

Citizens Advice Scotland  
Annual Report 2004/05



Advice that makes a difference!



## The CAB Service aims

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

*And equally:*

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

The CAB Service is independent and provides free, confidential and impartial advice to everybody regardless of race, sex, disability or sexuality.

## The 12 principles of CAB Service membership:

- a free service
- confidentiality
- impartiality
- independence
- accessibility
- effectiveness
- community accountability
- the client's right to decide
- a voluntary service
- empowerment
- information retrieval
- a generalist service

# Chair's foreword

My first year as chair of Citizens Advice Scotland has been a huge learning experience for me. I thought I knew quite a bit – about CAS and the CAB service – but, as I've discovered, "I didnae ken the half o' it".

Most of what I've discovered has been hugely impressive, in terms of the professionalism delivered by staff and volunteers. My colleagues on the board have made meetings easy to chair (maybe I shouldn't say that, in case they try new tactics).

I've enjoyed working with them, with the chief executive, Kaliani, and with other CAS staff, and I've managed to get a bit more insight into what's happening across the service by attending quite a few bureaux agms.

The common thread I've seen in this year of 'Make Poverty History' is of staff and volunteers (from those I presented with long service certificates, to asylum seekers in Maryhill) playing their parts in doing just that.

If there are still frustrations that poverty remains for too many folk in our communities, we should also recognise - with some pride - that the CAB service is are making a real difference in many people's lives.

It has been good to feel part of that in 2004/05.



**Graham K Blount,**  
Chair, Citizens Advice Scotland

# Chief Executive's introduction



**Kaliani Lyle,**  
Chief executive,  
Citizens Advice Scotland

2

2004/05 has been another very busy year for Citizens Advice Scotland and one in which I believe we have made further important steps in enhancing the wider CAB service in Scotland.

We completed the first round of membership audits for all bureaux while CAS, itself, retained its Investors in People status. We launched our new intranet, a major tool in improving communication and efficiency across the service, while thoroughly revamping our public website.

We continue to make progress in ensuring that free, independent, high quality advice and information is available to people throughout Scotland. And we continue to play an influential role in helping to inform and shape social policy and legislation, based on the case-evidence that our member bureaux return to us.

CAS remains determined to help position the CAB service as a vital and relevant part of 21st century Scotland. I hope this report will illustrate what we have done to realise this in 2004/05.



## Key achievements in 2004/05

- Motion tabled in the Scottish Parliament unanimously praising the work of Scotland's Citizens Advice Bureaux service.
- Completion of the first round of CAB audits under our new membership scheme.
- Citizens Advice Rights Fife becomes full member of Citizens Advice Scotland.
- Launch of Citizens Advice Direct 'call centre' facility in Glasgow.
- Launch of the CAS intranet enabling CAB service workers to communicate and interact more quickly and efficiently.
- Launch of a revamped and more accessible CAS public website, with more pages visited and more volunteer applications received online.
- Broadband connections installed in Citizens Advice Bureaux.
- Launch of four In-Court Advice Projects making advice available inside sheriff courts.
- Launch of Financial Education Projects by seven Citizens Advice Bureaux.
- CAB service voted 'most helpful organisation' by readers of *Prima* magazine.



Scotland's Citizens Advice Bureau service, of which Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) is the umbrella body, exists to offer free, independent and impartial advice to the public on a wide range of topics - advice that is accessible to everybody.

4

Each CAB is an individual charity in its own right and around 85 per cent of CAB workers are trained volunteers. The 77 CAB offices in Scotland offer advice and information from over 200 service points, from Shetland to the Borders. Advice is also available online.

Everything that CAS does is designed to benefit the clients who come to bureaux, through helping each CAB improve the service that they offer to clients and through our impact on social policy.

Small, expert teams work on membership standards, information used in advice-giving, training for CAB staff and volunteers, ICT systems and support, social policy work (including liaison with both parliaments), maintaining the CAB service media profile and providing marketing support.

Our work in 2004/05 centred around five over-arching themes. These define our strategic direction and form the framework for activity for the period:

- A vision for the delivery of advice to the people in Scotland
- Service accessible across Scotland in different ways
- A quality service to bureaux
- Making a difference to people's lives
- Gaining resources needed to deliver the service

# A vision for the delivery of advice to the people of Scotland

With the prospect of a community legal service being established in Scotland, the focus for our work in 2004/05 has been to ensure that the CAB service remains central to the delivery of advice in Scotland and a major influence on public policy.

