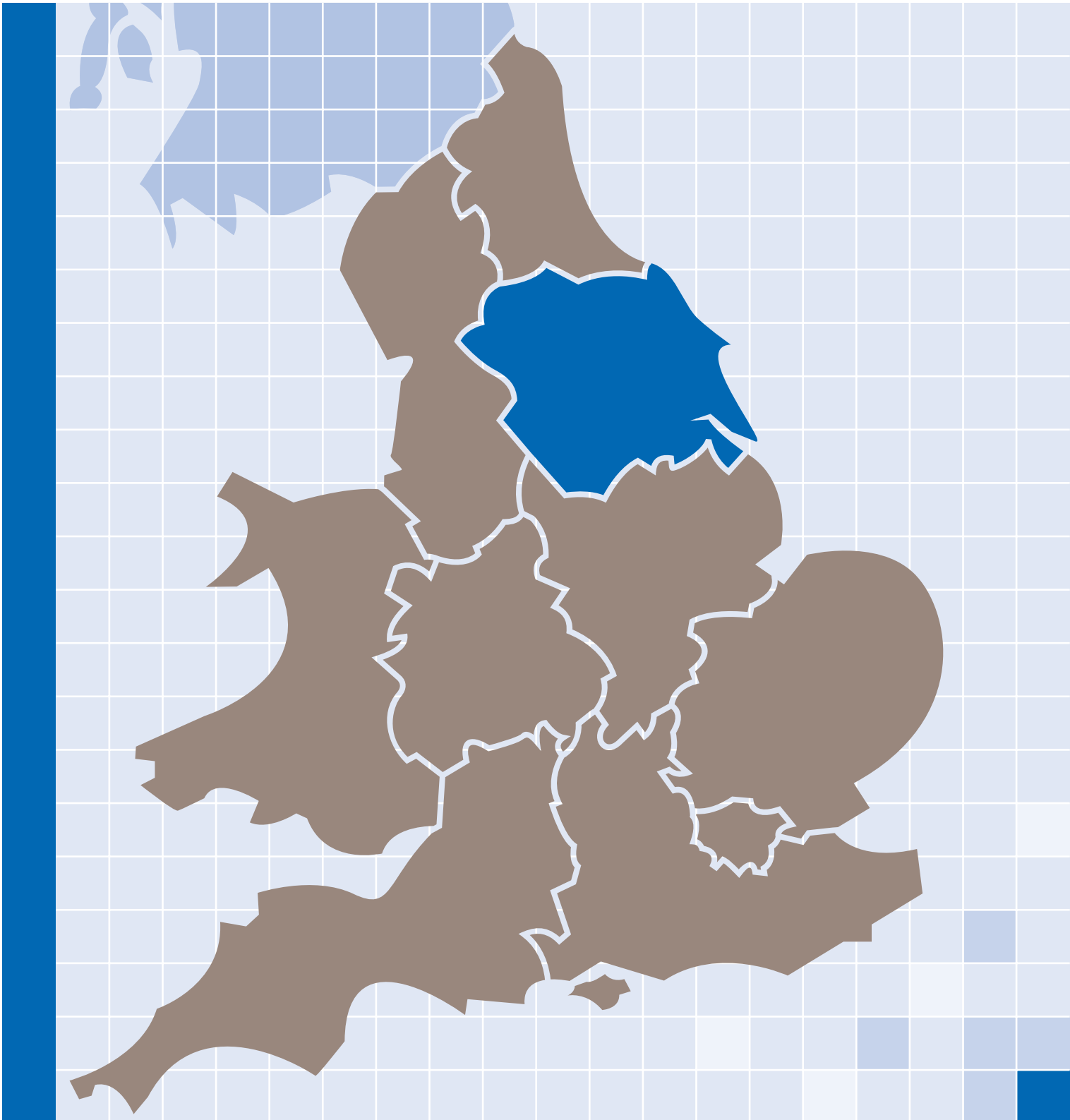


Developing partnerships, enhancing services

Citizens Advice in Yorkshire and Humberside



Introduction

The Citizens Advice service is one of the best known organisations in England and Wales. We score highly on trust and recognition in public polls, with 96 per cent of the population having heard of us.

We provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity and challenge discrimination. Our aims are two-fold; to provide the advice people need for the problems they face, and to improve the policies and practices that affect their lives.

Partnership

The Citizens Advice service works in partnership with agencies from all sectors, at local, regional and national level. We are always striving to achieve more and recognise this is often best done by partnering with others. This briefing sets out the benefits of working with the Citizens Advice service for regional agencies and the local communities they support.

Comprehensive coverage in Yorkshire and Humberside

In Yorkshire and Humberside the Citizens Advice service is one of the largest third sector providers of advice, operating from 44 high street premises in the region. There is at least one bureau in every local authority district, providing outreach services from a further 251 outlets

During 2008/09 over 138,000 people in Yorkshire and Humberside were able to turn to the Citizens Advice service for help to resolve their money, legal, employment or other problems.

High quality advice

Every Citizens Advice Bureau is an independent charity and a member of Citizens Advice, the national body that:

- provides bureaux with training and specialist support
- audits the operational efficiency of bureaux and the quality of their advice
- coordinates national policy and campaigning work.

