

# Supporting the nation



Impact Report 2020  
How we're delivering



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# CEO's statement

At the end of 2019, we had no way of knowing quite what an extraordinary year 2020 would prove to be – for our clients, for our colleagues, for our partners and funders. All have been, and continue to be, amazing. Together, we have proved that we really are maturing into the organisation we want to be – flexible, efficient, resilient and solution-focused.

From a standing start when the first lockdown materialised, as an organisation previously based on a traditional office-based working model, we successfully and quickly transformed ourselves to deliver the same seamless and supportive services to our clients through home-based working. We will be forever grateful to those funders who went the extra mile and helped us buy laptops to ensure that we were able to set up our colleagues with the necessary tools for the job.



Once we were over the initial operational hurdles, we learned as we went. Looking back over the year it's very clear that the learning experience has been challenging, but our colleagues have risen to the moment. We created new virtual training academies and received excellent feedback from those we trained. We significantly improved the way in which colleagues communicate with each other, using new technology platforms, and have seen a blossoming of mutual support and better ways of working emerging as a result. We researched what our clients were experiencing as a result of Covid, and put them at the centre of our response. I'm humbled to say we've become a more human organisation over the past year, and I hope that the benefits of that will be long-lasting.

**None of this would have been possible had we not invested heavily in our systems and business resilience strategies in previous years. While we could never have anticipated it, the skillsets we were able to draw on within our team resulted not only in being able to deliver existing services, albeit in a completely different way, but also to develop new flagship innovations. Perhaps most notable was our new Covid Payment Plan, a temporary 12-month product for these unique times, designed to complement the suite of long-term debt solutions by giving people who are hopeful but cash-strapped a sensible, structured lower payment period with equitably distributed payments to creditors along the lines that our partners already know and trust. During this time we have continued to invest in our digital tools, moving ever closer to delivering a true, omnichannel debt advice experience for our clients.**

Of course, 2020 was far from plain sailing.

Perhaps the biggest challenge has been the difficulty in accurately forecasting demand for debt advice, and the likely mix of solutions appropriate to clients in these very different conditions. The client paradox of 2020 was that we – along with other debt advice providers – saw fewer clients actually going through full debt advice than in previous years, despite the worsening economic environment. As the pandemic stayed entrenched for far longer than had seemed likely at the start of the year, the attendant emergency support measures were extended again and again. We are now seeing that the full scale of the UK population's financial problems has yet to crystallise due in large part to the unprecedented level of government support made available during the pandemic.

We've been seeking reform to debt advice funding structures for some time, and the pandemic certainly laid bare the flaws in the existing models that rely to a large degree on setting up debt solutions. I'm enormously proud that, despite the various challenges, we maintained our reserves position – and we greatly appreciated the responsiveness of HM Treasury, the Money and Pensions Service, the devolved Governments and our creditor partners in finding creative and flexible ways to meet our unforeseen capital needs and protect our capacity through this unusual period.

**Pandemic aside, we also continued our proud tradition of giving our clients a voice, and ensuring that voice was heard among policymakers. Our successes to improve the landscape for people in debt included significant reforms to address the detriment being caused by opportunistic lead generators for debt management solutions, as well as the announcement of significant reforms to the consumer credit environment. Every such success helps to protect our current and future clients from harm.**

As 2020 gave way to 2021, the future remained uncertain for many of us and demand for debt advice remains markedly suppressed. As Chief Executive my ultimate responsibility is to our colleagues and the clients who rely on our services. To ensure that we can support those who need us in the months and years ahead we face difficult decisions and painful moments for the charity. I remain enormously grateful to all partners, supporters and colleagues who ensure that we are here to help those throughout the Covid crisis, its aftermath and beyond. We look forward to a future in which we can help more and more people become debt free. Thank you to all who support us.

**Phil Andrew**  
Chief Executive Officer



# Our key achievements in 2020



## How we're delivering

Our Trustees follow the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit and supplementary guidance for charities whose aims, like ours, include preventing or relieving poverty.

We also adhere to rules from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

In 2020 our activities were in line with our charitable objectives. Our progress against these objectives is described in the following sections.

Our Annual Report measures our progress against our key strategic objectives. In 2020 the headwinds of the pandemic which exacerbated the pressures on an already creaking sector funding model have impacted our ability to deliver against our key objectives.

