

ASAP Annual Report

1 October 2018 – 30 September 2019



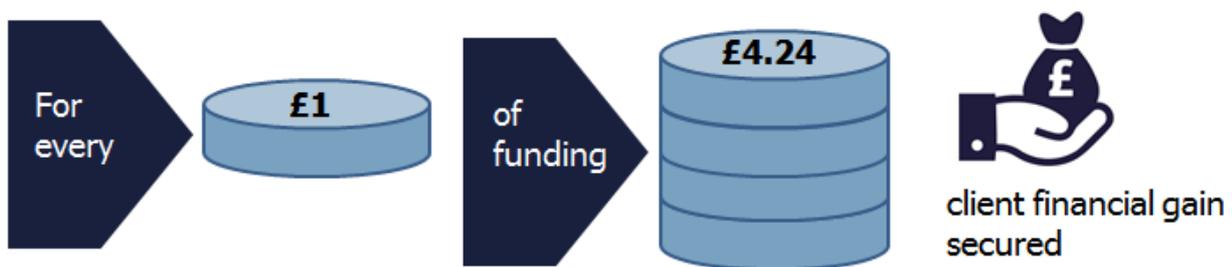
Key Achievements

The Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) delivers information, advice and support to members of the Armed Forces Community through a Scotland wide helpline and face to face casework in 11 regions. The service is made possible by the funding partnership, led by Poppyscotland, with whom we work closely to develop the service and ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the clients we support.

Key statistics for the period 1 October 2018 - 30 September 2019

- Advisers supported 2,347 individuals over the year, and gave advice over 12,300 times. This resulted in an average of 5.3 issues per client, compared with a bureau average of 2.6 issues per client.
- 50% of issues raised were about benefits, 14% concerned debts. Financial issues, including charitable grant applications, accounted for 11% of issues raised, and housing 6%.
- Clients may gain financially as a result of the support they have received, for example through receiving benefits to which they are entitled, debt written off or rescheduled or charitable grants received. Client financial gain recorded over the year was £3,304,959. A total of 915 clients benefited from a financial gain; the average financial gain per client was £3612.

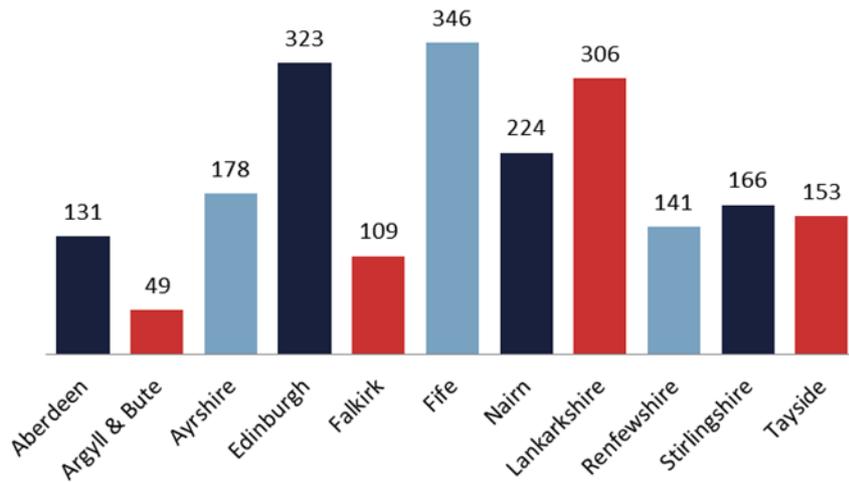
From the start of the service on 1 July 2010 to 30 September 2019, ASAP has supported a total of 15,099 individual clients with around 82,600 pieces of advice. The client financial gain since the start of ASAP is £15.1 million.



Face to face ASAP area performance

The total number of individual clients recorded for ASAP in the period 2018/19 is slightly lower than the previous year. In part, this is due to changes in recording following the move of the ASAP helpline to Motherwell CAB, with clients supported by both the helpline and face to face adviser counted once rather than as separate clients.

Figure 1: Individual clients supported in face to face ASAP areas over the 12 month period



The geographic areas are dissimilar in nature, covering different numbers of bureaux. The ease of access for clients to the bureau is a large factor, with a wider population spread in more rural areas making access to bureaux, outreach and home visits more problematic. Typically, ASAP client numbers are lower in more rural areas.

