

We stand up for equality.

**citizens
advice**

**Stand up for equality
2015-20**

If not us, who? If not now, when?

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Foreword

At Citizens Advice we believe that our common humanity makes us equal in worth, dignity and rights. *Stand up for equality 2012–15* has guided us locally and nationally over the last three years, as we seek fully to live these principles of equality and diversity through our advice, our research and campaigns, and our relations with employees and volunteers.

Our challenge now is to be bolder still. *Stand up for equality 2015–20* is about us all – staff, volunteers and trustees – working together to be a stronger champion on equality. It is about achieving the breakthroughs and improvements in services that our clients need; and about using our clients' evidence and stories to contribute constructively to policy-making and debates.

It gives us space to embed the important work we began under our previous strategy. To follow through, for example, on developing our national British Sign Language and discrimination advice services; and on rolling out our ASK routine enquiry and equality leadership programmes.

Our equality strategy also enables us to scope, plan and begin delivery in new priority areas that will become increasingly important for clients in the next five years and beyond. These are: increasing client voice and influence; improving services for people with mental health problems; and promoting the fair treatment of migrants and community cohesion.

Stand up for equality calls on us to involve clients more effectively. This may feel like a challenge but – as members who already work in this way attest – it will bring more authentic solutions and huge rewards.

To achieve our aim and be a stronger champion on equality will require creativity, discipline and commitment from us all. As leaders we recognise our particular responsibilities to communicate why these issues are important, to set priorities and ensure they can be delivered. We stand up for equality. We hope you will too.



Gillian Guy
Chief Executive



Sir David Varney
Chair

Overview

We will be a stronger champion for equality by:

- Challenging discrimination through advice.
- Championing equality through research and campaigns.
- Valuing diversity as an employer and volunteer agency.

Work will be phased, and in phase 2 we will not cover all of the new strategic change priorities at once. The scope, extent and duration of activities for each strategic change priority will vary depending on need and resourcing. See our strategic change priorities, on page 7, for more information on specific activities.

Phase 1

Embed current equality priorities (Phase 1 priorities), including across witness, consumer and pensions services

Gender violence and abuse

Continue planned roll-out of ASK routine enquiry programme **2015–21**

Domestic abuse campaign **2015–16**

Discrimination advice

Complete Solutions for Equality and Growth project, identify ways to further its progressive equality agenda **2015–16**

Work with local Citizens Advice to develop and pilot performance quality framework (PQF) and equality leadership **2015–17**

Content revision of our online advice **2015–16**

Transform then deliver learning and development offer **2015–20**

National British Sign Language (BSL) strategy

Complete and evaluate regional pilot **2015–17**

Develop national service as part of overall channel strategy **2015–20**

Improve access

Support local Citizens Advice to improve access for Gypsy and Traveller communities, and hate reporting, using existing tools and resources. **2015–16**

People

Continue roll-out and further development of equality elements of People strategy **2015–20**

Phase 2a

Develop new strategic change priorities (phase 2 priorities):

- Increase client voice and influence.
- Improve services for people with mental health problems.
- Promote fair treatment of migrants and community cohesion.

Agree plan and timescale with national teams and services with input from local Citizens Advice.

Review consultation responses to questions about key activities.

Identify urgent fixes and quick wins and longer term initiatives.

Reflect activities in 2016/17 business plan.

by April 2016

Co-design tools and initiatives with local Citizens Advice and specialist partners.

Phased by priority, **from June 2016**

Phase 2b

Deliver phase 2 priorities

Test, pilot and scale underpinned by monitoring and evaluation.

Phased by priority, **from June 2017-20**

About Stand up for equality

Why have an equality strategy for the service?

Because equality is about and for us all.



Citizens Advice believes that our common humanity makes us equal in worth, dignity and rights. This is the definition of equality¹ we adopted in 2004 and it still holds true today.

To provide practical tools to respond to client needs and solve problems, without reinventing the wheel

Jim's benefits were sanctioned (reduced) for not going for a job in a refrigerated factory, even though Jobcentre Plus knew he had a long-term health condition that meant he couldn't work in cold environments. With the help of his local Citizens Advice, Jim got Jobcentre Plus to recognise their legal duty to make adjustments for his health condition. Jim got his money reinstated.

Inequality impacts on many Citizens Advice clients. Often this is linked to life events such as losing your job for having cancer, or for having a baby, or being refused service, or abused when growing older.

