



Introduction to the Citizens Advice service

2007/08



5.5million

advice issues dealt with

1.9million

individual clients advised

7.3million

visits to our public information
and advice website –
www.adviceguide.org.uk

426

Citizens Advice Bureaux in
England and Wales

3,200

locations where the service
provides free and independent
advice

"There has long been a very valuable role for Citizens Advice Bureaux; that is why Citizens Advice is supported... by the Government. It does a great job up and down the country, and that is why we will continue to support it."

Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP, Minister of
State for Employment and Welfare Reform,
2 June 2008¹

¹In response to a question in Parliament from Philip Hollobone MP on Kettering Citizens Advice Bureau.

Who we are and what we do

Our aims and principles

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination. Its aims are to provide the advice people need for the problems they face, and to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

Our structure

There are 426 Citizens Advice Bureaux across England and Wales and 22 in Northern Ireland, all of which are independent registered charities. Citizens Advice is also an independent registered charity and the membership organisation that provides training and support to member bureaux, and coordinates national policy work.

Together we make up the Citizens Advice service, across which there are some 26,000 workers, 20,000 of whom are volunteers.

Our work

The Citizens Advice service is the UK's largest advice provider, with nearly half of the population using our service at some point in their lives. We provide face-to-face services in over 3,200 locations including the high street, community centres, health settings, courts and prisons.

We are equipped to deal with any issue, from anyone; debt, benefits, housing, employment, consumer issues, relationships, family matters, health, education, discrimination, immigration and the law.

We also campaign for changes to policy and practice that benefit millions of people each year by carrying out effective, influential and award winning evidence-based social policy work. We use evidence from bureaux to inform policy makers and service providers about the impact of their decisions and policies both locally and nationally.



42%

of people say they have used a Citizens Advice Bureau at some point in their lives (BMRB, 2008)

86%

of those who have used a Citizens Advice Bureau are satisfied with the service they received (BMRB, 2008)

46%

of people felt less anxious, stressed or had fewer health problems after using a CAB (MORI, 2005)

37%

of people who use a Citizens Advice Bureau are financially better off as a result (MORI, 2005)

64%

of problems are resolved as a direct result of using a CAB (MORI, 2005)

In a recent poll, the CAB service was described as the most honest, approachable, helpful, effective, informative and fair out of 21 national charities (nfpSynergy Brand Attributes survey, 2008)

Advice services

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, and confidential advice to help people resolve their problems, take control of their lives and understand their rights. In doing so it plays a central role in tackling injustice, reducing poverty and social exclusion, and enabling people to realise their full potential.

The delivery of advice

We deliver this information and advice through face-to-face, telephone and email services, and online via Adviceguide.org.uk. In the last year alone, we helped 1.9 million people to solve 5.5 million new problems.

Advisers recognise that one problem is often the cause or result of another so, rather than addressing a single issue at a time, they look at a client's situation holistically. This way, other potential problems can be identified early or pre-empted, which prevents them escalating into anything more serious.

Bureaux are right at the heart of their communities and the services they offer reflect the profile of residents. This could mean access to multi-lingual advisers, or information on specific local issues.

The impact of advice

Clients often report improved health and increased confidence after receiving advice, both of which reduce the demand for health services and contribute to happier, more integrated communities. In fact, the service saves time and money for society and stakeholders in many ways, for example, by preventing homelessness, avoiding legal action and helping people to fill in official forms.

As well as taking the strain off other services, bureaux also actively contribute to the local economy through means such as increased benefit take-up and the training of volunteers who go on into paid jobs.

Analysis of client problems 2007/08

	CAB client problems ('000s) (England and Wales)	Adviceguide visitor problems ('000s) (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)
Debt	1,737	644
Benefits	1,516	1,533
Consumer and financial services	286	451
Employment	476	1,857
Housing	399	943
Legal	275	531
Relationships and family	295	974
Tax	48	1,146
Utilities*	95	233
Other**	413	1,092
Total	5,540	9,404

Figures rounded to the nearest thousand. Adviceguide figures are for web page views and not equal to the overall number of visits.

*Utilities include telecoms, TV and internet.

**Other includes immigration, health and education.



20,000

volunteers in the service,
including volunteer trustees

19%

of new volunteers are under
the age of 25

20%

of new volunteers are from
black or minority ethnic
communities

The CAB Certificate in
Generalist Advice Work
involves about

250 hours

of learning to become a
fully competent CAB
generalist adviser.

“By volunteering I am
gaining much more
experience and confidence
in quite a wide range of
areas... It has opened my
eyes to how important the
CAB is to the public.”

James Spiteri, v project volunteer,
Shirley CAB

Volunteering

Of the 26,000 people who work in the service, 20,000 of them are volunteers, all from different backgrounds with different skills. They perform a variety of roles from giving advice to fundraising, IT, administration, publicity, campaigning and trusteeship.

Benefits for all

Volunteering for a CAB provides a tremendous benefit to the local community. Our volunteers give £86 million worth of hours a year between them. Without their passion and generosity the service would struggle to survive and the cost to the economy of unresolved problems would soar.

CAB volunteers benefit from free training, ongoing support and expenses. Training results in an accredited qualification which, along with the experience of volunteering itself, helps people develop skills for life beyond the bureau. Of the volunteer advisers that left the service in 2007/08, 28 per cent left for paid employment and eight per cent went into further education.

For younger people, volunteering provides new experiences, a confidence boost and a path into work or education. Our older, or retired, volunteers say it keeps them active, in touch with the community, and means they can 'put something back'. What is common across all volunteers is that they find it a uniquely rewarding experience.