Our five-year strategy sets out our ambition to double the number of people we help. In fact, 2020 saw us

take fewer people through full debt advice (198,980 in 2020, compared to 301,574 in 2019). Whilst StepChange and others across the sector believe problem debt is increasing across the country, the unprecedented level of government support has prevented many people from falling over the financial cliff-edge or, at the least, ensured that financial troubles have yet to crystallise.

As an organisation, we are funded based on taking people through full debt-advice and supporting them on to long-term debt solutions. We have long highlighted the challenges, complexities and contradictions in this funding model and 2020 has starkly demonstrated our concerns. As we help fewer people than in previous years, we face funding challenges and difficult decisions in 2021.

However, our amazing colleagues have continued to deliver amidst the professional and personal pressures they have faced in 2020.

## Objective 1:

# Cutting edge work on advice and solutions

Our first objective is to provide free debt advice and solutions for people struggling with problem debt.

In 2020 we expanded our role in providing the widest range of practical debt solutions of any provider in the UK by launching the Covid Payment Plan (CVPP).

The CVPP is a new debt solution that was created to support those needing short term financial help due to the coronavirus pandemic. We also published research into how clients and the general public have been financially affected during the pandemic, and launched a pilot to encourage more clients to seek debt advice online.

## Who we supported: Among new clients accessing debt advice in 2020<sup>1</sup>:

- Three in five (60%) were women
- Half (50%) were in a vulnerable situation, up from 44% in 2019
- Almost one quarter (22%) were single parents, compared to 6% of the wider population
- One third (33%) were in receipt of Universal Credit
- More than one third (34%) were renting privately
- Two thirds (67%) had at least one credit card debt
- More than one third (36%) of clients were behind on council tax

## Key achievements: The Covid Payment Plan

To respond to the pandemic we launched the Covid Payment Plan (CVPP), a new debt solution to help those who have been put into short-term financial hardship as a direct result of Covid-19. We launched CVPP in just eight months.

The CVPP is a helping hand, offering clients an alternative to full debt advice, long-term restructuring of debt or taking additional borrowing to repay arrears. By enabling clients to make reduced payments towards their monthly financial commitments such as credit cards or loans, our new product gives them time to recover their incomes and regain control of their financial situation.

<sup>1</sup> StepChange Debt Charity, Statistics Yearbook 2020 [https://www.stepchange.org/Portals/0/assets/pdf/stepchange\\_statistics\\_yearbook\\_2020.pdf](https://www.stepchange.org/Portals/0/assets/pdf/stepchange_statistics_yearbook_2020.pdf)

## Key statistics:

### How we're performing



**4.4 million**  
clients reached in total\*



**242,369**  
clients guided\*\*



**198,980**  
clients advised\*\*\*



**40,700**  
clients supported\*\*\*\*



**£436m**  
of debt was repaid  
by clients



**24,042**  
clients became free from problem  
debt with our support

\*The number of people who have visited our website or called our phoneline for information or support with their money or problem debt.

\*\*The number of people who've used a StepChange money guidance or advice tool to support them with budgeting, income or to identify what support they'll need with problem debt.

\*\*\*The number of people who have completed full debt advice or received emergency advice or support.

\*\*\*\*The total number of new clients supported in 2020.



## Tracking the impact of the pandemic

To share our understanding of the ways our clients have been financially affected by the coronavirus pandemic, we published a series of monthly reports from March 2020 which identified the demographic groups seeking debt advice, and which types of debt affected them.

In December 2020, we also conducted an in-depth review of clients' experiences. Using debt advice data and a survey of our clients, this report explored the factors that have underpinned clients' financial difficulty during the pandemic, and how they've coped during this difficult time.

This series of reports found that many of the same demographic groups that were 'debt vulnerable' before the pandemic continued to be over-represented among clients seeking full debt advice. For example, we continued to advise a disproportionately high number of women, younger people, single parents, and renters during the pandemic. The reports also found that an increasing proportion of clients had fallen behind on essential household bills, and that credit cards continue to be the most common form of unsecured debt.

## StepChange 'Your Way'

To prepare ourselves for the increase in people needing our help during the pandemic we began to pilot a seamless omni-channel approach to debt advice allowing a client to access our services at a time and through a channel that suits them. Clients also have the opportunity to change between channels, such as online and telephone, as they choose with a webchat function also available.

