

the citizen

citizens
advice
bureau

Autumn
2011

News from across the Citizens Advice service



**Building
financial skills
and confidence**

**Strengthening
consumer protection**

Free money advice

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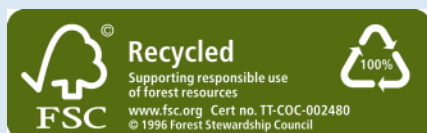
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Editorial

The Citizen is produced three times a year bringing you all the news from the Citizens Advice service.

A bilingual version (Welsh / English), called *Cyngor*, will be available online at citizensadvice.org.uk

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Foreword

Welcome from Barclays to the autumn issue of *The Citizen*.

Barclays is proud of our extremely strong, longstanding relationship with the Citizens Advice service. We value the critical work that it does in assisting clients to resolve their concerns and the policy expertise and social benefit that this brings.

We are working together to tackle issues that are important to both of our organisations, and are investing in initiatives that build financial capability and increase financial inclusion.

In addition to our flagship financial capability programmes such as Barclaycard Horizons and Barclays Money Skills (see pages 4-5); we are working together to develop our market leading basic bank account; shared practice in assisting customers in financial difficulty and providing funding for the CAB specialist support unit.

We have achieved a great deal through our work together, however there are some figures that stand out for me: over 164,000 clients have received money management training through Horizons; two million money management leaflets have been distributed and some 1,000 delegates have attended the annual Citizens Advice money conference that Barclays has supported since its inception five years ago.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Deanna Oppenheimer
Chief Executive
UK Retail and Business Banking, Barclays

For more copies of *The Citizen* or to receive an e-version of this newsletter, please send your contact details to thecitizen@citizensadvice.org.uk

Do you have a Citizens Advice story you would like to share? Send your news stories to Sally Littlecott at thecitizen@citizensadvice.org.uk

ThirdSector

Britain's
**most
admired**
charities



The Citizens Advice service is proud to have been nominated for the Third Sector's 'Britain's Most Admired Charity' award.

Third Sector produced the shortlist from nominations put forward by ten influential figures in the sector. Other nominees are The British Red Cross, Help for Heroes, Kidney Research UK, the National

Trust and the World Society for Protection of Animals.

Voting was restricted to chief executives of charities and not-for-profit organisations up until 22 August. The winner will be announced at a champagne reception hosted by Barclays on Tuesday 18 October.

Rebuilding communities



Prince Charles meets residents who lost their homes during the disturbances

Haringey bureaux have been helping local residents to get back to normal after the rioting in August. As part of the Community Assistance Centre, organised by Haringey Council, CAB advisers were on hand to deal with housing and benefit enquiries, including applications for emergency grants.

When the Prime Minister, David Cameron visited on Tuesday morning, he made a beeline for Haringey CAB's advice desk and was impressed with what he saw, praising the advisers and the Citizens Advice service as a whole.

Other dignitaries visiting the centre, included the Deputy

Party conference time

Citizens Advice will be holding two separate fringe meetings at each of the main party conferences this autumn. The first – on Consumer Empowerment – is being sponsored by Barclays, with whom we have worked for a number of years on financial inclusion issues.

The second event is entitled 'The Biggest Challenges Facing Britain', and will present Citizens Advice as the key organisation when it comes to solving the multitude of problems people face.

We will also be contributing speakers to fringe events held by the think-tanks DEMOS and IPPR, as well as by the umbrella groups Justice for All and the Disability Benefits Consortium.

All meetings will also be addressed by ministers or shadow ministers.

Prime, Minister Nick Clegg and HRH The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall.

The Tottenham office survived the disturbances intact, although staff had to relocate to the Wood Green office for several days while its immediate location remained a crime scene.



Building financial skills and confidence

Debt is the number one reason why people visit a Citizens Advice Bureau, with debt issues making up a third of all bureau enquiries.

But we're not just here to help resolve problems. Our financial capability initiatives empower people with the skills, knowledge and confidence to stop difficulties from arising in the first place.

Our longstanding partnership with Barclaycard and Barclays has enabled us to engage with some of the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities – lone parents and young people – through our involvement with the Horizons and Barclays Money Skills programmes.

Being a parent can be challenging. Especially if you are lone parent on a limited budget. At Citizens Advice we recognise that lone parents can feel ill-equipped to deal with the financial pressures they face – one in five of our debt clients is a lone parent.

That's why we work with Family Action, Gingerbread and One Parent Families Scotland on the Horizons programme, which is supported by Barclaycard. Together, we have helped 450,000 lone parents take control of their money and improve their job prospects since 2005.