It also impacts on a significant proportion of clients on an ongoing basis, for example the continual struggle faced by many Deaf and disabled people to get public services to make the required adjustments to their services so they can use the services they are entitled to. As Jim's case above shows, the Equality Act's duty to make reasonable adjustments is one example of how advisers can use simple, powerful discrimination rights to make a real difference.

To drive continuous improvement in key areas

Equality, diversity and human rights are wide, complex and ever-developing subject areas. Many local Citizens Advice already do a fantastic job in key areas such as improving access for marginalised communities and bringing members of those communities into the service as staff and volunteers.

There are areas where improvement and support are needed. Citizens Advice cannot try to improve everything all at once, to be effective we need to focus.

This strategy will help us improve the service we provide our clients so that national and local Citizens Advice are confident to:

- give advice and campaign on the key equality issues that really matter to our clients
- understand how to work with marginalised groups we don't reach so well
- provide advice, develop services, and run campaigns in ways that empower clients.

To progress our one service strategy

Becoming a stronger champion for equality is one of five strategic objectives of the *One service strategy 2015–20*. *Stand up for equality* sets out what we will do to deliver on that objective.

¹ For more information on our approach to equality see section 6 – Key concepts.

Who is it for?

Staff, volunteers and trustees in local and national Citizens Advice, including the consumer, pensions and witness services. We all have a role to play to support the breakthroughs and improvements on equality that our clients need.

Leaders have particular responsibility to:

- Understand and communicate the issues and why they are important to the business.
- Set priorities, be clear about who is responsible for doing what at strategic and operational levels and monitor progress.
- Overcome blockages and celebrate successes.

How do I get involved?

Local Citizens Advice

The information, tools, models and resources for phase 1 strategic priorities are on our internal intranet (CABlink) and the equality business planning tool is on BMIS, our local management and government system. If you need help, or to sign-up for ASK routine enquiry, email equality@citizensadvice.org.uk

National teams and services

In addition to the above, the Equality Strategy team can help you identify priority activities for your business plan and advise on the use of EQUIPT, our equality impact and planning tool, that helps ensure you embed the right equality activities into initiatives, projects and daily business practice.

Local and national Citizens Advice

Information on getting involved in designing phase 2 priorities will be available in due course. To register your interest, become an Equality champion by emailing equality@citizensadvice.org.uk

Our aim

We will be a stronger champion for equality, we will achieve this by:

- challenging discrimination through advice
- championing equality through research and campaigns
- valuing diversity as an employer and volunteer agency.

One challenge that *Stand up for equality 2015–20* seeks to meet is to strike the right balance between continuity, on the one hand giving space and maintaining momentum to drive through what we started with our previous strategy. And on the other hand, moving forward on priorities that have emerged from external socio, economic and political changes and those that will emerge in the next five years.

We have tried to strike the balance between being clear about what we will do, where that is known and leaving room to shape, at the appropriate time, sub-priorities and work programmes through co-design initiatives and partnerships.



Strategic change priorities

Phase 1. Gender violence and abuse

A client in her 80s sought help for money problems from her local Citizens Advice. It eventually emerged that she had endured a lifetime of emotional and physical abuse from her husband, resulting in numerous hospitalisations and having a kidney removed. She had never told anyone about the abuse.

ASK routine enquiry gives clients the opportunity to get help for abuse at an early stage. It works by building gender abuse, in an appropriate way, into the natural flow of the advice process. Clients who disclose abuse are given information and advice about their options and can be referred to local and national specialists where appropriate.

In April 2014, the Trustee Board approved the national roll-out of ASK routine enquiry, following a successful pilot. We completed the early adopter phase in August 2015 and to date, routine enquiry has enabled between 24–27% of clients to disclose domestic abuse and other forms of gender violence and abuse.

Key outcomes:

- All clients² are enabled to get help for gender abuse at an early stage.
- We know when clients' experience of gender violence and abuse is relevant to their enquiries and so provide better advice.
- The data gathered provides nationally robust evidence of incidence rates.
- Staff and volunteer survivors are able to access appropriate support.

Key activities:

- The roll-out of ASK routine enquiry will continue to be developed with local Citizens Advice and specialist partners through a phased programme to 2021.
- We will co-design new aspects of ASK routine enquiry, such as its use by phone and develop its role in other major areas of service delivery such as the Witness Service, Pension Wise and major funded programmes.
- This will be supplemented by the Citizens Advice Domestic Abuse campaign and further national policy developments in gender violence abuse and domestic violence abuse in England and Wales.

² Where safe, for example in face-to-face advice where the client is on their own.