In October 2020 two of our telephone debt advice teams in Chester piloted the approach. Early results are good, with the majority of clients providing positive feedback about the flexibility of the approach. StepChange 'Your Way' also gives our debt advice teams an increased capacity to help more people who particularly need advice via telephone.

## Supporting vulnerable clients

Working on our Vulnerability Strategy continues to be high priority, particularly in light of the pandemic as we saw the highest disclosure of vulnerability amongst our clients in 2020. Last year a new Vulnerability Training Programme was delivered to 100% of our client-facing colleagues and built into our New Starter Academy. Our partners Mental Health UK and Surviving Economic Abuse helped us to redesign the debt advice journey to enable our debt advisors to refer clients to specialist services easily, and they also provided expert training for our specialist vulnerability team.

## Success with bankruptcy eligibility criteria in Scotland

Working in collaboration with a range of debt charities in Scotland, we were able to encourage the Scottish government to include changes to the bankruptcy eligibility criteria in Covid-19 emergency legislation. These provisions included free bankruptcy applications for clients on benefits, those with increased levels of debt, longer moratorium periods and protection against eviction for tenants.



## Our goals for 2021

- To help more people through full debt advice than we did in 2020, balancing ongoing government support, the continued impact of the pandemic and the need to carefully manage our finances
- Promote our new Covid Payment Plan to clients as temporary government support and creditor forbearance begins to end
- To continue to deliver research to understand the impact of the pandemic on clients – including lobbying to ensure a fair and equitable recovery from the financial impact of covid
- To further develop our omnichannel debt advice process 'Your Way' to provide clients with a seamless choice as to how they get support from us
- Improve the efficiency of how we deliver debt advice for our clients and our partners







I ended up with a provisional job offer, but I didn't pass the security checks needed for the role, so I'm currently in the process of appealing the decision. One of the stages of the vetting process is a credit reference agency check, which is likely to be the reason for the job offer being on hold.

Most days I felt like I was teetering on the edge, because the process is incredibly invasive and I felt anxious about how I'd deal with my finances if I don't have a new source of income soon. However, now I've signed up for the new Covid Payment Plan (CVPP) with StepChange, I feel like a massive weight has been lifted off my shoulders.

I also learned recently that my Mum has been diagnosed with a rare form of Parkinson's and Supra-nuclear Palsy, which is also brutal and quite advanced. So to not have to deal with my creditors going forward will be a massive relief.

Before starting my CVPP, my mental health was in such a state that some days I felt I couldn't function at all. Without additional intervention, it could take years for me to recover mentally and financially from the impact of the pandemic.

I'm relieved to be able to draw a line under the additional debt I have accrued during the lockdown period and move on with my life as best as I can."

## Robert's story

"Before the coronavirus pandemic, I had just started working in a senior role at a large international company. I have a long career history of working in learning and development for big organisations and I was really excited to start this new opportunity.

However, in February – when I was only halfway through my six month probation period – I was laid off just as the severity of the pandemic was emerging. I found that I was ineligible for any redundancy benefits and I was not offered the lifeline of being placed on furlough.

My mental health crumbled, but I decided it was important to get on with contacting my creditors to find out what my options were, with StepChange's support. I found that I was able to access payment holidays fairly easily, leaving me able to focus on trying to find another job.

As it stands, I've applied for over 300 jobs throughout the duration of lockdown and I've had one virtual interview.



## Objective 2: Collaboration and efficiency



Our second objective is to be the most efficient and sustainable provider of free debt advice and solutions.

We launched the Covid Payment Plan (CVPP), and worked quickly to ensure that our colleagues were set up to work remotely during the pandemic. In addition we adopted a seamless approach to debt advice ensuring clients could get help in the most appropriate way for them.



### Key achievements: Designing the Covid Payment Plan

We worked closely with our partners, the Treasury, the Money and Pensions Service and the Financial Conduct Authority to launch the Covid Payment Plan (CVPP) debt solution.

The team at StepChange undertook extensive user testing to understand our clients' needs and designed and launched a new product to respond to these needs in just eight months. The creation of the CVPP has also helped us continue to shape the approaches that we'll take towards modernising our heritage technology systems, which is a major piece of work we will continue in 2021 and a project we seek to accelerate.