## Positioning the service

At a national level, we successfully:

- Secured CAB service involvement in Scottish Executive initiatives such as: working with the Executive to explore a framework that would replace Health Councils with a national scheme for the independent handling of health complaints with an accompanying advice and information service; acting as a test bed for five new initiatives aimed at improving financial literacy amongst vulnerable people; and developing the skills and competence necessary for Scottish money advisers to deliver the new Debt Arrangement Scheme.
- Engaged with community legal service pilot projects. In particular, bureaux participated in four out of five in-court advice projects funded by the Executive, based on the success of a CAB in-court advice project at Edinburgh Sheriff Court. CAS also founded a consortium of organisations to develop a project for the provision of disability legal advice

At local level, we provided support and guidance to all bureaux on participating in local reviews of advice services, and a team of seven CAS staff attended 221 funding negotiation meetings between them. To date, 33 bureaux (over 50 per cent of member bureaux) have been involved in local community planning processes.

In 2004/05, Scottish Citizens Advice Bureaux handled 468,081 contacts with clients, an increase of 10.3 per cent from the previous year, partly due to the launch of two new bureaux service this year (Citizens Advice Rights Fife and Citizens Advice Direct). Likewise, the total number of issues dealt with by bureaux increased by 6.13 per cent to 430,621.

## Communicating the value of the service

During 2004/05 - in addition to extensive marketing and media activity and an oversubscribed national conference - two initiatives were used to communicate the value of the CAB service to stakeholders: our revamped public website, and our annual awareness week.

## CAS website

The newly revamped CAS public website ([www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk)) now contains more information and is easier to navigate than ever before. Visitors to the site can quickly find the bureau nearest to them, volunteer online and download job application packs, sign-up for e-mail updates on CAS news and developments, and download our catalogue of reports, briefings and press releases.



Alasdair Morrison, MSP for the Western Isles, was among those supporting the motion.

“Citizens Advice Bureaux play a vital role in the islands and throughout the country,” he said. “My own experience in the Western Isles is of an irreplaceable service. It is a voice for those who are often ignored, it is an advocate for those who are treated unfairly and it is an authority on social issues.”

The site has had 50,000 unique visitors and over 8,000 repeat visitors since its launch in September, and has sustained an increase of over 350 per cent in online applications to volunteer in the CAB service.

In a nod to the increasingly influential role the service now plays in shaping social policy, the motion added that: “Citizens Advice Bureaux speak with authority and relevance on changing social issues from both a local and national perspective.”

## Advice Week

During our annual awareness week (Advice Week) in September 2004, CAS successfully initiated a motion resulting in a debate on the CAB service in the Scottish Parliament.

The motion, lodged by Bill Butler MSP, invited the Parliament to commend “the vital work that bureaux do in providing free, impartial and confidential advice” and noted that “good quality advice is increasingly necessary in today’s society.”

Mr Butler said: “The exceptional level of support for my motion, which has been drawn from right across the political spectrum, further underlines just how pivotal the work of CAB have become. The CAB service is one of our country’s most precious assets.”

## Equality and Diversity

In an effort to mainstream diversity and equality issues into the work of the service, each member of staff has had a diversity objective included in his or her staff performance plan for 2004/05. Outcomes for the period included support to bureaux for the implementation of the final stage of the Disability Discrimination Act, including updates to the Bureau Management Information System (BMIS). Other items in BMIS and training units were revised to reflect diversity and equality issues.

As well as this, two new projects were initiated: a migrant workers project with Lochaber CAB, and a proposal drawn up for a black and minority ethnic volunteer recruitment pilot in Edinburgh-Gorgie CAB



## External Relations

To make and maintain strategic contacts that position and raise the profile of the CAB service locally and nationally, in this period we held over 90 meetings in total with the Scottish Executive, parliamentary representatives and other voluntary agencies. In addition to which CAS was represented on the Sentencing Commission, working groups and committees of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, and the Scottish Executive's Advisory Group on race equality.

We continued our successful 'Advice in Action' initiative to invite politicians and civil servants to 'volunteer' for a morning or afternoon at their local CAB. Among those participating in 2004/05 was John McFall MP, chair of the Treasury Select Committee and himself a former CAB adviser, who visited Dumbarton CAB.

As well as exhibiting at all the major political parties conferences, we received wide coverage of CAS/CAB press releases on television and radio, and recorded a slot for Scottish Television's *Politics Now* programme in February commenting on the social fund.

## Partnership working

CAS continues to work in partnership with many statutory and voluntary organisations. In addition to the work with the Scottish Executive previously outlined, a number of other notable partnerships were maintained in 2004/2005:

In conjunction with Money Advice Scotland through the Money Advice Training, Resource, Information and Consultancy Service (MATRICS) Project, provided learning opportunities at three levels in money advice standards and the production of the WiserAdviser training programme. 2004/05 also saw the implementation of the MATRICS certification process for bureaux advisers wishing to be approved under the Scottish Executive's Debt Arrangement Scheme regulations. A number of advisers have already been approved and the first debt payment programmes for clients have been put in place.