84%

of stakeholders describe themselves as advocates of Citizens Advice
(Opinion Leader, 2007)

During 2007/08, our campaigns touched many lives:

- 420,000 pensioners will no longer face unexpected tax debts, which had arisen because HM Revenue and Customs failed to properly collect tax on small occupational pensions.
- Over seven million school children will benefit from our campaigning work on school costs.
- As a result of our campaigning, the Department of Health announced an 11 per cent increase in funding for NHS dentistry in England during 2008/09, which could help the 2.7 million people who have not had dental treatment since April 2006.
- At least 28,000 people per year will benefit from our work to persuade the Office of Communication (OFCOM) to take action on the mis-selling of mobile phones including cashback offers.
- By working with Shelter and mortgage lenders we persuaded the Government to address the problems with sale-and-rent-back schemes, which could potentially benefit 10,000 families facing the loss of their home due to mortgage arrears.

Campaigning

The Citizens Advice service doesn't just exist to provide advice in times of crisis – we also campaign for changes to policy and practice that benefit millions of people each year by preventing problems arising in the first place.

Evidence-based lobbying

Every client that comes into a bureau with a problem is a first hand example of policies and practices having gone wrong. It is the case notes recorded during interviews with clients that form the foundation of our award winning evidence based policy work.

We use these case notes, anonymously, to demonstrate to policy makers and service providers the impact of their decisions, and to lobby for improvement. Our case notes are detailed and our geographic coverage is incomparable, giving us a vast body of evidence on the problems that people are facing. Our bespoke software allows for it to be analysed at a local or a national level, and enables us to track trends year on year.

This unique and important insight empowers us to: expose inadequate or unfair laws, policies and practices; respond with authority to Government consultations; and recommend how resources can be targeted most effectively.





96%

of people have heard of the
Citizens Advice service
(BMRB, 2008)

52%

of people have either used a
bureau themselves, or have
friends and family who have
(MORI, 2005)

The Citizens Advice service has initiated many significant projects to help society's most vulnerable. There are many more things we would like to do or that we are already working towards. All of these need additional funding.

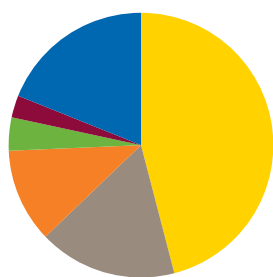
These include:

- using technology to increase access to our services
- launching a national telephone service
- developing our capacity for partnership working
- setting up referral practices, so more clients get access to those with the most expertise
- establishing a truly national financial capability programme to reduce the instances of people getting into debt
- helping bureaux to identify and access more sustainable income streams
- improving systems to better capture evidence from clients.

How the service is funded

Each Citizens Advice Bureau is a charity reliant on funding from a variety of sources. Citizens Advice is also a registered charity.

Citizens Advice Bureaux income 2007/08

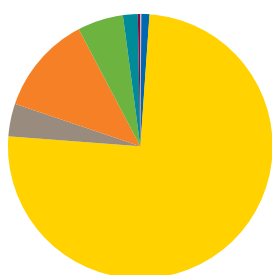


Local Government	£68m
Legal Services Commission	£25m
Financial Inclusion Fund (via Citizens Advice)	£17m
Big Lottery Fund	£6m
Primary Care Trusts	£4m
Other sources	£28m

Total £148m

For a breakdown of the financial situation for each Citizens Advice Bureau, please consult individual bureau annual reports.

Citizens Advice income 2007/08

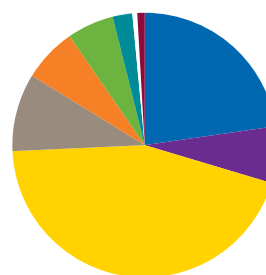


Donations £63,000	0.1%
Bank interest £455,000	1.0%
Government grants £34,329,000	75.1%
Other public body grants £1,838,000	4.0%
Other grants £5,519,000	12.1%
Trading activities £2,539,000	5.6%
Training and support £820,000	1.8%
Other incoming resources £120,000	0.3%

Total £45,683,000

For a full list of Citizens Advice donors, see our annual report and accounts 2007/08 at www.citizensadvice.org.uk.

Citizens Advice expenditure 2007/08



Strengthening the bureaux network £11,390,000	22.7%
Delivering IT services £3,452,000	6.9%
Bureaux and other grants £22,403,000	44.6%
Developing our people £4,782,000	9.5%
Influencing policy £3,339,000	6.6%
Making information available £2,873,000	5.7%
Trading activities £1,209,000	2.4%
Governance costs £309,000	0.6%
Costs of generating funds £466,000	0.9%

Total £50,223,000

There are 426 Citizens Advice Bureaux across England and Wales, all of which are independent registered charities. By supporting us you will become part of a well established charity network that really values its 20,000 volunteers.

We are thankful for the support we receive from companies, trusts, individuals, and others. It enables us to develop innovative projects that make a difference to communities, and we always welcome new partners who can help us to build on our work.

To support our work:

- Contact kate.trenouth@citizensadvice.org.uk
- See www.citizensadvice.org.uk/support-us
- Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

To volunteer for your local CAB:

- See www.citizensadvice.org.uk/join-us
- Call our volunteer hotline on 08451 264 264
- Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

To find you local CAB online:

- See www.citizensadvice.org.uk/getadvice

To get advice online:

- See www.adviceguide.org.uk

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Citizens Advice is an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.
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