



Prescribing advice

A pathway to health

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**GPs believe access to advice can have
a positive effect on patients' health.**
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**Health services should ensure that
advice on legal, money and other issues
is widely available and accessible to all.**
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Many NHS commissioners and charities recognise the value of prescribing advice.

At present, Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) provide advice in 712 different health settings: 605 GP surgeries, 78 hospitals or hospices and 29 mental health day centres or groups.



Many of life's problems are bound-up with our health and well being.

Illness and disability can cause people to experience financial difficulties, whilst problems at home or at work can make us feel stressed or depressed.

As a service that provides people with the advice they need for the problems they face, Citizens Advice can act as a pathway to better health. By helping people to deal with problems such as poverty or poor housing, or by connecting people to the right services and support, our bureaux can put people on the road to better health.



Citizens Advice can also help tackle the health inequalities that blight our communities.

Each year we reach almost one in every five people who is living on a low income in England and Wales .

We call for MPs to encourage local health commissioners to work with Citizens Advice Bureaux to improve the health of their communities.

Life's problems impact our health and wellbeing...

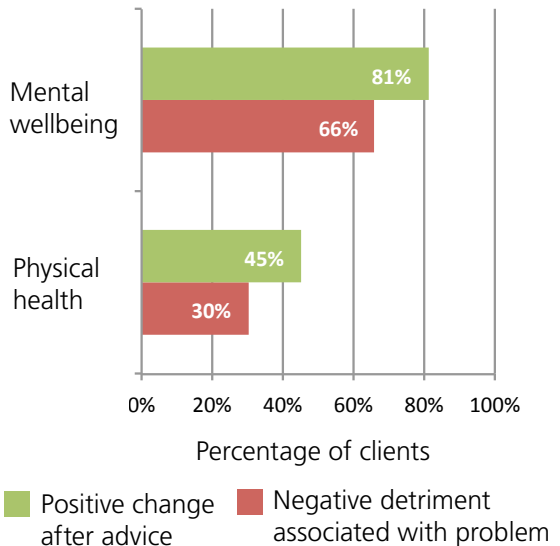
The link between indebtedness and mental health is well understood^(1,2,3), however strong links exist for other problems, with mental illness reported twice as often for people experiencing social welfare issues than not⁽⁴⁾ and with 2 in 3 of all CAB clients reporting their problem had negatively impacted upon their mental wellbeing⁽⁵⁾.

...but advice can help to improve health and wellbeing

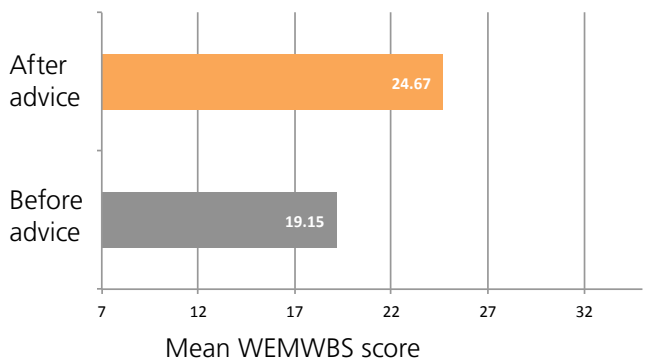
Advice leads to significant health improvements for our clients. After receiving advice from a CAB 81% of clients reported they felt less stressed, depressed or anxious and 45% reported improvements to their physical health.⁽⁶⁾

This resonates with GPs, 94% of who think access to advice on social welfare issues can have a positive effect on patients' health.⁽⁶⁾

We have also measured our clients' mental wellbeing using an NHS validated scale⁽⁷⁾. Before advice the average wellbeing score of CAB clients was well below the UK average. Encouragingly, after advice, the average score was improved and closer to the population average⁽⁸⁾.



Change in average wellbeing scores after advice



General Practitioners agree that advice is needed to help resolve their patients' problems.