Similarly in housing-related areas, CAS has worked with Shelter through the Scottish Homeless Advisory Service (SHAS). Both SHAS and MATRICS have met all of their respective targets in providing second-tier consultancy services to bureaux in money advice and housing

All CAS teams continued to strengthen our relationship with Citizens Advice in England and Wales to ensure the UK-wide coherence of the CAB service. As well as daily collaboration on the production of the information system that underpins CAB advice, and monthly attendance at the Information Development Programme Board, we worked closely on the development of learning opportunities, on bureau management support, IT, and on social policy, parliamentary and marketing and media issues.

## Services accessible across Scotland in different ways

In 2004/05, there was at least one Citizens Advice Bureau within every local authority area in Scotland apart from Inverclyde and South Ayrshire. But we have also helped bureaux to expand their services within their own localities, taking advice to where it is needed most.

### **In-court advice**

Four new In-Court Advice Projects are now underway in Aberdeen, Airdrie, Dundee and Hamilton sheriff courts. Within each of the courts an adviser provides advice and guidance and, where resources allow, may also provide representation in court.

This means litigants and other court-users can now access expert on-the-spot legal advice inside courts on issues such as small claims, rent arrears and evictions, consumer complaints and debt.

The two-year project, funded by a Scottish Executive grant, is part of a nationwide Community Legal Services initiative to improve access to justice. A similar CAB in-court service has been running in Edinburgh since 1997.

### **Financial education**

Seven Citizens Advice Bureaux – in Airdrie, Angus, Dumfries & Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Haddington and Musselburgh - launched Financial Education Projects in 2005 to help vulnerable people avoid debt.

The two-year projects, backed by £500,000 in Executive funding, are targeting groups as diverse as young people, lone parents and low income families, the homeless, ex-offenders, and people with disabilities and mental health problems.

The bureaux will work in partnership with other agencies such as health boards, credit unions and specialist charities. The projects build on established strengths of the CAB service - money and debt problems remain the biggest single concern that people bring to their local bureau.

### **Advice in healthcare settings**

From April 2005, local health councils will no longer assist people with queries or complaints about the NHS. CAS secured Executive funding to develop a strategy for bureaux to contract with health boards to deliver this role, and to consolidate their general advice-giving work in healthcare settings. We hope this might add a new dimension to CAB service work in 2005/06.

Bureaux already play an increasingly important role in patient-care. With social and financial circumstances now recognised as a factor – and even a cause - of physical or mental ill-health, many bureaux offer advice in hospitals and clinics, even in people's homes if they are housebound. There are now 25 bureau projects delivering advice in healthcare settings across Scotland.

This year, bureaux have also begun the process of expanding the service they provide to cancer patients and their families through discussions with Macmillan Cancer Relief on possible projects in Grampian, Fife and Glasgow

In June, the CAB service promoted 'Healthy Advice Week' to highlight that people affected by severe or sudden illness often need advice on issues such as sickness and



disability benefits, how to manage debts and mortgages, and what their employment rights are. Feedback from a number of studies confirms that the CAB service lifts a significant burden from both patients and carers, and from hard-pressed medical staff.

### **Citizens Advice Direct**

Scotland's first 'advice call-centre', began operations in 2004/05 in a bid to ease pressure on bureaux in Glasgow. Citizens Advice Direct advisers deal with client-queries that can be answered over the phone - those that require face-to-face contact are referred on to a high street bureau.

Citizens Advice Direct has won three-year backing from CAS, the Community Fund, Glasgow City Council and the European Social Fund, and has successfully bid to undertake other areas of telephone-based advice work.

### **Advice online**

Adviceguide ([www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)), the CAB service's award-winning online advice service for the public - available in Scottish, English, Welsh versions to reflect different languages and political, legal and educational systems - was strengthened in 2004/05 to provide more content for users in Scotland. The total number of visits to the Adviceguide website in this period was 2,364,970.

### **Other services**

In 2004/05, funds were secured for a pensioner home-visiting service in the Borders, to extend advice service provision through three CAB-local authority partnership arrangements, and for additional money advice and housing services in certain local authority areas.

While a project targeting victims of a miscarriage of justice was abandoned because funding was not secured from the Scottish Executive, exploratory meetings with the Scottish Prisons Service could lead to the provision of advice services in prisons.

Readers of best-selling women's magazine *Prima* voted the CAB service tops in the publication's 'Make Life Simple' awards in March. The award - for 'most helpful organisation' - was based on readers' personal experience. Editor Maire Fahey said: "It's fantastic that such a long serving, trusted organisation as the Citizens Advice Bureau should pick up the *Prima* award for most helpful organisation. Time and again our readers mentioned the friendliness of the service - a tribute to the thousands of people who work for CAB all over the country."

