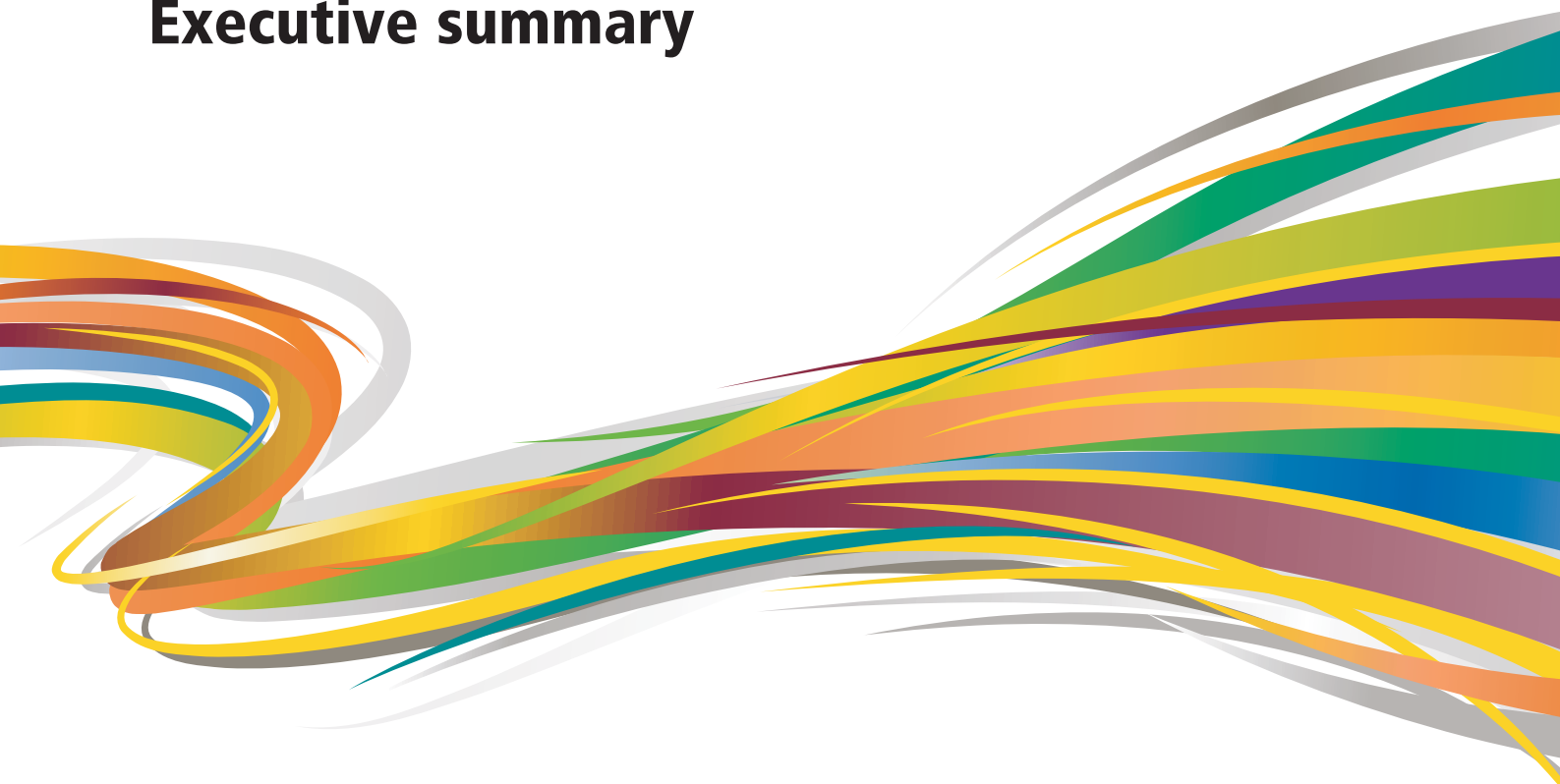


Majority matters programme evaluation

Executive summary



The Citizens Advice service and discrimination advice

At Citizens Advice helping people is our business. The CAB service deals with 2 million clients and over 5.7 million new problems every year. More than 6,200 paid staff and 12,800 trained volunteers provide advice from more than 3,000 locations. It's what we excel in and what we are proud of (the figures speak for themselves). This doesn't mean we are complacent. We are always looking at ways to improve how we work together and how we develop services for our clients.