### Home working during the pandemic

In 2020 we made sure that 95% of our colleagues could work remotely at the same time limiting as the impact on our service to clients. This meant acquiring over 1,000 laptops and other pieces of equipment, installing software and applications, and safely delivering these to our colleagues across our eight sites in the UK.

Within a few weeks of the first national lockdown, we'd set more than 800 colleagues up to work from home from a charity device and provided training where needed. We'd also increased our network bandwidth to ensure nearly all 1,600 of our colleagues could work remotely.

We're extremely proud that we were able to keep our service running for clients while ensuring our colleagues could continue to work from a safe environment.

## Key facts and figures:



We launched the CVPP in less than eight months



We've been shortlisted for 13 awards and won three in 2020, including an award for business continuity throughout the pandemic

**95%**  
of our colleagues were set up to work remotely



We continued to work closely with the Money and Pensions Service, Citizens Advice and the Money Advice Trust to improve client referrals to debt advice





## Omni-channel debt advice during the pandemic

The ability to deliver quality, free to client, omni-channel advice has been imperative during the pandemic, especially in light of the fact that many face-to-face debt advice services were unable to operate early on. To support the demand for debt advice we:

- Increased the availability of our online debt advice tool to enable people to have a truly omni-channel experience
- Introduced an online triage tool guiding people more quickly to the help they need
- Improved our offering for vulnerable clients

## Securing funding

With significant additional pressure on the charity's funding as a result of the pandemic, we're grateful to have been able to secure short term funding to keep the charity operational throughout 2020. This has included creditor partners, the Money and Pensions Service and the devolved governments in both Scotland and Wales. Our funding partners showed enormous additional financial support to the charity by reducing invoice payments times, providing one off donations, and paying Fair Share Contributions up front. However, we remain acutely aware that StepChange and others in the sector will face significant financial pressure in 2021 as the number of people going through full debt advice remains suppressed.

## The Piloting Advisor Capacity and Efficiency pilot

The charity has continued to participate in the Piloting Advisor Capacity and Efficiency (PACE) pilot funded by the Money and Pensions Service alongside the Money Advice Trust and Citizens Advice. Our involvement in PACE has allowed the pilot to increase the number of referral agencies into the service, and allowed online self-referrals. The pilot has also introduced open banking into the debt advice process.

## Sector collaborations

We've continued to work collaboratively with our partners and shared with them how we adapted our services throughout the year. This included introducing payment holidays to help people on debt solutions who found themselves struggling to make any level of debt repayment due to a drop in income. In addition, we provided detailed weekly updates in the early stages of the pandemic to ensure our partners were kept up to date on early insights, and operational and digital performance. Finally we rolled out a new Expanding Referral Routes signposting tool to 45 organisations, which includes both an option to book a telephone appointment for debt advice and a digital link to begin debt advice online.

## Our goals for 2021

- Implement the Breathing Space scheme to benefit our future clients
- Deliver a clear technology plan for the next three years that defines how we modernise our systems and applications
- Continue to develop our seamless advice through an omni-channel approach
- Work and integrate with even more partner organisations for debt advice



# Objective 3: Improving debt advice policy and practice

Our third objective is to champion the cause of people in, and at risk of problem debt by campaigning for change in public policy and private sector practice.



## Key facts and figures:



**5 reports** showing the financial impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and setting out the help people need



**20+** responses and submissions to policy makers



**6 monthly reports** showing the impact of the pandemic on clients and debt advice demand



**6 events** on coronavirus debt impact in Westminster and Scottish parliaments and at party conferences

## Key achievements:

In 2020, understanding and responding to the financial impact of coronavirus on UK households was our first priority. We were also able to move key policy areas like Breathing Space, Government Debt Management and Universal Credit forward.



### Responding to the coronavirus pandemic

Throughout 2020 we monitored the impact of coronavirus on our clients along with households across the UK. We worked with Money Advice Trust and Citizens Advice on a policy briefing immediately after the first lockdown, and published research in June and November showing the financial impact of coronavirus, as well as calling for policy action.

As secretariat of the All Party Parliamentary Group on debt and personal finance, we organised two sessions on preventing a coronavirus debt crisis and hosted two high profile events at party conferences. Our client data and survey analysis has informed policy makers about who is struggling and how policy changes can help.