Discrimination advice

More than 1 in 3 people will get cancer and more than 1 in 3 who return to work after cancer treatment say they experience some kind of discrimination from their employer or colleagues.³

Discrimination became a core advice topic at generalist level in 2005 following extensive consultation with the service. It is an ongoing challenge to build and maintain the skills and confidence of the whole network to provide the help clients need. There are key problem areas such as welfare, debt and consumer rights, where generalist advisers can use discrimination advice to make a real difference for clients.

The availability of specialist discrimination caseworkers was hit by cuts in legal aid and the Equality and Human Rights Commission funding. However, Welsh Government currently funds specialist caseworkers in local Citizens Advice in Wales and a number of specialist caseworkers remain in local Citizens Advice and Law Centres in England. Legal help is available for discrimination by telephone and clients can be referred to the Equality Advisory Support Service.

Key outcomes:

- We give advice on discrimination rights to help solve clients' welfare, debt, benefits, consumer and employment problems.
- Research and campaigns identify and address significant impacts of policy proposals as they affect equality, both on the basis of the characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 (race, sexual orientation, etc.) and on the basis of the broader Citizens Advice definition of equality (including socio-economic status, rural deprivation etc. see page 16 for more details).

When I told my employer that I'd been diagnosed with cancer and asked to have time off for treatment, I was given the sack. They said they couldn't employ someone who was not 100% committed. It was a shock as I had a very successful career, and a fulfilling life.

Key activities:

- Develop, test and roll-out equality leadership performance measures that will drive improvements in discrimination advice and provide the support to enable it.
- Improve our advice content across our website focusing on the most important areas for our clients so that it is easier for advisers and the public to use discrimination advice to solve their problems.
- Transform our discrimination advice learning and development offer.
- Roll-out legacy from the Solution for Equality and Growth project's new ways of working with employees and small and medium enterprises to overcome workplace barriers. Identify ways to further its progressive equality agenda.
- Continue to seek funding for more specialist advice and casework.

³ Macmillan Cancer Support, 2013.

British Sign Language

Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users are a relatively small community, however, they experience chronic social exclusion and worse life outcomes on many indicators due to disadvantage and discrimination. Access to information, advice and services is severely limited. This includes digital information, as for many profoundly Deaf people BSL is their first language and their understanding of written and oral English is limited.

We have been working closely with Deaf communities since 2012 to identify the best ways to meet their advice needs. The solution preferred by Deaf BSL users is advice directly in BSL provided by Deaf advisers, either face-to-face or via secure webcam. This is also the most cost effective model.

Key outcomes:

- A sustainable service for Deaf clients who use BSL, provided primarily in BSL by Deaf advisers.
- Research and campaigns that identify and address key impacts on Deaf communities.
- Citizens Advice staff and volunteers are Deaf aware.

Key activities:

- Continue pilot of Beyond Barriers with BSL, a regional pilot with local Citizens Advice in the Midlands, testing training and service provision. If successful the model could be replicated nationally as part of our overall channel strategy.
- The pilot will help identify any adaptations to our national and local infrastructure mechanisms needed to support the provision of advice in BSL, for example technology, information systems and learning and development offered.
- Local and national teams and services can embed good practice using the Deaf awareness tools, guidance and service provision models on CABlink.

Improve access to hate reporting and access for Gypsies and Travellers

The main focus for our Citizens Advice network is to continue to embed what they have begun, using the operating models, case studies, guidance and e-learning available on CABlink.

- At minimum all local Citizens Advice should be able to operate as level one hate reporting centres (see model on CABlink).
- All local Citizens Advice should have used the *Getting Started Pack* to review their work with Gypsies and Travellers.
- National teams and services, including Witness, Learning and Development, and Research and Campaigns should use EQUIPT to identify key issues on these topics and build them into work as relevant.

People

To fulfill our aim of valuing diversity as an employer and volunteer agency during *Stand up for equality 2012-15*, we embedded a strategic approach to developing equality leadership skills and diversity management across the People strategy. This aim will continue to be important throughout the lifetime of this equality strategy.

The work will continue to include a combination of specific initiatives, such as the Equality Leadership programme, positive action and support for our Self-Organised Network Groups and the inclusion of equality within generic initiatives such as induction and mentoring programmes.

This involves supporting staff to understand and deliver on the equality aspects of their day-to-day role. For example building business focused equality tasks into all new role profiles and increasing capacity to use EQUIPT, our equality impact and planning tool, when planning work.