Participating bureaux deliver the 'Your Money' aspect of the Horizons programme. They use their expertise in money matters to run free training sessions – both group and one-to-one – designed specifically for lone parents. The courses cover everything from basic household budgeting and

choosing credit to managing debt. Bureaux also provide direct support and training for frontline staff working with lone parents.

We work closely with our project partners to reach the most vulnerable. This year we're helping lone parents access the programme through new Horizons information centres in community settings. We're also providing intensive training to small groups of parents so that they can mentor others. Mentors will provide basic support and sign-posting to their peers on how to manage their money and get back into work.

We know that our work has made a real difference, significantly increasing lone parents' confidence. Before the training, only 35 per cent felt confident managing their day to day finances compared to 81 per cent afterwards.

Independent evaluations have shown that, as a result of the training, at least two thirds of lone parents have:

- changed the way they handle money – the most common change being budgeting
- passed on what they learnt to friends and family.

"I know I haven't got any more money but it feels like I have! Thank you for providing me with the confidence I needed to stick to my budget and manage my debts."

Lone parent participant



Helen Grant, MP Maidstone and The Weald, with Russell and Bikash

With nearly a million 16-24 year olds unemployed, it's no surprise that more young people are coming to bureaux for help and advice. Last year we dealt with over 700,000 problems from people under 25. This included a 27 per cent increase in young people seeking information on Debt Relief Orders, demonstrating the financial difficulties facing this age group.

Alongside Horizons, bureaux are also involved in Barclays Money Skills, a national programme that helps young people to develop and improve their financial skills, knowledge and confidence. The programme aims to reach a total of one million people by 2012 through face-to-face workshops, seminars, peer education and online support.

Maidstone CAB has delivered almost 200 half-day courses to 2,500 young people across the South East, helping them avoid unmanageable debt. Staff from local Barclays branches also attend courses to chat with young people about banking procedures.

Part of the training includes two short films covering overspending on a mobile phone contract and borrowing from an unauthorised money lender, produced by the bureau working with media students at Mid Kent College.

Citizens Advice is excited to be working with the

National Youth Agency and a consortium of four other youth and information charities on the Barclays Money Skills 'champions' project. An innovative three year peer education project, it will build the financial knowledge and confidence of up to 5,000 young people and equip them with the skills to share this information with their peer group. Using this model, the project aims to reach 100,000 disadvantaged young people. A pilot for the project will take place in a number of areas across the country in the autumn.

Local bureaux will train up 'champions' on the basics of debt and how to get advice and help before things go wrong.

> CASE STUDY

Sarah hadn't had her credit card long when she took part in a Barclays Money Skills course run by Maidstone CAB and learnt all about interest charges.

She realised that out of the £60 a month she was repaying £40 was interest. It would take her four and a half years to clear her debt.

By transferring to a 0 per cent credit card provider, she could pay off all of what she owed within 18 months.

She said this will mean that she'll be able to go on holiday in the future, something she had dismissed as unaffordable.

For more information about Horizons:
www.yourhorizons.com

For more information about Money Skills:
www.barclaysmoneyskills.com

Strengthening consumer protection

The Government is simplifying the 'consumer landscape'. Consumer Direct's advice-giving work will be transferred to the Citizens Advice service* in April 2012.

The Government has also proposed that at a later date we take on much of the advocacy and education work currently done by Consumer Focus and the Office of Fair Trading. With a government consultation on this underway, Citizens Advice has been preparing for both known and possible change.

Our 'Programme 2014' brings together the various projects that will make us the first choice for advice and advocacy by 2014: work that will enable us to develop our advice services for all our clients, whether they choose to contact us face-to-face, over the phone or online, and to become an even stronger voice for consumers in particular.

Consumer advice will be delivered through a Citizens Advice-branded phone and web service, run by a commercial supplier in line with our standards and values.

Anyone with very complex problems in need of specialist consumer advice will be referred to partners, such as Trading Standards, as they are now. Anyone with wider problems or in need of face-to-face advice will be referred seamlessly within the Citizens Advice service – either to a new in-depth generalist phone advice service or to a CAB. This is an economical way of delivering consumer advice that also allows bureaux to use

-
- 97 per cent of people know who we are.
 - 84 per cent have a positive opinion of us.
 - 26 per cent of consumers already pick Citizens Advice as the organisation they would contact about redress – second only to Trading Standards (35 per cent).
-

their face-to-face and generalist advice skills to the full.

Integrating consumer advocacy into the Citizens Advice service – as the organisation responsible for consumer advice – will have the effect of making the pool of evidence that informs advocacy work larger and more robust than ever.

