**AIMS AND PRINCIPLES**

**The twin aims of the CAB service are**:

To ensure that individuals do not suffer through lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, or of the services available to them, or through an inability to express their need effectively.

And equally:

To exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services, both locally and nationally.

The two aims are complementary. By providing an advice service, bureaux (Citizens Advice Bureaux) deal with clients’ problems on an individual, day-to-day-basis feeding back information to the bodies responsible for policy making. The CAB endeavours to prevent problems from recurring and similar problems from arising.

**The Twelve Principles**

What are the principles?

1. A FREE SERVICE

Citizens Advice Bureaux provide information, advice, assistance and representation services to clients. These services are free at the point of delivery. The Citizens Advice Bureau service will not withhold services from clients even if it is believed that they would be able to pay for help from an alternative source. All advertising about services must clearly demonstrate they are free. This is to ensure that members of the public are not discouraged from seeking assistance for fear of incurring expense.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

Citizens Advice Bureaux provide a confidential service to clients. Nothing learned from clients, including the fact of their visits, will be passed on to anyone else outside the service without the client’s express permission. It is a function of the Citizens Advice Bureau service to exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies concerning matters which have been brought to light in the course of assisting clients. However, no details will be made public which might enable a client to be identified unless prior consent has been given.

3. IMPARTIALITY

The service provided by Citizens Advice Bureaux is impartial: it is open to all, without any subjective regard for whether or not the client is deserving. Information, advice and assistance will be given on any subject no matter how unpopular or unpalatable. Information will be provided solely on the basis of its potential usefulness to the client, and will not be selected to conform to any particular point of view. Representations made on behalf of clients will faithfully attempt to express the clients own intentions and point of view.

4. INDEPENDENCE

A Citizens Advice Bureau is an independent, charitable organisation. This independence enables Bureaux to offer, and be seen to offer, impartial advice to all clients, and to take up any issue with any appropriate agency on behalf of individuals or groups. The policies and practices of the Citizens Advice Bureau service are decided solely by its members. No other individual or agency, even one giving financial support or other aid to bureaux, has any right to determine these policies or practices.

5. ACCESSIBILITY

Citizens Advice Bureaux aim to make advice services accessible to all by using premises which are centrally and/or appropriately located, easy to enter, welcoming in appearance and open at times suited to local demand. Each bureau will actively recruit a variety of voluntary workers from the area served by the bureau who are capable of gaining the confidence of the bureau’s clients. Each Citizens Advice Bureau will publicise the service it offers, especially in areas where the service is apparently under-used, and to particular groups of potential clients making little use of the service. The Citizens Advice Bureau service will seek to extend its services to those for whom the service is presently inaccessible.

6. EFFECTIVENESS

Citizens Advice Bureaux judge the effectiveness of their service by the extent to which they meet the needs of their clients. This is measured by the extent to which clients are helped to clarify problems and concerns, the accuracy and completeness of any information provided, the usefulness of any advice, and the appropriateness and qualify of any assistance provided to enable clients to carry out the course of action chosen. An effective Citizens Advice Bureau service depends on the way in which a bureau makes use of its most valuable resource – its voluntary staff – and the efficiency of its administrative systems.

7. COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY

Citizens Advice Scotland is an Association of autonomous member Citizens Advice Bureau, each democratically accountable to the community which it serves. A bureau’s autonomy is only qualified by the conditions it must accept to retain membership of the Association. At least two thirds of the places on a bureau committee of management should consist of persons elected by the local public at the Annual General Meeting, or nominated by relevant local bodies, including bodies giving financial support, organisations working in related fields, and bodies representing potential clients. A bureau’s constitution must also provide for the manager and a number of representative Bureau workers to be on the committee of management.

8. THE CLIENT’S RIGHT TO DECIDE

Citizens Advice Bureaux recognise that those who use the service have a right to set their own objectives and to decide whether or not to accept the advice and assistance offered to them. Citizens Advice Bureaux seek to avoid making assumptions about their client’s objectives. The Citizens Advice Bureau service tries to identify all the options available to clients and to present these options fairly so that the clients can make their own decision without any pressure.

9. A VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Each Citizens Advice Bureau operates on the principle that first and foremost it is a voluntary service offering advice and assistance provided by individuals serving their communities in an unpaid capacity. It is also an essential complement to advice from statutory and other agencies. The Association advocates the employment of paid support staff within its member Bureaux in order to maximise the contribution and effectiveness of the voluntary workers.

10. EMPOWERMENT

Citizens Advice Bureau seek to assist clients to help themselves. The Citizens Advice Bureau service helps clients to understand their situation, decide which course of action to adopt, and to take steps themselves to tackle their problems. It is the aim of the Citizens Advice Bureau service that each client should have the experience and satisfaction of successful self-help.

11. INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

The social policy aim of the Citizens Advice Bureau service is to exercise a responsible influence on the development of policies and services affecting the local community and on a national scale. This Aim does not conflict with the treating of each enquiry as a priority nor with the principles of Confidentiality and the client’s Right to Decide. The Association depends on information retrieval from member bureaux when presenting Social Policy issues to the media and, in particular, to Central Government.

12. A GENERALIST SERVICE

Citizens Advice Bureaux provide information and advice on all matters. This breadth of service enables Citizens Advice Bureaux uniquely to deal successfully with problems, or groups of problems, which do not fit within the remits of other sources of assistance. As a generalist service, Citizens Advice Bureaux are committed and have the information system to provide in depth advice on a wide range of issues.