Phase 2 priorities

Phase 2 priorities were chosen, through consultation with the network, based on the following criteria:

- There is an opportunity to address major inequality and detriment.
- Detriment may relate to the numbers of people affected or the severity of the detriment or both.
- Local Citizens Advice want coordinated support from peers, Citizens Advice and partners.
- There is need for a national approach in both England and Wales.
- It is something the service can and should do, including through partnerships.
- The issue will be significant over the five years of the strategy.


The strategy includes key objectives and activities for the phase 2 priorities based on the consultation input. We will carry out further scoping and develop a work programme for the phase 2 priorities. The key objectives and activities will be reviewed and refined at regular intervals throughout the lifetime of the strategy so they can adapt to changing needs.

Activities will include co-design and peer learning within our Citizens Advice network. Wherever possible we will use or refresh good practice tools, training and materials that already exist in the network, making them applicable and available nationally.

Empowering clients to have more voice and influence

Empowering clients to have more voice and influence, to have control in their lives and to have more agency, for instance to act to achieve a specific outcome and is central to keeping clients at the heart of everything we do. That's because clients can only be at the heart of what we do if we see them and involve them as a key part of the solution.

'The voice of clients is vital in influencing change'⁴



Human rights provide the legal and conceptual frameworks that establish and protect all people's fundamental equality in terms of worth, rights and dignity. They underpin our clients' rights to have voice, influence, control and agency in their lives. For more information on our human rights approach see page 18.

Empowerment is an essential element in tackling inequality because people and groups who experience inequality are likely to have less voice and influence therefore, lack of voice and influence contributes to inequality.

Supporting clients to have voice and influence is also becoming increasingly important in the public policy arena, such as the NHS empowerment agenda which aims to put the patient at the heart of decision-making and the localism agenda.

There are a number of ways that clients already have input to Citizens Advice's work, commonly through feedback and research surveys. We need to deepen our understanding of what empowerment, engagement and involvement mean in practice both for how we work and for influencing public policy and develop tools to help us be ever more effective.

⁴ Response to consultation on *Stand Up for Equality 2015-20*

Definition

Empowering clients to have more voice and influence means working with clients in ways that respect their fundamental human dignity while using a range of methods to:

- build on clients' skills, resources and coping strategies in the advice process
- support clients to take action themselves where possible to resolve their problems, influence policy and improve public services
- involve clients in the development of, and as active agents or participants in, research and campaigns
- use client stories, and have clients speak directly with policy makers, to influence change
- help clients have more input to the design, delivery and governance of Citizens Advice services and public services

Where we say clients, this includes the broader public where appropriate, for example canvassing the views of people who don't use our services as well as those who do and public engagement in campaigns. It also includes working with user led organisations.

Note that in this context, increasing client voice and influence is not about peer-to-peer support.

Key outcomes:

- We improve our understanding of what increasing voice and agency, involvement and engagement mean in practice, and develop a range of suitable methodologies.
- Clients are supported through advice and tools to act on their own behalf where possible.
- Increased client involvement in the design and delivery of research and campaigns.
- Increased client involvement in the design, delivery and governance of Citizens Advice services.

Key activities:

- Work with local and national teams and services and partners to develop a programme of work, to produce a suite of tools, training and peer learning to both support:
 - continuous improvement within the national and local organisations
 - help local Citizens Advice respond flexibly to their local equality priorities. These could for example be the needs of young people or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans communities, rural deprivation, or strengthening work with Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees to challenge discrimination and lack of service provision in key areas.
- Develop national research and campaigns on citizenship and democracy, addressing key voice and influence issues as they arise. Such as enabling clients to get public services to work better for them, responding to proposed changes to the Human Rights Act based on an understanding of the impact on clients, through client evidence and stories.

Improving public and Citizens Advice services for people with mental health problems

People with mental health problems have long been an important client group for Citizens Advice and overall we have a strong record in supporting them. However, local Citizens Advice report that this should now be addressed nationally. The combined effects of legislative changes, the recession and spending cuts are having significant impacts on people with mental health problems and the public services they used to be able to rely on, as well as on Citizens Advice. The impacts are on clients who might have coped in the past, are no longer able to, but are not 'ill enough' to qualify for services and on the increasing numbers of people presenting with more severe forms of illness.

Definition

In using the term people with 'mental health problems' we include the full range of issues including 'low mood' and self-reported problems as well as those with a clinical diagnosis. It covers both community and hospital settings.