# A Quality Service to Bureaux

The advice the CAB service offers has to be reliable, consistent, of high quality and professionally delivered. A drive to improve the effectiveness of our support to bureaux has been central in helping to ensure this.

To strengthen the partnership between CAS and our member bureaux and to meet the needs of our membership, we have made efforts to institute more inclusive planning processes, and to improve internal communications.

During the year, bureaux were consulted on all major developments. We also set up special project teams to plan services to meet the needs of individual bureaux relating to audit, the collection of statistics, and to assist bureaux in preparing for the withdrawal of the paper information system.

10

## **Our membership scheme**

To retain the CAB brand, all bureaux must meet exacting standards and satisfy six key conditions:

- Meet the 12 principles of the CAB Service
- Provide wide-ranging advice, information and assistance,
- Develop social policy at national and local level,
- Work in a local community context,
- Ensure effective management is in place,
- Provide quality advice.

By April 2005, we audited all bureaux against these standards, reviewed the scheme and commenced a second cycle of audits. During 2004/05, membership audits were also carried out in a pilot-scheme run in conjunction with HomePoint, which led to three bureaux receiving Type 3 Accreditation (the highest level for housing advice in the HomePoint standards).

Our work and experience to date is not only of help to bureaux, but is being used to inform the development of national standards and innovative practices across advice and information services in Scotland.



## Training

Bureau advisers require particular skills and knowledge to advise clients and meet established competence standards. CAS continues to develop new methodologies and processes to improve the training services available to bureaux. In 2004/5, CAS:

- Provided 80 courses and regional training days - a total of 874 people attended courses on a range of topics and subject areas. Where appropriate, the workers attending these courses will, in turn, 'cascade' this training to their bureau colleagues.
- Introduced training units on discrimination and neighbour/anti-social behaviour, and reviewed the structure and content of benefits training-units to improve effectiveness in this complex area.
- Offered competences at casework-level on money advice, welfare benefits, employment and housing.

In addition to these core training activities, our team has undertaken extensive development work on areas of major potential for the CAB service and beyond.

- CAS' SVQ centre is now offering two new Professional Development Awards (PDAs) to those who deliver and support training in bureaux. The Certificate in Delivering Training in the Workplace is suitable for bureau tutors; the Certificate in Supporting Learning in the Workplace is suitable for bureau mentors and

training support workers. Each PDA consists of four units from the Learning and Development suite of awards.

- We have completed a 'blended learning' feasibility study, with the next phase anticipated to be taken forward in 2005/06. A cutting edge approach, blended learning is an integrated training strategy that combines electronic learning with traditional methodologies that will revolutionise the provision of training in remote areas.
- We have offered targeted support and training to advisers in 12 bureaux to help correct any non-compliance issues arising from the membership audit process.

## Scottish CAB service intranet

In July 2004, our new intranet – Caslink - was launched. As well as improving internal communications, Caslink has helped the CAB service become even more efficient and less reliant on paper-based services.

- Our Bureau Management Information System has been transferred to the intranet and an online Social Policy Feedback Form created through which bureaux can return case evidence to CAS.
- Bureaux now receive a monthly e-mail newsletter outlining intranet developments and service news.
- All CAB service vacancies are now posted on the intranet rather than circulated by e-mail.

- Online booking for the 2005 annual conference was introduced.
- Workers across the CAB service can now access a wealth of training-related information such as course and venue details, downloadable training materials and tutor support materials and guidance.

### Bureau Management Training and Support

A crucial aspect of the service CAS provides is the support it offers to bureaux in running as sustainable organisations efficiently, effectively and within the law. The voluntary sector is increasingly carefully regulated and without back-up, the duties and responsibilities that this can place on small organisations can be very challenging. CAS provides bureaux with the policies, systems and procedures necessary to run smoothly – and the support and guidance necessary to resolve any difficulties that could still arise.

**Management Committee Training:** During 2004/05, training courses on employers' responsibilities, staff appraisal, partnership working and marketing were provided to local bureau management committees. Short courses were also delivered on request, usually as part of a management committee board-meeting. This training is augmented by our Bureau Management Information System, which is continuously reviewed. In 2004/05, 87 items in this system were updated.

**Direct management support:** In total we assisted bureaux with 260 volunteer/staffing issues, 752 funding and service development issues, and 733 organisational and governance issues. CAS staff also attended 32 bureau planning meetings and provided assistance on 105 membership issues.

### Information

Our information system remains the cornerstone of the CAB service, revised monthly to ensure all bureaux offer accurate, consistent and up to date advice. We monitor legislation from both Holyrood and Westminster, update the information system with relevant changes and work closely with Citizens Advice, our counterpart in London, on cross-border issues.

