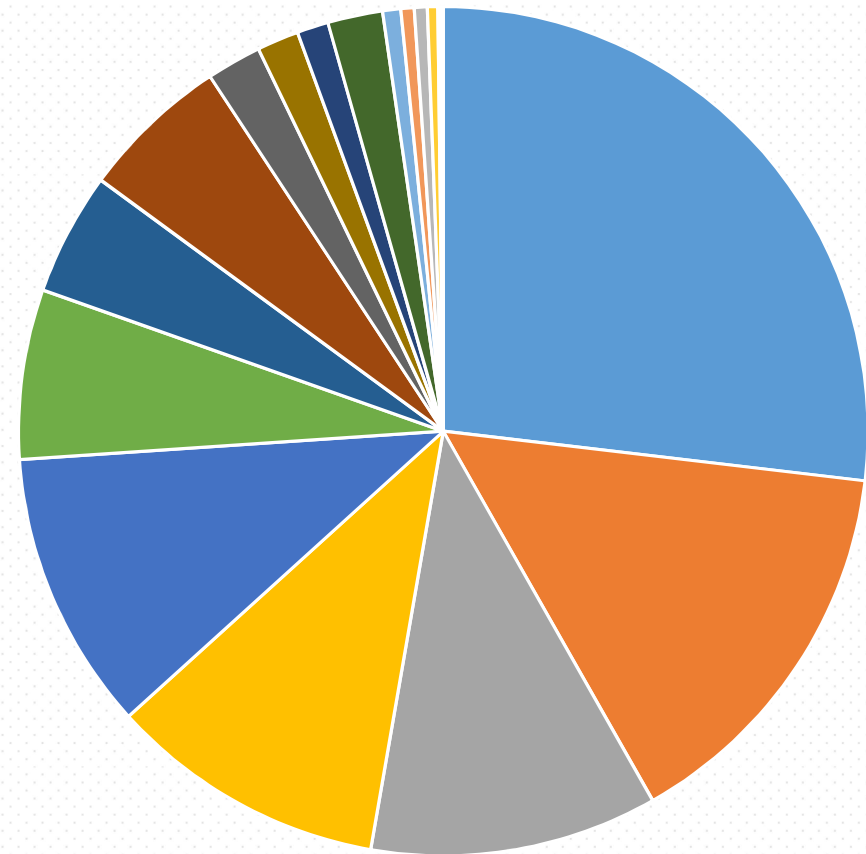
- We advise on numerous energy related issues, the majority of which are to do with fuel debt, billing enquiries, tariff checks, price comparisons and government related schemes, including the Warm Home Discount.
- Our energy advisers are seeing a rise in enquiries relating to Smart Meters and issues resulting from smaller suppliers going into administration with more overall cases escalating to the Energy Ombudsman.
- On average, a client will be assisted with 1.7 energy related issues.



