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Press Release

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CCCS wins award for hi-tech help for debtors

The UK's leading debt charity, the Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS), won an award at the tenth annual *Charity Awards* last night (June 11) for innovative use of technology in helping tens of thousands of people in debt.

CCCS, a charity dedicated to providing free and impartial advice to financially distressed people, beat off stiff competition from organisations Deaf Parenting UK and Developing Initiatives Supporting Communities (DISC). The three were short-listed for the *Research, Advice and Support* category, one of ten presented on the night at the *Charity Awards*, the pre-eminent awards programme in the UK voluntary sector. Judges praised CCCS's winning three-stage development project, describing it as "impressive – an exemplar in change management."

Before 2006, CCCS was primarily a telephone based service, but then developed *Debt Remedy* – the world's first online debt advice tool using innovative, specially created "decision logic" software – to ensure more people could access the charity's advice and to relieve the growing pressure on helpline staff as the numbers of people seeking CCCS's help rose dramatically. *Debt Remedy* was launched at the end of 2006 and counselled over 42,000 people online in 2008, equating to a third of its clients that year, all at a fraction of the cost of an equivalent face-to-face or telephone appointment while producing similar results.

In response to the changing nature of debt problems, CCCS introduced specialist centres dealing with mortgage arrears, repossessions, welfare benefits, bankruptcies, and the self-employed. All were swiftly inundated with enquiries, proving they were meeting an urgent and growing need.

Most recently, in the third stage of the charity's development project, CCCS has "reengineered" its core telephone service, using the same "decision logic" software as *Debt Remedy* to give people faster and more efficient help.

Commenting on winning the award, chairman Malcolm Hurlston said:

"Using technology to make life easier for our counsellors allows them to focus on the human and emotional aspects of debt. We are delighted to receive this award and to be in a good place to help people in the current economic climate."

The Charity Awards recognise and celebrate excellence in the leadership and management of charities, aiming to help spread good practice throughout the sector, and drawing attention to the talent and expertise being brought to bear on voluntary activity in the UK. The awards are decided by an independent panel of judges, respected for their expertise in charities and management.

Thirty projects altogether were short-listed at the *Charity Awards 2009* in all ten categories, having been drawn from a record number of entries after selection by the judging panel.

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Notes to editors:

1. The CCCS helpline number is 0800 138 1111 and is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday.
2. CCCS *Debt Remedy* is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at www.cccs.co.uk
3. The Charity Awards is the pre-eminent awards programme in the UK's vibrant and diverse voluntary sector: www.charityawards.co.uk.

It is sponsored by the Charities Aid Foundation, the Leadership Trust, and The Times. The Charity Awards are open to UK charities registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales or with the Inland Revenue in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

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