Legislation that had significant implications for CAB advice-giving in 2004/05 included the Freedom of Information Act, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, the Tenements (Scotland) Act and the introduction of the Debt Arrangement Scheme. In total, 30 information items on new Scottish legislative changes and nine UK-wide changes were completed.

Our Electronic Information System has compressed 15,000 pages of information onto CD-ROM disk, which is updated and sent to bureaux each month. We were busy throughout the year not only working towards the withdrawal of the paper-based information system entirely (scheduled for June 2005), but also on the move to a web-based system – AdviserNet.



In total, with only a small increase in available resources, we worked on four different systems concurrently - the paper information system and its shorter 'Keynotes' version, and the electronic systems EIS2 and Adviceguide - while also developing AdviserNet. Keynotes was discontinued in 2004.

### **Legal Services**

The CAS legal services adviser provides a consultancy service to bureaux that require additional legal advice on complex cases. Employment problems remain the main area of enquiry (57 per cent) in an environment of increasing legislation and regulation.

The Free Representation Unit continues to provide bureaux with access to trainee advocates who give written legal advice and represent bureaux clients in tribunals *pro bono*. In 2004/05, 32 cases - mostly employment tribunals - were taken on.

In addition, the three-year Part V legal project, funded by the Scottish Legal Aid Board, continues to provide expert legal advice and training for nine Highlands and Islands bureaux. In 2004/05, its funding was renewed for a further three years and an additional bureau, Lochaber, was encompassed by the project.

### **IT Support**

The provision of a remote IT support facility by CAS has enhanced the level of help provided to bureaux in rural areas especially. This has removed the need for local support contracts, with significant notional savings. We have also been able to recover bureau servers as far away as Uist within 24 hours.

Since 2001/2002, the increase in calls for assistance with IT rose by 140 per cent. In 2004/2005 we received 1,602 calls from bureau compared to 1,057 the year previously.

The combination of remote IT support, along with a standardisation of hardware, has meant that we have been able to deliver a highly effective and efficient IT support service to bureaux.

### **Continuous Improvement**

CAS adopted the 'balanced scorecard' model of continuous improvement to help us measure our performance against key outcomes more effectively. This will have greater impact in 2005/06 when the first full year of results, strongly focusing on outcomes, are available.

# Making a difference to peoples' lives

As well as giving advice, the CAB service's second main aim is to *“exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services, both locally and nationally”*.

We are well-placed to do this. The case evidence returned to CAS by our member bureaux offers a unique insight into the kinds of everyday problems that Scotland faces as a society (see appendix *CAB clients – a profile of their problems*).

The CAS social policy team analyses and collates this evidence and focuses it onto the political agenda through meetings with politicians and civil servants, written reports and briefings, and responses to parliamentary consultations. We also publish a free quarterly *Inform* journal for all Scottish MSPs and MPs that highlights the issues and concerns that clients bring to bureaux.

Our social policy work during 2004/05 sought to improve the lives of CAB clients, particularly the most vulnerable in society, and to help build a more inclusive Scotland. In pursuit of this aim, our work included:

## **Publications...**

- We produced six new debt briefings on creditor behaviour, low-income clients, older clients, younger clients, lone parents and disabled clients.
- We also produced briefings on Post Office card accounts, crisis loans, the lack of transparency in credit card charges, the impact of bank arrestments on social security benefits, cuts to local benefit services, and tax credit overpayments.
- We produced a leaflet, in liaison with the Scottish Executive, to inform advice providers and their clients on fuel poverty-related problems.

## **Responses and evidence to reports and consultations...**

- We responded to parliamentary consultations on pension credits, bankruptcy and diligence, store cards, water charges, civil advice and assistance. We also gave evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee on pension credits in November.
- CAS welcomed a Treasury Select Committee report in February that called on credit card lenders to offer consumers clearer information and to lend more responsibly. CAS urged that credit statements should highlight that free, independent advice is available from agencies such as the CAB service.



### Amending legislation...

- CAS met with the Executive in September to recommend lowering the minimum threshold above which sequestration (bankruptcy) can be accessed from £1,500, and for more safeguards in the new Bankruptcy and Diligence Bill to exempt benefits and savings from arrestment. We also tabled our concerns over 'land attachments', which could see a debtor's home sold to pay off debts.
- In response to a debate on the Executive's Water Services Bill in November, CAS pressed for a system that more directly links the level of water rebates to actual income, arguing the poor still pay disproportionately.
- CAS welcomed a proposed new Consumer Credit Bill to crack down on irresponsible and extortionate lending, and pressed for 'Time Orders' to be included.
- CAS broadly welcomed the launch of the Executive's Debt Arrangement Scheme - but we remain concerned that creditors are not required to freeze interest and that the scheme does not require the composition of debts.