Energy Issues Advised

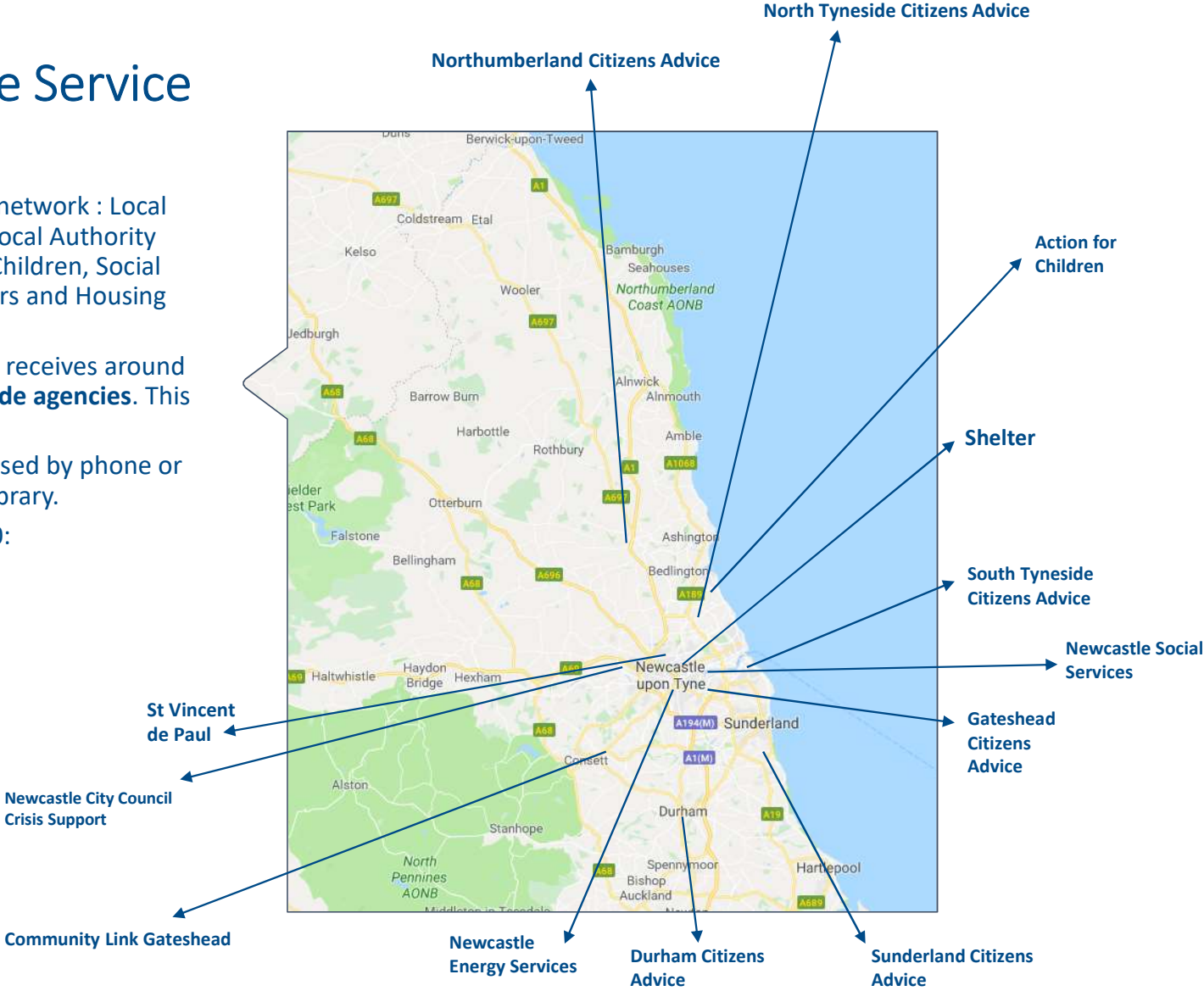
(Listed largest to smallest, total clients = 1,227 from 1st April 2019 to 3rd March 2020 with 2,114 energy related issues)

- Fuel Debt
- Priority Services Register
- Energy Crisis
- Warm Home Discount
- Billing and Meter
- Price and Tariff
- Complaints and Redress
- Method of Payment
- Issues with Supply
- Energy Company Obligation
- Smart Meter
- Switching Supplier
- Cancellation and Withdrawal
- Contract Terms
- Customer Service
- Energy Efficiency Measures
- Solar Panels
- Heating System