Since 2004, the Citizens Advice service has been working towards becoming a first point of contact for discrimination advice and we

have done this working in partnership with others. Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR, formerly DTI) supported us in our objective by funding an initial equality in employment project. The project acted as a catalyst to develop the CAB service's capacity to provide specialist discrimination advice. We were able to work with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people (LGBT), religion and belief communities, and national and local equality organisations. In 2006/07, Citizens Advice Bureaux gave advice on 26,884 discrimination problems.

The Majority matters programme



The programme consisted of two BERR-funded projects; Sexual Orientation and Religion or Belief (SORB) and Age. The SORB project aimed to support the employment equality (sexual orientation and religion or belief) regulations in the run up to the establishment of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The project was implemented at national level by Citizens Advice and through seven pilot bureaux. The Age project aimed to enhance the capability of bureau advisers to deal with age discrimination. The project was implemented at national level only. SORB and age equality organisations provided specialist knowledge and input into both projects.

The SORB project

How we built generalist advice capacity to identify discrimination cases

Citizens Advice Training Services developed and delivered 15 training courses, which covered strand-specific issues, outlined the skills and approaches needed to identify and explore potential discrimination issues/cases. Generalist advisers and advice session supervisors from England and Wales attended to ensure maximum impact and sustainability of learning and training. After course completion, participants were more confident on how to identify discrimination issues. Input and facilitation on LGBT issues/training materials was provided by the Village CAB, a LGBT focussed bureau. Faithwise, contracted by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and a member of the Citizens Advice Religion and Belief Reference Group ensured materials produced for the SORB project accurately reflected the experiences of religion and belief communities. SORB training has since been converted into e-learning materials and is available online to all bureaux workers in England, Wales and Scotland.

How we built specialist employment capacity to provide discrimination advice and casework

We invested in sustainable learning (and development) for generalist advisers and advice session supervisors. This has been central to the success of the Majority matters programme. Citizens Advice is working in partnership with Wolverhampton University to develop an accredited training programme for caseworkers, which will cover all the equality strands in employment discrimination. The accessibility of online capacity building was maximised by creating an employment discrimination casework management system and an employment

adviser discussion forum to encourage transfer of knowledge.

How we built towards and piloted methodologies for regional expertise

Seven pilot bureaux were selected on a range of criteria. This included their varying community demographics, location, expertise in handling grants to undertake and report on SORB and other employment discrimination casework. In addition, they needed to be able to establish their bureau and forge links with LGBT and religion and belief communities and to build a local referral network for discrimination cases. Their role was to develop and test approaches to the regional delivery of specialist discrimination advice, as well as to provide high quality advice and casework to clients.

Citizens Advice Specialist Support team assisted bureaux caseworkers with a combination of tailored consultancy, mentoring and training support to develop their discrimination casework skills. Caseworkers had access to the Wolverhampton Discrimination Casework course and short courses on specific topics.

Bureaux devised imaginative ways to maintain their project momentum by including discrimination advice in the wider work of the bureau. They organised training days, devised questionnaires for use by generalist and specialist advisers and discrimination issues case sheet reminders to name just a few. The success of these activities and other achievements were a direct result of having specialist caseworkers in post to build the awareness, knowledge and referral process.

In some bureaux, LGBT and minority religion and belief communities are already well represented amongst bureau workers. In other

cases a bureau SORB community sustainability initiative was set up to recruit and retain volunteers from these communities. For some bureaux, the national partnership with the MCB provided them with a direct route to make contact with mosques or Muslim community centres. Another positive outcome was a small number of potential volunteers being identified through MCB beacon centres.

A volunteer recruitment leaflet was produced for pilot bureaux to attract potential volunteers from LGBT and religion and belief communities and a 'buddy' system provided support and encouragement for new volunteers.