It will also create new opportunities to actively involve people in protecting themselves and each other. It is because we are anchored in virtually every community that we are able to represent consumers effectively at a national level. Our network of local bureaux means we can also empower consumers at a very local level, on specific issues affecting particular areas.

Consumers in the new 'landscape' will get a service from Citizens Advice, which they know and trust. We will not only help them solve their problem, but will work to ensure the same thing does not happen to others – and will invite people to join our campaign for change. We will report people's experiences to those who can take enforcement action, without passing anyone around or making them repeat themselves, and we will warn them about rip offs and scams. In short, the new consumer landscape represents a more effective and user-friendly system, with Citizens Advice as its heart.

If you have questions about Programme 2014 or our consumer advice and advocacy proposals please email: change@citizensadvice.org.uk.



Spot the scam

Scams and frauds cost people millions every year, causing misery and distress. People can lose their life savings, find themselves with crippling debts and experience mental health problems as a result.

The current economic climate has provided rogue traders with opportunities to make money out of desperate consumers trying to make ends meet.

Bureaux across England and Wales deal with an average of 1,631 consumer enquiries each working day.

The key problem areas in which CAB clients have been experiencing poor service or outright scams are looking for work, training or affordable accommodation; trying to cut their expenditure or increase returns from investments; looking for credit to make up the shortfall and to reduce their debt repayments.

The immediate future looks set to get worse before it gets better. Cuts in public spending and a gloomy economic forecast for the UK could simply encourage more scams.

To counteract this, we recently launched a survey asking which scams people feel we should prioritise action on. This campaign will build on the evidence in our latest report, *Desperate times, desperate consumers* – www.citizensadvice.org.uk/desperate_times_desperate_consumers, and

enable us to better protect clients and help them get a fair deal. Raising public awareness in this way will help people to avoid scams and to understand the different ways to report them.

The results of the survey will be analysed and fed back to bureaux to inform local campaign action. Developing partnerships with other consumer organisations such as Action Fraud, Consumer Direct, Trading Standards, the OFT and Consumer Focus will be key to the campaign, both at national and local level. This will allow us to establish new models for concerted local advocacy and campaigning on consumer issues.

> CASE STUDY

A CAB in the South West of England saw a Slovakian man who had limited English.

He had applied for a loan from an internet company. Instead of receiving the loan, his bank details appeared to have been passed around four different credit brokers who all took a fee.

He had not been able to convince his bank of the need to close his account in order to stop further losses and only achieved this with the bureau's help.

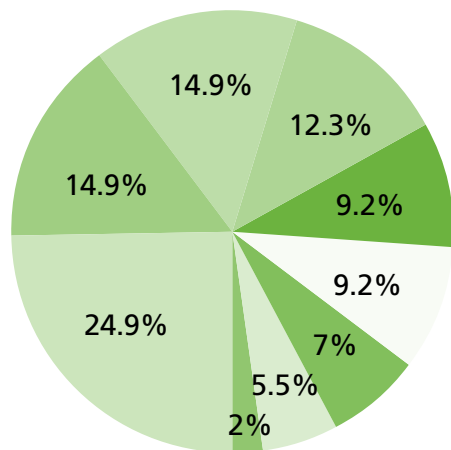
Helping people make the most of their money

Citizens Advice has been providing free Money Advice Sessions in Wales on behalf of the Money Advice Service since the Service was launched across the UK in April.

The Money Advice Service is an independent organisation helping everyone to understand and manage their money better.

In the first four months, 783 people have benefited from free money advice. Six bureaux across Wales delivered the sessions from 47 venues including bureaux, Jobcentre Plus offices, children's centres, Asda, T-Mobile and other community organisations.

The pie chart below shows a breakdown of money advice topics covered:



Budgeting 24.9%	Mortgages 9.2%
Credit 14.9%	Other 7%
Benefits 14.9%	Insurance 5.5%
Retirement 12.3%	Tax 2%
Savings 9.2%	

“Holding Money Advice Sessions in retail environments like T-Mobile and Asda means we are reaching a whole new group of clients. Over half the people we see have never used a CAB service before.”

Erika Helps, Chief Executive, Rhondda Taff CAB

Money Advice Sessions are tailored to individual needs and circumstances and can give people the information and confidence they need to make the financial decisions that are right for them.

The Money Advice Service is completely impartial and money advisers do not recommend or try to sell any financial products or services.

With bureaux having dealt with almost 2.3 million debt enquiries last year, we know the damaging effect debt can have on people's lives. Although not the same as debt advice, money advice has the potential to help people plan for a more financially secure future, lessening the risk of unmanageable debts at a later stage.