### Government debt management and bailiffs

We moved a little nearer to our goal of ensuring fair debt management practice by public sector creditors in 2020 with the Cabinet Office publishing a call for evidence. Our response included evidence from StepChange clients highlighting problems with assessing affordability and understanding vulnerability. This is especially important as Stepchange clients with public sector debts are more likely to be vulnerable and have negative budgets. We've continued to campaign for better oversight of bailiffs, and look forward to progressing this in 2021.



### Breathing Space and Statutory Debt Repayment Plan schemes

2020 saw important progress on both of these long-term policy priorities. The Government confirmed its plans for Breathing Space in February and the scheme will go live on 4 May 2021. As part of the announcement, StepChange was delighted to welcome Economic Secretary John Glen MP to our London offices. Regulations on the Breathing Space scheme have since passed into law and the Government has also introduced the legislation needed to move the Statutory Debt Repayment Plan scheme forward.







## Key reports in 2020: Insight and data to drive change

In 2020 we released more influential reports that helped us shape opinion and influence policy.

### Problem debt and the social security system – January

We reported on the experiences of StepChange clients on working age benefits, with a particular focus on Universal Credit. National polling shows that over half of people in problem debt receive social security support and that four in ten need to use credit for essentials. Among StepChange clients receiving support, 53% showed signs of destitution and hardship. Our research found that unaffordable deductions, including for Universal Credit payment advances, contributed to this.

- **We called for:**
  - Debt proofing of the social security system by ensuring benefits meet needs; deductions are affordable; and reliance on harmful unaffordable credit is reduced
- **Result:**
  - We shared our evidence with officials and ministers, gave evidence to MPs on Universal Credit advance payments and worked with other charities on deductions and extending the £20 uplift to Universal Credit. Since the report was published, the government has reduced the rate at which deduction are collected from Universal Credit and extended the period over which advances are repaid, allowing claimants to keep more of their payment

### Client Outcomes - March

Our second report on debt advice client outcomes data focused on clients at nine and 15 months after advice. The report found clients valuing and using the advice and support they received, with significant improvements in wellbeing and the large majority of clients making progress with their debts.

### Scotland in the Red - May

In 2020 our Scotland in the Red data report demonstrated the extent of problem debt pre-coronavirus, and the pressing need for urgent changes to respond to the financial impact of crisis, and the long-term nature of these impacts. The report also identified the economic harms that many were experiencing due to the ongoing crisis and that these harms would be long-lasting. This contributed to the case for several of the Scottish emergency debt legislation provisions to be made permanent.

### ➤ We found:

- The data suggests a large harm reduction potential from encouraging people to debt advice earlier
- Poorer outcomes for clients with negative budgets questions what more advice services and public policy need to do to help this group

### ➤ We called for:

- The Scottish government to introduce emergency measures to Scottish debt legislation

### ➤ Result:

- The Scottish government introduced a broad range of emergency measures around their debt legislation, including amendments to the client fee for bankruptcy, the extension of the client moratorium and several process improvements. Subsequently the changes to the fee structure for Minimal Asset Process and Sequestration were made permanent after lobbying from the charity and others in the sector in Scotland

## Our goals for 2021

- To respond to the financial difficulties developing throughout the coronavirus pandemic, and the need for policy action to support households falling into debt
- Continue to call for support to help people facing debt problems as a result of coronavirus
- Develop new knowledge about problem debt and develop policy on public sector debt, negative budgets and financial resilience
- Build links with newly elected MSPs in Scotland
- Ensure the new Scottish Government maintains its focus on problem debt and goes ahead with the legislative review of statutory debt solutions in Scotland

## Objective 4: Testing out prevention alongside cure

Our fourth objective is to educate and inform people through our services to enable them to manage their money better and recover from problem debt.

The charity has ambitious and achievable plans to help over 150,000 people with early intervention strategies over the course of the next three years.

### Key facts and figures:



\* We've changed the way we measure web users with industry best practice: we now only count a user when a person has used one of our pages for a least 30 seconds.

\*\* Repeated views of a single page are counted.