## Gaining resources needed to deliver the service

The CAB service needs more funds, staff and equipment to meet the increasing demand for our services as experienced year on year. In particular, both bureaux and CAS need more resources to keep pace with advances to help the public access electronic government and to improve the impact of our social policy work.

### **CAB funding**

Each CAB is an individual charity in its own right and must raise its own funding. In 2004/05, CAS helped bureaux secure new and additional resources to enhance and expand their services to a total of £2,466,291. This included grants from the CAS Development Committee, negotiation of new and existing service level agreements with local authorities, Scottish Executive initiatives, trusts, non-government organisations, and the provision of broadband and server equipment.

We also helped to secure new premises for Aberdeen CAB, and assisted bureaux to access funding from the Scottish Executive - paid through local authorities - to purchase additional PC equipment for money advice work.

### **CAS resources**

Key activities in 2004/05 have been negotiations with the Department for Trade & Industry (DTI) to prevent a ten per cent cut in CAS income – however, this will be applied in 2005/06 and 2006/07. In anticipation of this cut, significant efficiency working practices were identified and implemented.

In 2004/05 we received a clean audit report, established an audit committee, and a CAS funding taskforce.

### **Modernising our IT infrastructure**

As part of our IT infrastructure project, we completed the installation of Microsoft Small Business Server software in 2004/05, standardising delivery of our electronic services across the CAB service in Scotland. The servers allow every bureau computer to connect to the new CAS intranet. Again as part of our infrastructure project, we secured a supplier to install affordable broadband connections in all bureaux.

### **Electronic case recording**

For some years, CAS has been looking to introduce electronic case recording, replacing the laborious manual process by which bureaux record case-details of each client they deal with.

After consultations with bureaux over summer 2004, CAS funded a pilot project in early 2005 to customise an off-the-shelf software application and evaluate its use in three bureau settings. The outcome of this evaluation is expected in 2006.

FIRST FLOOR

citizens  
advice  
scotland

# Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux

## Treasurer's Report

### Introduction

The Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (Citizens Advice Scotland) publishes full formal accounts as prescribed by law under the Companies Act and other legislation, such as that relating to charities.

The level of detail in the accounts can confuse readers unfamiliar with formal accounts. Consequently, this short report is intended as a more readily understandable summary of the Association's financial position and includes a comparison with the financial position last year. A full set of accounts can however be obtained from CAS at 1st Floor Spectrum House, 2 Powderhall Road, Edinburgh, EH7 4GB

In summary, I am pleased to report that the Association received continuing support from the Department of Trade & Industry with a grant in aid to fund core activities of £3.1 million. In addition, the Association has been successful in securing other income from a number of sources. The majority of this other income is directed at providing specialised information and advice for bureaux in areas such as money advice, housing and law. Core expenditure continues to be monitored closely and includes for the extension of services to cover new bureaux, increasing use of technology and in-depth social policy research.

Looking ahead, developments in information technology continue to provide significant opportunities for improvements in service provision and in the quality of social policy evidence. The current public sector funding environment is creating challenges for both bureaux and the Association. The Association will continue to monitor costs and seek additional funds for both the Association and for bureaux in order to maintain a quality service and to take advantage of development opportunities.

# citizens advice bureau

## Income

Income for the year was £3,827,263 (2003/2004: £3,710,108).

We are grateful for the significant and continued support from the Department of Trade & Industry (DTI) which provided a grant of £3,103,343 (2003/2004: £2,800,000) to fund core activities.

The Association continues to seek additional sources of funds, over and above the grant-in-aid from the DTI, to finance other relevant activities. During the year, continuing grants of £25,180 were received to fund work on the Homelessness Advisory Project (SHAS), and grants of £17,871 were received from the Scottish Legal Aid Board to fund the Part V Project.

Various grants totalling £322,818 were received from the Scottish Executive to fund a money advice help-line and to develop software for the delivery of interactive money advice training, to draw up a framework for an NHS complaints handling service and general advice service, to develop and manage six bureaux-based financial education projects, and to develop and deliver certification training for advisers seeking approval under the Debt Arrangement Scheme.

In addition, the Association received £2,463 from Citizens Advice for training, £5,000 from Highlands & Islands Enterprise to fund a feasibility study on remote training opportunities, and £12,638 from the Money Advice Trust for training on money advice.

## Expenditure

Total expenditure in the year was £4,001,886 (2003/2004: £3,826,048). This comprised expenditure under general funds of £3,046,404, expenditure of designated funds of £225,823 and expenditure under restricted funds of £729,659.