Together we are the Citizens Advice service, combining the resource and experience of a national organisation with the intimate local knowledge of frontline agencies.

All issues, all people

In 2008/09 the bureaux in Yorkshire and Humberside advised on 522,150 issues. Many clients are advised on multiple issues as their problems are dealt with holistically.

The most common issues in the Yorkshire and Humberside region are:

- debt **41%**
- benefits and tax credits **27%**
- employment **8%**
- consumer and utilities **6%**
- housing **5%**
- legal **4%**.

Nineteen bureaux in the Yorkshire and Humberside region are able to provide civil legal advice through contracts with the Legal Services Commission.

The Citizens Advice service is also a leader in equality and diversity best practice. We aim to develop and deliver discrimination advice, from first point of contact to resolution, in partnership with others.

Sixteen per cent of clients using the service in the region are from black, Asian or minority ethnic communities; 23 per cent are disabled; 12 per cent are below the age of 25 and 10 per cent are over 65 years.

We achieved

96%

in public polls for trust and recognition

We helped

138

thousand people during 2008/09

We advised on

522

thousand different issues during 2008/09

We operate

44

high street premises in the region

We provide a further

251

outreach services across Yorkshire and Humberside

Informing policy

Bureaux record all enquiries in a central database, providing a unique picture of the problems faced by residents in the region. This service data can be analysed at national or local level, and allows for tracking trends year on year.

This intelligence informs the development of local services as well as the setting of policy objectives for Yorkshire and Humberside.

In addition to statistical data on enquiries, bureaux record detailed, anonymous descriptions of cases. These provide rich, qualitative information which demonstrates unquestionably to policy makers and service providers, the impact of their decisions on individuals' lives.

Partnership working for client-centred services

Bureaux belong to networks of statutory and third sector community agencies. They frequently identify common goals and separate strengths, leading to partnership work that delivers more joined up, client-centred services for people throughout Yorkshire and Humberside.

As a service, we recognise that it is only by working with a range of partners that we can improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable groups in society.

We currently work with partners from the public, private and third sectors to ensure our experience, and that of our clients, is used proactively to inform policy and practice for the better. Our existing partnerships include the sharing of statistical information to facilitate advice needs assessment, as well as the development of new and existing services.

Partnership examples include:

- Working with statutory organisations to deliver advice to those at threat of redundancy or reduced working hours.
- Working closely with the DWP Financial Inclusion Champions to develop a strategic approach to dealing with money issues.
- Developing partnership arrangements with universities.

Case study

A 52 year old woman went to a Bradford and Airedale CAB outreach session in her local GP surgery. She told CAB she'd had "such a breakdown after major traumas" including problems at work and caring for her parents who were dying. Her husband had given up work to look after her: "he was on suicide patrol".

The client had to leave work due to illness and had been trying for 15 months to claim help with her mortgage under a Payment Protection Plan. The company did not acknowledge her letters. When the CAB wrote, the company replied but did not pay out, so the bureau helped her take the case to the Financial Services Ombudsman.

The bureau helped her claim disability living allowance and referred her to a specialist CAB Employment Caseworker. They helped her take her case to an employment tribunal. She won and was awarded £20,000 for unfair dismissal and breach of contract.

The client told CAB: "The Adviser has been a wonder for me, she encouraged me to believe in myself, and she helped me fight".

We have

19

bureaux in Yorkshire and Humberside providing civil legal advice

16%

of our clients are from BAME communities

23%

are disabled

12%

are below the age of 25

10%

are over 65 years

Developing the regional and local economy in Yorkshire and Humberside

- Citizens Advice bureaux in Yorkshire and Humberside are both small businesses and training agencies, employing and training 599 local staff. In addition we train and rely on over 1,140 volunteers each year.
- Based on current rates of pay for employed staff, the value of the contribution made by volunteers in the West Midlands region is estimated at almost £5.3 million.
- Over a quarter of volunteers go into paid employment following training and support in bureaux.
- Across the Yorkshire and Humberside region the Citizens Advice service brings money into the pockets of families and individuals through benefit take-up, management of debt, and advice on employment and housing. This extra wealth often stays in the community, boosting the local economy.
- In the course of delivering projects to improve financial inclusion, 12,341 clients were helped in the region during 2008/09 through our successful national programme – funded by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.
- The Citizens Advice service hosts a financial capability forum across the region and is expanding its work in money advice.

Our strategic priorities

Across Yorkshire and Humberside bureaux are making an important contribution to regional priorities and the service is actively seeking to develop partnerships to deliver on our ambitious 2008-11 strategy, of which the key priorities are:

- Easier and faster access to advice and information for more people.
- To strengthen our voice in social policy.
- To develop the Citizens Advice Bureaux network.
- To develop new initiatives in advice.
- A commitment to equality.

We recognise that it is only by working in partnership that we can achieve more and we welcome contact from other agencies and stakeholders as to how we can work with them on these shared agendas.

If you want to talk about working with Citizens Advice in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, please contact:

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We train

1,140

volunteers each year

We employ

599

local staff

5.3

million pounds
contributed in the Yorkshire
and Humberside region