In a recent survey commissioned by the Legal Action Group of GPs:



of respondents said they felt the need for advice on welfare and benefit issues amongst their patients had increased.



of GPs think that a patient not having access to advice on social welfare issues can have a negative effect on their health (for example causing stress, anxiety, hospitalisation or other medical intervention) with 48% reporting this affects patients' health to a great extent.

Dr Andrew is a local GP, supporter of the CAB GP project:

"For GPs, it's about having a joined up-service for patients when they come in to the surgery. Maybe they have low level mental health problems, tied up with financial or housing issues. And I can say: 'I understand why you're depressed'. 'How about some practical advice and you can make an appointment for that, here in the surgery?' It's popular with patients because it's accessible."



Derbyshire CAB case study

Providing advice services in healthcare settings represents excellent value for money.

Advice services in GP surgeries have been operating across Derbyshire for nearly 20 years with support from the commissioning Public Health team. Presently the service operates in 94 of the 102 GP surgeries in Derbyshire.

In 2012/13 the bureau saw 6,226 clients and dealt with 30,528 problems, achieving financial gains of £9,024,744 for their clients. Every £1.00 invested by the commissioning bodies secures £12.00 of additional income for clients and £8.00 of debt managed, meaning debt is either renegotiated or rescheduled.

A recent Government paper shows that debt management interventions commissioned through health settings have positive outcomes and lower costs to society including to the NHS. For every pound invested, there is a return to society of £3.55.



Client case study

Dawn is a single mother who until recently worked as a night club bouncer. In October of last year she was served with an eviction notice from her privately rented flat. A long delay finding alternative housing and a leak in temporary storage meant she lost most of her belongings. Dawn fell behind with the rent on her new place. This, along with other debts that her ex-husband had left her with, totalled £5,000 and caused Dawn to develop depression. The council's rent officer referred her to Citizens Advice and she received a phone call from her local bureau the next day. She had four appointments over the coming weeks where her adviser helped her go through the process of applying for a debt relief order (DRO).



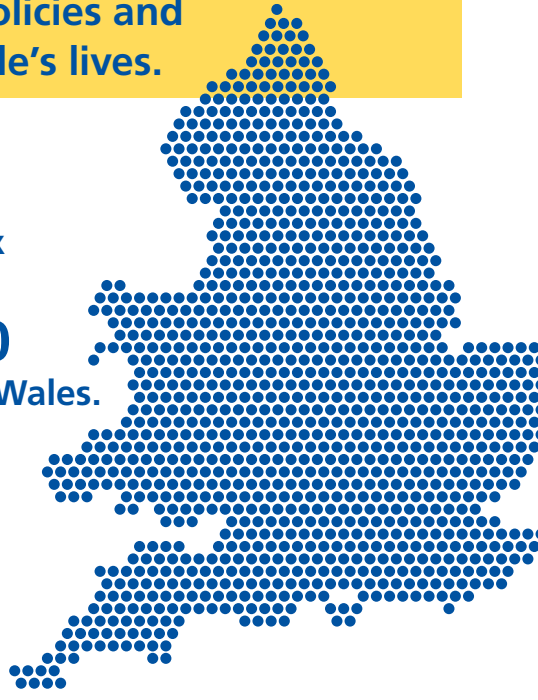
Dawn is now debt free and able to move forward

Dawn said:

“The help I received was absolutely amazing and I cannot thank Citizens Advice staff enough for helping sort everything out. I felt I had nowhere to turn to for advice at a very difficult time. I’m now rebuilding my life and hope I can go back to work soon.”

Citizens Advice makes society fairer by providing the advice people need for the problems they face and improving the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

340 Citizens Advice Bureaux provide free, confidential and impartial advice from **3,300** locations across England and Wales.



Last year...



Our bureaux helped two million people with 5.5 million problems



Our consumer service answered 1.2 million calls



16 million people visited our website for advice

Our aims

- To provide the advice people need for the problems they face.
- To improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

Our principles

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.

Useful contacts

For advice on a wide range of problems and information about contacting your local Citizens Advice Bureau visit:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

@citizensadvice

emily.jeffrey@citizensadvice.org.uk

For advice, help and information about health and accessing health services visit NHS Choices:

www.nhs.uk

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

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