Expenditure under general funds comprised the following:

	2004/2005 £000	2003/2004 £000
Development Committee grants	660	772
Fundraising	50	43
Rent payable	34	33
Direct charitable expenditure	1,912	1,831
Management and administration	390	424
	3,046	3,103

The lower level of expenditure by the CAS Development Committee for 2004/2005, compared with the previous year, reflected a temporary increase in the funds available to the Committee in 2003/2004 following an underspend in 2002/2003. The exclusion of Development Committee grants from the above table shows that expenditure generally rose by only £55,000. Whilst many items of expenditure decreased during the year, there were increases due to having an Information Manager and Executive Assistant for the full year, and there are increases in the cost of delivering IT support to bureaux and in rent and rates for the new wing at Spectrum House.

Designated funds arise where the directors designate that retained funds are set-aside for a specific purpose. Such funds are kept separately and are used for the purpose specified by the directors. Of the £225,823 spent, the predominant expenditure was the provision of an internet connection for each

bureau. Also included are the development of the CAS intranet and the cost of the bureaux management training programme.

Restricted funds arise when money is granted to the Association for a particular purpose. Such reserves are kept separately and can only be used for the purpose specified by the donor. A total of £729,659 was spent, of which approximately half related to depreciation, in particular following the completion of the bureaux infrastructure project which provided a server and client server network as well as a PC dedicated to training in each bureaux. Other major expenditure included £181,156 on the Money Advice project, providing the 'WiserAdviser' website and a consultancy service for money advisers throughout Scotland, and £62,841 on the Financial Education project.

### **Income less expenditure**

The net effect of the above income and expenditure was a surplus of £394,773 on general funds, a deficit of £225,823 on designated funds and a deficit of £343,573 on restricted funds. These sums are added to or are funded from reserves.

### **Reserves**

Reserves arise where money is received which is not spent or where money is received which is spent on fixed assets that have not been fully depreciated. Although deficits arose on designated and restricted funds over the course of the year, the reserves held money previously provided for these purposes.

At the end of the financial year there were restricted fund reserves of £893,190, being comprised of fixed assets of £420,955

purchased using restricted funds, principally under the bureaux infrastructure project. A detailed composition of restricted funds, and the reasons for holding these reserves are outlined in note 18 to the annual accounts.

Likewise, the financial year ended with designated funds of £505,845. The composition of these designated funds and the reasons for holding them are also outlined in note 18 to the annual accounts.

In addition to these restricted and designated funds, at 31 March 2005 there was a general fund of £861,274. Free reserves - that is reserves not tied up in fixed assets - were £702,161. The Association requires to maintain a level of free reserves principally to meet ongoing obligations at the beginning of each financial quarter before the core grant is received from the DTI. The board of directors is satisfied that the level of free reserves is adequate given the funding secured from the DTI for 2005/2006 and taking into account the confirmed ten per cent reduction in funding from DTI for 2006/2007.

### **Fixed asset additions**

During the year, £177,860 was spent on fixed assets. This is comprised principally of expenditure of £36,536 for replacement of motor vehicles, £32,094 on development of the CAS intranet, £53,143 on completing the bureaux infrastructure project, £23,100 on WiserAdviser software for the Money Advice project and initial expenditure on fitting out the new wing of £21,454.

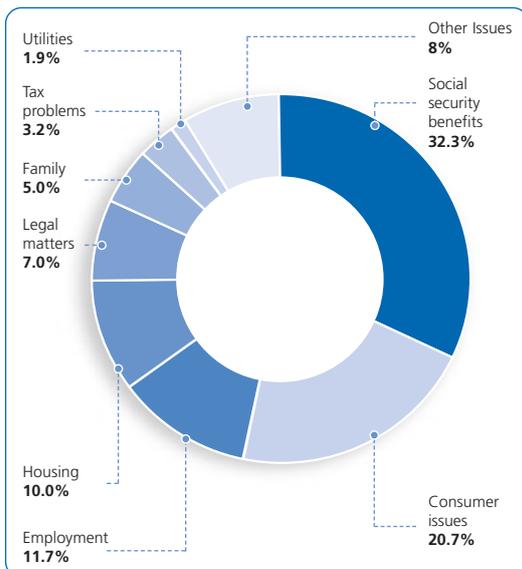
## CAB clients – a profile of their problems

The CAB service collects statistics on the nature of every single enquiry made to Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland, enabling us to monitor the issues that are affecting our clients. These statistics are collated to produce an annual, national profile of the problems experienced by our clients.

In 2004/05, the CAB service in Scotland dealt with a total of **430,621** new enquiries through **468,081** advice sessions. These headline figures show significantly increased capacity, driven by an expansion in the number of outlets and access points offering advice under the CAB banner.