### Key achievements: A record-breaking year for our website

To ensure we were a trusted first port of call for our clients and members of the general public worried about debt and money during the pandemic, we launched a comprehensive 'debt and coronavirus' hub on our website. This provides clear and accessible guidance and support for anyone who has questions about managing their financial situation and debt, as well as information on financial regulation, legislation and financial sector policy.

The hub was updated on a regular basis to give near real-time information. In addition our website expanded to feature numerous informational hubs to cover a broad range of topics including:

- Emergency support with money, food and housing
- Furloughing support and money
- Redundancy and reduced income
- Money, debt stress and financial wellbeing

### Launching and expanding our persistent debt hub

In February 2020, working in parallel with our early intervention team, we launched an informational hub on our website and a self-service online tool to help users understand and get out of persistent debt. We created a softer approach for clients to managing money by hosting an online repayment calculator and a budgeting tool, giving client the ability to move into full debt advice if it became clear they needed extra support. It was successful at launch, with over 20,000 views in its first six weeks, before the pandemic hit and the Financial Conduct Authority asked the sector to pause their persistent debt strategies.

While we stand ready to support further when persistent debt communications are re-started, the hub continues to attract thousands of users each month who needed information on how to lift themselves out of paying the minimum on their credit commitments.



### Our goals for 2021

- To assist over 65,000 clients at the earliest possible stage before they reach crisis point
- To further develop and expand the budgeting information available online



# Objective 5: Getting the message out



Our fifth objective is to create greater awareness of free debt advice. Given the continued trend towards digital throughout the pandemic, making sure people receive the right kind of advice is even more crucial.

We launched a new marketing campaign in response to the pandemic, made good progress with our business-to-business (B2B) marketing strategy, secured a significant amount of coverage in the media and tackled online impersonators.

## Key facts and figures:



## Key achievements: Launching a new marketing campaign

During the coronavirus pandemic we launched our *What If* marketing campaign to not only remind existing clients of our services, but also make the thousands of additional people affected by problem debt in 2020 aware of how we can help. Knowing that many people would be faced with countless worries about their finances and job security, our campaign provided solutions to these problems and signposted the public to our newly launched Covid Payment Plan (CVPP) debt solution alongside our existing services.

In 2021 we will relaunch the campaign and continue to collaborate with our partners to ensure that our annual Debt Awareness Week helps to increase the number of people aware of free, impartial debt advice.

## Our online reach

Our website, blogs, online tools and partnerships have helped us reach an estimated 5.7 million people in 2020. We also had 2.7m views of our debt guides.

We're very prominent online, ranking highly in search engines for a wide range of debt terms. Our online visibility has increased by publishing answers to debt questions with high search volumes and by gaining coverage on charity, local authority, consumer news, creditor, utility company and housing association websites. We've also successfully tackled 53 instances of trademark infringement by websites attempting to masquerade as StepChange through online advertising.

## Media coverage

By securing over 2,000 items of coverage, we helped to raise awareness of pandemic debt, signpost the availability of debt advice, and build support for new policy interventions.

## Brand awareness

In 2020 we commissioned the research agency YouGov to deliver our brand awareness tracking activity and also provide us with access to real-time insight on consumer behaviour and opinion. In December 2020, our prompted brand awareness, where the general public are asked to name the debt advice organisations they have heard of with a prompt or hint, was at 17% of the UK population<sup>2</sup>. Among the cohorts of the population with the greatest likelihood to require our services prompted brand awareness was at 27% of the UK population.

## Building our partner proposition

We continued to encourage our partners to spot the signs of problem debt, refer their customers and garner their support for Debt Awareness Week. In May we launched our easy referral form, providing a seamless way for partners to help clients engage digitally or to book a call-back, and over the summer we worked closely with them to develop CVPP. We also began to engage with partners through new digital channels including webinars, and began developing our employee financial wellbeing service for employers to support their staff which we'll continue to build on in 2021.

## Our goals for 2021

- Reach a greater number of prospective clients by delivering new targeted marketing campaigns
- Continue to build our consumer insights programme to fully understand the changing needs of the people we are looking to support
- Gain media coverage that builds support for positive actions and policies to help people experiencing debt
- Continue to work with Google to tackle impersonators

<sup>2</sup> We now report on prompted brand awareness as a key metric rather than unprompted brand awareness as this has been identified as a more reliable measure of actual consumer awareness.