How we raised awareness of the regulations in 'hard to reach' religion and belief and LGBT communities

Bureaux displayed practical understanding and knowledge of their local community and of the different groups within it, and took a strategic approach to reach their target communities. Some bureaux tapped into councils and organisations with support groups for LGBT and religion and belief communities/Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff and found this method particularly effective. Other bureaux succeeded in establishing outreach services at local LGBT meetings and mosques. Some of the SORB regulations awareness raising activities included:

Village CAB promoted the regulations to employers and employees on local radio and advertised their website which contains employment discrimination factsheets in the gay press. Salford CAB, which hosts the Village CAB, also has an outreach project with the Jewish community in Salford.

Barking and Dagenham CAB regularly attended a LGBT forum, made presentations highlighting the regulations and through

Faithwise has forged links with the London Muslim Centre through outreach sessions.

Newport CAB worked in partnership with the Stonewall Cymru SORB project and has established regular surgeries in partnership with a mosque (beacon centre).

How we used local volunteers and local radio to increase awareness of the regulations

Citizens Advice built bureaux media capacity by providing training to 29 bureau spokespeople and to two regional Citizens Advice staff. The training was tailored toward employment discrimination and designed to equip participants with a range of skills for any type of media interview.

National, local and advisory partnerships were pivotal in the development and implementation of the Majority matters programme. These partnerships, like any relationship, took time to develop trust and to arrive at a mutual understanding. Improved coordination and clarity on local agreements between bureaux and beacon centres need to be factored into future programmes. A Memorandum of Understanding should also be agreed between Citizens Advice and national partners to clarify expectations. The expected outputs from bureaux and the partnership organisations to be worked with need to be negotiated with individual bureau and included in Service Level Agreements. Overall, the benefits to clients (and future work initiatives) from these productive partnerships outweigh the investment of effort.

Public information services from Citizens Advice such as www.adviceguide.org.uk and Q Call, the 24 hour pre-recorded information service have been updated to include information on the SORB and age regulations.

The age project

How we trained generalist and specialist advisers

A course was developed to help advisers identify and advise on cases of age discrimination. The course was designed to equip guidance tutors with the skills and tools to teach advisers about the age regulations and clients' rights. Thirty courses ran at venues across England and Wales achieving a good demographic spread of delegates with 259 guidance tutors being trained.

How we reinforced the information systems that advisers draw from

AdviserNet, the Citizens Advice electronic information system, which is used by trained generalist advisers in all bureaux and 700 other advice agencies and the Bureau Management Information System (BMIS), the CAB service online management resource for bureau managers have all been expanded to include guidance on the age regulations, its implications and how they might apply to clients.

How we provided second tier specialist support on age discrimination

A web-based consultancy enquiry system for second tier age discrimination advice was piloted. It provides expert advice on casework queries and is available, free of charge to any advice agencies. Many agencies including adviceUK, Age Concern and Law Centres subscribe to this consultancy enquiry system.

Provided high quality information to the public on age discrimination using www.adviceguide.org.uk which now includes a factsheet on the age regulations and Q Call, the 24 hour pre-recorded information service have been updated to include information on the age regulations.

Raised public awareness of the age regulations in local press. Bureaux did this with support and tools from the Citizens Advice Press Office.

Created partnerships between Citizens Advice and the other organisations funded under this project. This resulted in the formation of a working group called the Age and Advice Network (AAN). The network meets to discuss progress, ideas and future partnership working. The network has provided a forum for sharing materials and will continue to run for 12 months. The Age and Employment Network (TAEN) provided consultancy support to develop the knowledge content of information about the regulations and in addition helped with quality control of materials. They also contributed information for bureau managers and trustees explaining the implications of the regulations for them as employers. This information has been added to Citizens Advice BMIS.

Commitment from the partnerships and the bureaux involved in these projects has enabled Citizens Advice to establish ways for the advice sector and equality organisations to work together for the greater benefit of communities. Citizens Advice has developed a body of learning and expertise which will help inform the way the Equality and Human Rights Commission can work effectively with the advice sector.

For a more information about Citizens Advice and our work visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Find out more about volunteering for your local CAB: Call 08451 264 264 (local rate)



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