



*Transforming lives through  
money advice & education*

## **East London Debt and Benefits Advice service supporting vulnerable clients sees dramatic increase in demand during Coronavirus crisis**

Plaistow-based social enterprise Money A+E has seen significant increases in demand for its debt and benefits advice service due to the financial effects of the Coronavirus crisis and lockdown restrictions. Now delivered entirely via telephone or video link, the service supports disadvantaged communities and vulnerable clients, via a system of referrals from other community organisations and charities.

The service is seeing an influx in clients who are unable to work due to current lockdown restrictions, or who have been let go from their employment rather than furloughed. With many already struggling with debt or with little to no savings to fall back on, the situation has hit the communities served by Money A+E especially hard. This is compounded in many cases by social isolation or language barriers, particularly among local migrant communities.

The Money A+E Advice team is helping to seek arrangements with creditors or landlords, including many cases where eviction is threatened. Advisers are also supporting a high number of clients with making new claims for Universal Credit, as well as for the advance payments and loans available to cover the five-week wait for first payment of the benefit.

Advisers are deeply concerned about the speed with which these new claims may be processed. Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, their service saw approximately 80% of claims resulting in payment within the expected five-week period, with the remaining 20% taking longer. With new claims in past weeks reaching around one million nationally, Money A+E's staff are closely monitoring the effects of this surge on the Department for Work and Pensions' ability to process claims.

Money A+E is also offering support in the form of emergency grants to cover household costs or utility bills. Many applications to this offer have already been made, and staff fear that funds could soon become exhausted. They are leading a [fundraiser](#), attempting to reach a target of £20,000 so that grants can continue to be offered to as many vulnerable clients as possible.

The social enterprise is also offering ongoing support to the Advice team itself. The service provides a 'holistic' approach that takes into account the complexity of clients' financial and personal circumstances, typically seeing each client multiple times. All its advisers work on a part-time basis but are currently going to extra lengths to support clients, and management is monitoring staff for signs of burn-out.

### **Money A+E Money Coach (Adviser) and Head of Advice, Rosie Leach, said:**

'Our service is on the frontline of the financial crisis caused by Covid-19 and the lockdown. Our clients are already among the most vulnerable in society, and they have felt the effects of this crisis disproportionately. With little to no savings or safety net to fall back on, the loss in income has been devastating for many.'



*Transforming lives through  
money advice & education*

‘We are proud to be able to provide support but our service simply does not have the capacity required to keep up with the surge in demand. We welcome the measures to support the charity sector just announced by the Chancellor; however the precise level and timing of funding to organisations such as ours remains unclear. We urgently need more support, now, so that we can continue to protect those who might otherwise face destitution.’

---END---

For media enquiries, please contact **Suzy Kirby, Digital Marketing Officer**, on 0208 616 3750 or [suzy@moneyaande.co.uk](mailto:suzy@moneyaande.co.uk)

#### **About Money A+E:**

Money A+E is an award-winning social enterprise that helps people find solutions to their money problems through friendly, compassionate advice and education. The staff and volunteers are beneficiaries of the service and are trained to deliver courses and mentoring advice to members of their local communities. The courses combine dealing with debt as well as building financial capability to prevent future financial crisis. OCN certification will now allow Money A+E to develop its courses further so that expert debt advice and high quality financial literacy can be combined. This will amplify the impact that Money A+E’s services have on the lives of individuals facing debt and poverty.