For clarity, it does not include people with learning disabilities or learning difficulties such as Down's syndrome or dyspraxia, unless they also have a mental health condition such as depression or psychosis. It similarly does not include drug and alcohol use unless connected to mental illness.

Key outcomes:

- Staff and volunteers feel more confident in supporting clients with mental health problems.
- Research and campaigns identify and address key impacts on mental health.
- Staff and volunteers with mental health problems are able to access appropriate support.

Key activities:

- Work with local and national teams and services and partners to develop a programme of work.
- Provide training and support to build staff and volunteer confidence and capability, including in working with people with severe mental health problems.
- Practical targeted resources to support advice on key areas for people with mental health problems, for example how to complete personal independence payments (PIP) forms to cover mental health.
- Promote the benefits of good advice on mental health and strengthen links between statutory health organisations, voluntary sector mental health organisations and Citizens Advice at local and national levels.
- Understand and support the mental health impact of advice work on employees and volunteers, improve people processes to promote good mental health.

Promoting fair treatment of migrant communities and community cohesion

A pregnant woman was advised by her midwife to give up one of her two jobs. She did this not realising it would end her employment status. She is now destitute and her only option is to go back to Portugal even though she is Somali and speaks no Portuguese.

47% of respondents to the Network Panel survey⁵ had observed migrants being treated unfairly by the benefits agency and 40% by landlords.

Citizens Advice is in a unique position to identify and monitor the impacts of policy changes on our clients from migrant communities, to provide practical advice and support and where necessary to challenge unfair treatment across a range of advice areas such as benefits, health, housing, access to justice and employment.

Local Citizens Advice have reported on the severity of detriment being experienced, for example by people who lose their employment status and become destitute, making them and their families vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and by women in some communities disproportionately affected by the genuine prospect of work rules.

We are also well placed to monitor wider societal impacts and to play our part in promoting good community relations, for example through influencing local policy and inclusive staff and volunteer recruitment.

Definition

The issue is how people are treated, because of their real or perceived status as a migrant, the impact this has on them and the broader impacts on society and community cohesion.

Our definition of migrant communities is therefore broad. It includes:

- old and new migrant communities and seasonal workers
- people who have legal and illegal status
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people who aren't migrants but who are facing related hostility, discrimination or unfair treatment. This may be because they are perceived as being or possibly being migrants, or it may be a mask for racial discrimination. For example, people with non-British sounding names facing undue scrutiny from banks, letting agencies and government agencies.
- English community members who identify as migrants in Wales.

As residence test rules develop, it may increasingly include British citizens returning from living abroad facing reduced access to welfare benefits, legal aid or free medical treatment.

Our definition of community cohesion includes relations between majority and minority communities and/or relations between minority communities, as relevant in the local area.

⁵ Citizens Advice Network Panel survey, May 2015, 344 responses.

Key outcomes:

- Frontline staff are equipped to advise people from migrant communities and those facing related discrimination or unfair treatment.
- Migrant communities see Citizens Advice as a source of independent advice and support.
- We build and use an evidence base to inform policy making and public debate.

Key activities:

- Work with local and national teams and services and partners to develop a programme of work.
- Develop training and good practice resources for the frontline, including on what to do when there seems to be no solution.
- Support peer learning between the Citizens Advice network.
- Monitor impacts and inform government about unintended consequences of policy changes on individuals and on wider society.
- Identify opportunities to work with the Welsh Government and to contribute positively to the UK debate about migrant communities' place in society.
- Support the involvement of people from migrant communities as volunteers, paid staff and trustees.

Implementation

Timeline

See overview on page 2.

Implementation model

Each strategic priority will have three dimensions:

- Advice, covering advice content and skills and access to advice.
- Research and campaigns, national and/or local.
- Internal, covering People, trustees, volunteers and staff, or service improvement in the Citizens Advice network.

This is reflected in the key outcomes and activities listed for the strategic change priorities in the previous section.

We will use the following development model, adapting as necessary.



Key concepts

To implement *Stand up for equality 2015–20* we need to work with the key concepts that underpin our work on equality. This is important because it's not what you do, it's how you do it. The concepts are:

- Equality.
- Mainstreaming.
- Social model of disability.
- Human rights approach.

This section also contains information about our commitment to act within the spirit of the Public Sector Equality Duty.



Equality

There are many ways of thinking about equality.

For example, from the 1980s until 2010 different groups of people were protected under different laws from different types of discrimination and some were not protected at all. This is what we might call the equalities approach and is now out of date.