With initial funding for three years, bureau money advisers are targeting financially vulnerable people who are most likely to be adversely affected by poor financial decision-making.

As people's financial needs vary depending on their circumstances, we are keen to engage with people at different life stages, whether they have just left education or are approaching retirement.

Citizens Advice is now looking for partner organisations to work with across Wales to help us reach the people who need us most.

If you are interested in finding out more – from referring clients to hosting Money Advice Sessions at your premises – we'd like to hear from you.

Contact Katherine Adams
Service Delivery Manager
Email: MAS@citizensadvice.org.uk
Phone: 0292 037 6764.



Money Adviser Hilary Jones with a money advice client at Vale of Glamorgan CAB

Elsewhere across the UK, face-to-face sessions are delivered on behalf of the Money Advice Service by A4e in England and Northern Ireland and Citizens Advice Scotland in Scotland.

To make an appointment with a Money Adviser near you, contact:

- Wales – 0300 330 0520 or email: moneyadviser@citizensadvice.org.uk
- England – 0333 321 3434
- Scotland – 0808 800 0118
- Northern Ireland – 0333 321 2424.

In addition to the face-to-face sessions, the Money Advice Service also provides information and advice by phone and online:

www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk
0300 500 5000.



> CASE STUDY

Living in sheltered accommodation, John and his wife both get state retirement pension, housing and council tax benefit and John gets disability living allowance due to ill-health.

Struggling to manage financially and with worsening health conditions, they were no longer able to use public transport and had to use expensive local shops.

Their only debt was a credit card used for emergencies. Their repayments covered the interest charged but the outstanding balance of £800 was barely reducing.

The Money Adviser identified additional benefits they could claim and advised them to switch to a 0 per cent interest credit card.

The couple are now £139.35 a week better off – an increase of £7,246 a year and started reducing their credit card debt by switching.

The couple can now afford taxis to the supermarket, saving around £20 a week on food shopping. They have started saving and are planning to visit their daughter in France next year.

Come rain or shine

The first week of August means only one thing to Citizens Advice Cymru: Eisteddfod. For the uninitiated; that's eight long days in a field.

Nearly 150,000 people attended the 2011 Eisteddfod cultural festival: the huge, varied audience gives us the perfect opportunity to talk direct to the public, partners, funders and policy-makers about the Citizens Advice service.

Staffing the event involved a team of over 40 Citizens Advice service staff. Many of these are serial Eisteddfod team members. Their reward? Long days, hard work and lots of fun – in equal measure!

Monday's events focused on our benefit take-up work with a 'Use it or lose it' theme; encouraging people to check whether they are missing out on the £16 billion in means-tested benefits and tax credits that goes unclaimed each year. John Griffiths, Environment and Sustainability Minister also launched the Welsh Energy Best Deal online films, developed jointly by Citizens Advice and Ofgem.

Money wasn't growing on trees on Tuesday but Money Advice Sessions were available. Our free seeds attracted a steady stream of visitors; the branded packets ensuring people knew where to go for help in making informed choices on savings, pensions, mortgages and other financial matters.

Carwyn Jones, First Minister, returned on Wednesday to celebrate Adviceline Cymru's first birthday (see front cover photo), having launched our Wales-wide telephone service at last year's Eisteddfod. In the 12 months since then, call answering rates have more than doubled, making

Ruth Marks intervenes as Tedi Cyngor takes on Trading Standards' Cold Caller



the service more accessible to people in Wales than ever before.

Thursday's theme was Spot the scam where we asked the public to tell us which scams bother them the most. The results will help formulate future joint work with consumer agencies to tackle scams both locally and nationally.

Ruth Marks, the Older People's Commissioner (OPC) for Wales, joined us to sign an official partnership agreement with Citizens Advice Cymru to formalise our joint working in the future. As well as plans to hold a sector-wide conference for Wales in 2012 focusing on the advice, information and advocacy needs of older people, we will also be using our evidence to help OPC prioritise their services and guidance for older people in Wales.

Friday's focus was further partnership as we joined forces with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission Wales. Their report – *How Fair is Wales?* – provides independent evidence to measure progress towards equality, good relations and human rights. Visitors to the stand could post their views on how we can make Wales a fairer place.

On the remaining days, as well as helping people to navigate Adviceguide to find the answers they needed, we concentrated on promoting 'Amaze yourself': our volunteer recruitment campaign. Citizens Advice always needs high calibre, committed volunteers. At Eisteddfod 2011 our team promoted the CAB service to over 7,000 people, and if like attracts like, we can look forward to recruiting many more hard-working and enthusiastic volunteers.