# Objective 6: Empowering our people



Our final objective is to engage and develop our colleagues.

In 2020 we began implementing our Total Reward strategy and we reshaped our training programme to build in online learning. We continued to deliver our graduate programme, expanded our wellbeing strategy to support colleagues throughout the pandemic, and began building our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy.

## Key achievements: Rolling out our Total reward strategy

During 2020 we began implementing our new Total reward strategy. We've updated frameworks to manage the professional development of client-facing colleagues, revised pension scheme contributions and introduced a range of new family-friendly benefits.

## Learning from our colleagues

We delivered our annual charity-wide engagement survey and achieved an outstanding engagement score of 84%, which is 13% higher than in 2019. We believe this is a testament to our strategies to make StepChange an even better place to work, and our colleagues have told us that our collective response to the pandemic has been a factor in this.

Following the success of working with employee representatives to consider and implement our Total Reward strategy, we have established a new joint consultative committee to work with in addressing areas of concern or challenge and discuss key issues.

## Our talent strategy

All academies from March 2020 were virtual with online learning and we converted to online in just four weeks, training 100 colleagues. Our graduates continue to progress through their two-year programme, attending development events, gaining exposure to our Executive Team and Trustees, and moving through directorates gaining a real mix of skills and experience.

We also designed and launched the In Role Development Framework for operational colleagues, providing a structured learning platform facilitating progression in salary and competence.

## Developing our wellbeing strategy

We expanded our wellbeing strategy in 2020, working with colleagues across the charity to understand areas of concern and assess priorities. We delivered a range of wellbeing initiatives throughout the coronavirus pandemic, including communicating a range of tips and advice about managing the work-life balance and highlighting the productivity benefits of working from home. We extended our occupational sick pay provision, offered colleagues paid time off for dependents during 2020, and matched time off for dependants early in 2021.

## Gender pay gap results

Our gender pay gap is significantly lower than most organisations in the UK, and overwhelmingly lower than organisations operating in the same sector. For 2019, the charity's latest report, highlights include our median pay approaching parity, median bonus at parity and the proportion of women receiving a bonus is higher than men for the first time.

## Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy

We started work on our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy, working with external consultants to identify areas of priority and understand current and emerging best practice. Focus groups are being established, consisting of a diverse representation of our colleagues, to understand current challenges and how we can overcome these.

## Key facts and figures:



We provided **126** hours of training for each of our colleagues

Our CEO and Executive team hosted...



**2** townhall sessions with each reaching over 1,000 colleagues



We awarded **20** colleagues with an Iain Kendall Award for excellence



## Our goals for 2021

- Design and implement our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy
- Continue vulnerability and effective communication training for client-facing colleagues
- Support colleagues as the pandemic continues and the charity faces financial pressures



# Thank you to our supporters

Each of these organisations supported us financially in 2020, and many have worked with us on policy to improve the debt landscape. We'd like to express our gratitude for their support, without which our work would not be possible.



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 Aaseya  
 Aberdeen Considine & Co  
 Affinity Water  
 American Express  
 Anglian Water  
 Arrow Global  
 Barclays UK  
 Bristol and Wessex Water  
 BritainThinks  
 Britford Bridge  
 British Gas  
 Cabot Credit Management  
 Capital One  
 Capital Resolve  
 CARS  
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 Essex and Suffolk Water  
 Freeman Grattan Holdings  
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 Harvey and Thompson  
 Hitachi Capital  
 Hoist Finance  
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 HSBC Bank  
 Ikano Bank  
 Intrum  
 Jaja Finance  
 Klarna  
 Lantern  
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 Lowell Financial  
 Marston Group  
 McCambridge Duffy  
 Money and Pensions Service  
 Moneyline  
 Moorcroft Debt Recovery  
 Morses Club  
 N Brown  
 Nationwide Building Society  
 NatWest  
 NewDay  
 Northumbrian Water  
 Npower  
 Oakbrook Finance  
 OVO Energy  
 Paragon  
 Pega  
 PRA Group  
 Provident Financial Group  
 Pure Planet  
 QBE  
 Redcats  
 Sage Housing  
 Sainsbury's Bank  
 Santander  
 Scottish Government  
 Southern Water  
 Spark Energy  
 StepChange Financial Solutions  
 StepChange Voluntary Arrangements  
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