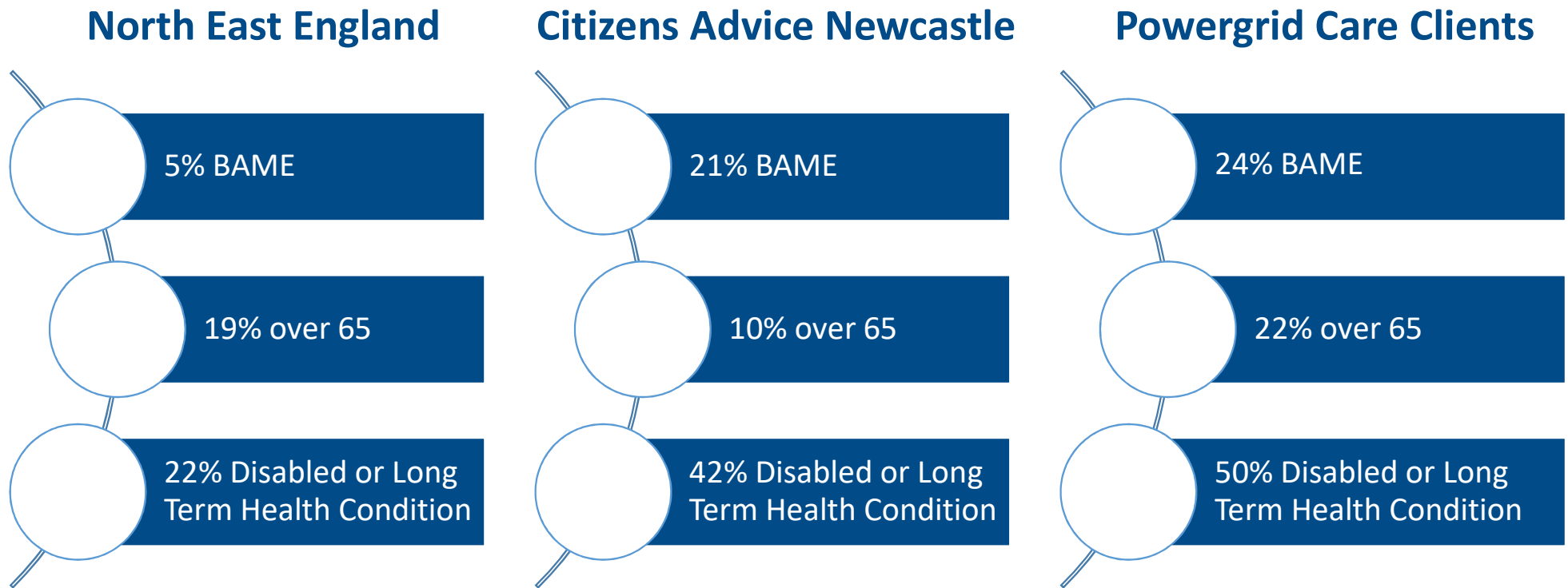
We are an Energy Advice Service Hub for the Region

- The Powergrid Care team have an effective network : Local Citizens Advices', local community groups, Local Authority Welfare Rights services, Shelter, Action for Children, Social Care workers, Adult Social Services, MPs, Cllrs and Housing Associations.
 - On average, the Powergrid Care team receives around **35-40 referrals per month from outside agencies**. This continues to grow month on month.
 - Clients outside Newcastle can be advised by phone or face-to-face at our premises in City Library.
 - Here are our referrals in January 2020:



Demographics of Powergrid Care Clients

Comparison between the North East, Citizens Advice Newcastle and Powergrid Care



Advice provided to elderly client about billing and meter readings.

Result of our intervention

- Elderly client understands her bill and how she pays.
- Successful challenge to incorrect billing
- Mrs B signed to the priority services register.



Mrs B lives in an all-electric property, with a prepayment meter. She had received a bill for £104.24. Mrs B was unsure how she owed this as she had always kept her meter in credit. She had contacted the fuel company who said her meter had been faulty, giving incorrect readings. Our adviser contacted them, and was told that the debt was for standing charges during the time meter was faulty. They demanded repayment at £5 per week. Advisor challenged this, and the company checked Mrs B's account. They accepted that the bill was incorrect and cleared the balance owed saving £104.24; client was very satisfied with the outcome.

Support for a vulnerable client in poor health



Results of our intervention

- Debt written off and fuel supply maintained
- Client's health improved significantly
- Client signed up for Priority Services Register

Mrs A was suffers from multiple health problems including vision impairment and a stomach disorder for which she relies on tube feeding. She had been forced to give up work and claim benefits. This drop in her income caused her to fall into arrears with her energy provider, EON. Our energy adviser made a successful application to the EON energy trust outlining her health problems and low income. The application was successful and the full debt of £1462 was written-off. This was a huge relief to the client.

New outreach work from February this year:

- **Weekly drop-in energy advice session at Prospect Place GP surgery, West Road Newcastle**
- **Specialist energy advisor helps patients with their fuel bills and other problems**
- **Significant, positive impact on health**





Free, confidential advice.

Whoever you are.

www.citizensadvice-newcastle.org.uk

We help people overcome their problems and campaign on big issues when their voices need to be heard.

We value diversity, champion equality, and challenge discrimination and harassment.

We're here for everyone.

Citizens Advice Newcastle

Registered charity number 1135396