Focusing on fairness

FOR ME FOR YOU FOR EVERYONE THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

At Citizens Advice tackling inequality, challenging discrimination and ensuring social justice for all underpins everything we do.

As our current equality and diversity strategy comes to an end this year, work is already underway to develop a new strategy outlining the service's equality and diversity work for 2012-15. A recent survey has sought the viewpoint of external stakeholders and members of the public, along with bureaux and staff.

Initial findings show that all respondents agree on the top three areas the Citizens Advice service should focus its future equality campaigns and policy issues on:

- The ongoing impact of cuts on equality groups and marginalised people such as lone parents, disabled people, BAME communities.
- Influencing government's and other policies that impact negatively on equality, human rights and social inclusion.
- Raising awareness of advice and support services for people who experience discrimination, hate or domestic abuse/gender violence.

When asked what would encourage members of the public and stakeholders to use the CAB service for information and advice on discrimination issues:

- 61 per cent said greater awareness of services
- 59 per cent wanted to hear more about our success stories
- 58 per cent wanted online information materials.

All responses will help to formulate our new strategy and shape what our equality and diversity priorities will be over the next four years.

Elsewhere across the service, bureaux are using new equality legislation as an opportunity to work closer still with their local authorities.

In April 2011, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) was extended by the Equality Act, 2010. This gives public authorities legal responsibilities to advance equality, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations.

As part of their role as lead agency for the Southwark Legal Advice Network, Southwark Citizens Advice Bureaux have been awarded a contract by Southwark Council to provide a 'critical friend' role and support the delivery and development of equalities and human rights issues in Southwark.

This includes the functions of policy and challenge; information and briefings to the voluntary and community sector; and consultation and partnership. In order to fulfil this role, the Forum for Human Rights and Equalities (FEHRS) was launched in January 2011. FEHRS is working with the council to develop the objectives for the council's Equality and diversity strategy, and will have a role in helping to monitor that these are met.

To date, a briefing on the PSED has been provided for community agencies, events to raise awareness of the rights of older people and carers have been held and the CAB has co-hosted a public meeting on the future of the taxi card scheme.

Future plans include working in partnership with Southwark Council to run an event on Anti Slavery day 18 October.

did you know?

Bureaux statistics

(April 2011 – June 2011)

In this quarter, we advised over **610,000** clients on over **1.6 million** new problems involving **1.3 million** contacts with clients (face-to-face, by phone, email or letter).

Percentage breakdown of bureaux enquiries:

32% debt problems

32% benefits/tax credits problems

8% employment problems

7% housing problems (excluding arrears)

6% consumer problems

Over the same period, there were **2.6 million** visitors to our self-help website –

Adviceguide.org.uk – who looked for information to help solve their problems themselves.

Percentage breakdown of total Adviceguide views:

8% debt problems

20% benefits/tax credits problems

21% employment problems

9% housing problems (excluding arrears)

12% consumer problems

Thousands left with nowhere to turn

We have recently published the first evidence that the impact of substantial cuts to bureaux funding is leaving thousands of people with nowhere to turn for help resolving serious and urgent problems.

In the first four months of this financial year (April to July 2011), bureaux across England and Wales recorded a seven per cent drop in the total number of people they were able to help compared with the same period last year. Cuts to bureau funding averaging ten per cent took effect from April.

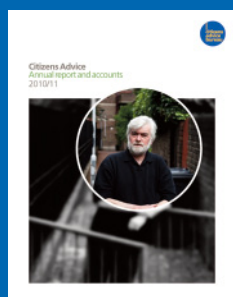
We know that the current economic climate is badly affecting people who are struggling to deal with job losses, reductions in public services and a massive jump in the cost of living. At a time when people need us more than ever, bureaux are having to make difficult decisions about how to cut back with the minimum impact on clients.

Access to early advice is vital to prevent problems escalating and necessitating costly and time-consuming solutions. As a volunteer-based service, we provide excellent value for money, saving public money in the long run.

Gillian Guy, Chief Executive, Citizens Advice, warned that there will be worse to come if planned changes to legal aid go ahead and funding for face-to-face debt advice ends.

Our priority is to protect frontline services so we can always be there when people need us and we are working hard to ensure that this continues to be the case.

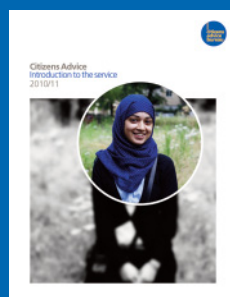
Now available online – www.citizensadvice.org.uk/publications



Annual report



Impact report



Introduction to the service



Social policy impact report