Since the Equality Act 2010, everyone has been protected against discrimination because of five characteristics we all have (our race, sexual orientation, sex, age, and religion or belief, or absence of) in a wide range of circumstances. People are also protected because of disability (including mental health), gender reassignment, marital/civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity.

The Citizens Advice service approach goes beyond both of these. In 2004 the Citizens Advice service adopted the following definition of equality, based on Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: **Our common humanity makes us equal in worth, dignity and rights.**

The key things about this, is that it includes us all and is not about specific equalities groups. It covers disadvantage that's not just about the characteristics or circumstances covered by the Equality Act 2010, so it includes those facing disadvantage due to social exclusion, poverty, rural isolation, class and being a prisoner.

Finally, because ours is a human rights based approach to equality, it also puts an emphasis on the empowerment and engagement of those with direct experience of the issues.

Mainstreaming

At its heart mainstreaming is about incorporating equality into all actions, programmes and policies from the outset⁶. It's about thinking about and planning equality into what we do from the start.

To make mainstreaming effective we need to think about doing things so that people can see both the equality picture and how equality fits within the wider activity:

- If equality is only embedded throughout other work, it becomes buried, hard to see and harder still to implement. There needs to be a place in addition to, not instead of, the embedded references where people can get the overall picture.
- If equality is only ever dealt with separately, that also causes problems. It can be too difficult to make the connection between the equality aspects of the work and the rest of the work. Again the solution is to do both, making links across so there is no duplication.

Effective mainstreaming does sometimes mean having specific or separate equality activity, particularly where there's a need for particular focus or effort to achieve aims or change. However, it is important that the specific or separate activity also connects back in appropriate timely ways to the wider business so that it does not end up as an add-on.

To mainstream advice on gender violence and abuse for example, we developed ASK routine enquiry (ASK RE) as a specific pilot and programme with its own identity. This was so it would be visible and people could understand and relate to it. It was also so we could provide the management and operational focus needed. Had we instead made it part of day-to-day business or of a much bigger corporate initiative, it would have been lost and would have been too minor an element to get the attention it needed. Crucially, however, we also made the links back to our core work, both by building ASK RE into the natural flow of an advice interview and testing how ASK RE would work for the new advice model during the model's initial development.

⁶ Rees, 1998.

What makes mainstreaming work is:

- A dual track approach, which means using a mix of specific and embedded equality activity.
- Leaders setting direction and driving the work.
- Visibility, transparency and accountability.
- A specialist equality unit to drive, coordinate and support activity, and provide expertise.
- Systematic and proportionate delivery throughout the organisation, including corporate decision making and processes like business planning.
- Using diversity monitoring and client insight to shape what we do.
- Involvement of clients, staff, volunteers and Self-Organised Network Groups.
- Staff training and development.
- Using positive action and procurement to make change happen.
- Using equality frameworks and standards so we know how we're doing.
- Celebrating diversity.

Social model of disability

Disabled people developed the social model of disability. It says that disabled people are disabled not by their impairments but by the physical, institutional and attitudinal barriers in society. Disabled people aren't the problem, the barriers are the problem. These barriers can be removed.

The social model liberates us all from out dated and unhelpful stereotypes and approaches.

It is important for Citizens Advice because how we define the problem of disability influences what we do about it. This social model helps:

- us relate more effectively to disabled clients
- design better advice and campaign solutions affecting disabled people
- disabled and non-disabled colleagues relate better to each other.

Human rights approach

Our human rights come from our common humanity. We all rely on our human rights everyday, even when we don't realise it.

Our human rights approach is about:

- applying human rights in beneficial ways to everyday situations with clients and colleagues and in our work with public authorities
- respecting people's dignity and rights in all we do
- empowering people to build on their own strengths and resolve problems themselves wherever possible
- involving people with direct experience of the issues in all key stages of our work, the 'nothing about us without us' philosophy.

Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public bodies to have due regard for how they can advance equality, eliminate discrimination and promote good relations at all levels of their decision making and activity. National and local Citizens Advice are independent charities, not public bodies, so are not bound by the PSED⁷. However, at national level, Citizens Advice has committed to act within the spirit of the Public Sector Equality Duty. The PSED provides a helpful framework, which we follow for example through setting equality objectives, the strategic change priorities in this strategy and the use of equality impact assessments, modified to fit our business need.

Local Citizens Advice are encouraged to follow these principles, to the extent that they support business need and continuous improvement.

⁷ In very limited circumstances, such as some aspects of Healthwatch, some services provided by Citizens Advice may entail formal responsibilities under the PSED. Guidance is on BMIS.



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