Note that a client can raise more than one enquiry in an advice session and, equally, that a client may have to visit the service more than once to get an issue resolved. Therefore, these figures do not represent a headcount. We collect our statistics under broad category headings, such as 'benefits'. These categories are then divided into more detailed sub-categories, such as 'consumer debt' or 'housing benefit'.

20



### The big picture

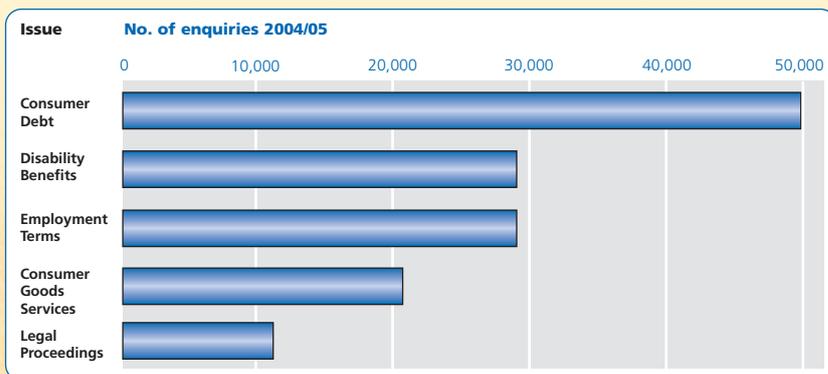
This graph looks at the proportion of enquiries received under each broad category heading.

- At 32 per cent, **social security benefits** account for almost one in three enquiries. This is a marginal decrease on last year's figures; however, social security benefits still make up the lion's share of the work of bureaux. Within this category, enquiries in relation to disability benefits are among those showing increases.
- At 21 per cent, **consumer issues** account for one in five of all enquiries. This category includes consumer debt – which has shown another year-on-year increase – as well as enquiries about unsatisfactory goods and services.
- At 12 per cent, **employment issues** account for one in eight of the enquiries dealt with by bureaux. This figure is relatively static in comparison to last year.
- At 10 per cent, **housing enquiries** account for exactly one in ten of enquiries. The biggest rise in enquiries is in relation to housing costs – this covers rent/mortgage enquiries that are not about arrears, as well as costs such as conveyancing and rent deposits.



### The top five

This graph looks at the individual sub-categories attracting the largest number of enquiries.



- **Consumer debt** remains the biggest single area of enquiry for CAB clients. Enquiries show another year on year increase and now account for 12 per cent (one in eight) of all queries.
- **Disability benefits** are the second biggest issue dealt with by the CAB service, overtaking employment terms and conditions for the first time. Bureaux advise clients on a range of disability benefits, assisting with everything from application forms to representation at appeal tribunals.
- **Legal proceedings** has made it into the top five single issues for the first time this year. The position was held by income support last year – but enquiries under this heading are now split between income support and the new benefit for older people – pension credit.



## Citizens Advice Scotland

First Floor  
Spectrum House  
2 Powderhall Road  
Edinburgh EH7 4GB

**Tel** 0131 550 1000

**Fax** 0131 550 1001

**e.mail** [info@cas.org.uk](mailto:info@cas.org.uk)

**website** [www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk)

## The Management Team

### Kaliani Lyle

Chief Executive Officer

### Susan McPhee

Head of Social Policy and Public Affairs

### Annabelle Ridley

Head of Training

### Lucie McKenzie

Head of Field Services

### Jacqui Cummings

Human Resources Manager

### Calum Coulter

IT Manager

### Seonaid Fowler/Judith Crichton (maternity cover)

Finance Manager

### Elizabeth Sykes

Head of Information

## The Board

### The Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (a company limited by guarantee)

Directors of the company are elected annually. Those who served in 2004/05:

Responsibility	Until 11 November 2004	From 11 November 2004
Chair	Robert Brodie	Graham Blount
Vice Chair	Sam Hewitt	Sam Hewitt
Honorary Treasurer	Gavin Kenny	Brian Evans
Board Member	-	Andy Borland
Board Member	Duncan Dennett	Duncan Dennett
Board Member	Gloria Fleming	-
Board Member	Margaret Gray	-
Board Member	-	Gavin Kenny
Board Member	William Kidd	William Kidd
Board Member	-	George Lochrie
Board Member	-	Joseph McCormack
Board Member	George MacDonald	-
Board Member	-	Margaret McIntyre
Board Member	Jane Marnie	Jane Marnie
Board Member	Finola Meikle	Finola Meikle
Board Member	Grant Millard	-
Board Member	Frank Mosson	Frank Mosson
Board Member	Irene Mungall	Irene Mungall
Board Member	Dominic Notarangelo	Dominic Notarangelo
Board Member	-	Len Scott