Figure 2: Percentage of bureau clients in accessible rural and remote rural areas

Source: National CAB client profile November 2017, Citizens Advice Scotland

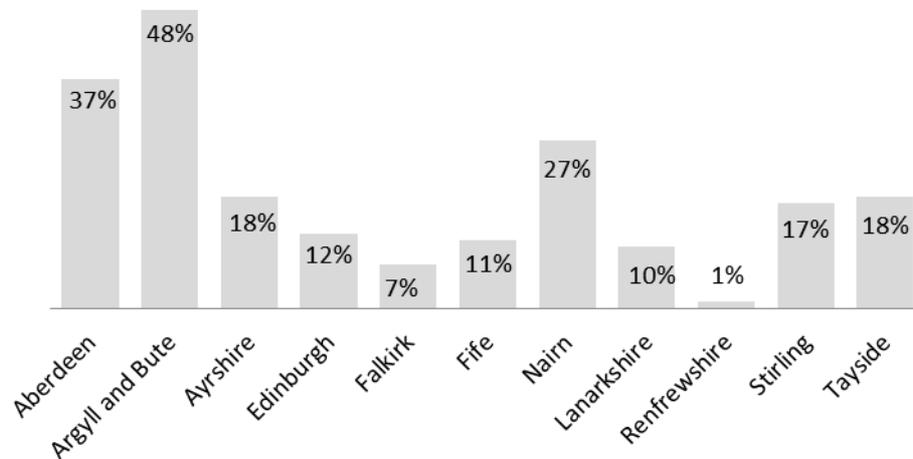


Table 1: Quarterly number of clients in each face to face ASAP area

Region	Oct – Dec 2018	Jan – March 2019	Apr –June 2019	July – Sept 2019	Total across 4 quarters
Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire	61	54	48	58	221
Argyll and Bute	30	17	9	18	74
Ayrshire	69	61	96	80	306
Edinburgh and Lothians	119	124	127	87	457
Falkirk	51	44	46	53	194
Fife	165	163	142	152	622
Inverness, Moray and Nairn	95	89	97	106	387
Lanarkshire	153	147	147	157	604
Renfrewshire	54	63	70	59	246
Stirlingshire and Clackmannanshire	48	63	52	29 (see note)	192
Tayside (Dundee, Angus, Perth)	70	73	79	80	302
Total	915	898	913	879	3605

Notes:

- The service in the Falkirk area is jointly funded by Falkirk Council and the ASAP funding partnership.
- The number of clients in Argyll & Bute was impacted by adviser absence due to illness, when ASAP clients were supported in other ways, and the low number reflects the high levels of rurality in the area. Initiatives are underway to promote the service more widely.
- Stirling moved to a new recording system in April; the figures shown are a partial count of work undertaken due to incomplete recording on the new system.
- The figures are for the number of people seen in each quarter, counting each person once no matter how many times they are seen in the quarter.
- As our clients have complex support needs advisers tend to see them for multiple appointments which can be spread out over many months. This means that a client may be seen in more than one quarter. If this is the case, they will be counted in each quarter and added into the total figure.

Helpline performance

The helpline moved to Motherwell CAB on 1 June 2019. As it is fully integrated within the CAB network, clients are recorded on their local CAB site, rather than on a separate site. Where the helpline supports a client in an ASAP area, the statistics are included in the total for the region in Table 1, while clients supported by the helpline outside ASAP areas are shown as separate helpline clients.

Table 2: Number of helpline clients

	Oct – Dec 2018	Jan – March 2019	Apr –June 2019	July – Sept 2019	Total across 4 quarters
Helpline clients recorded in regions			32	49	81
Helpline clients not recorded in regions	95	77	39	15	226
Total helpline clients	95	77	71	64	307

Following the move of the helpline it is possible to provide a regional breakdown of the support provided, both in ASAP areas and in areas without an ASAP face to face presence.

The helpline has fully supported around half of the clients accessing this service, without the need for a referral for face to face support, demonstrating that the experienced helpline adviser is providing comprehensive support for potentially complex issues.

Table 3: The ASAP Helpline supported 95 clients with 100 cases from 1 June - 30 September

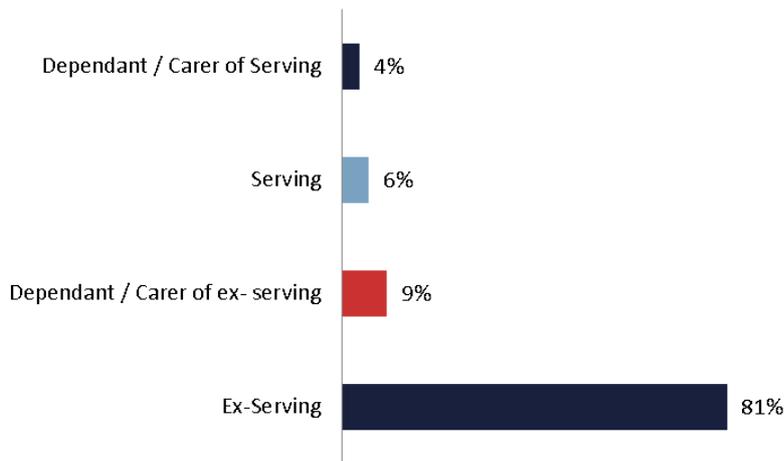
ASAP Area	Cases	NON ASAP CAB	Cases
Aberdeen	3	Dumfries and Galloway	3
Argyll & Bute	2	East Dunbartonshire	1
Ayrshire	8	Glasgow	8
Edinburgh	17	Peebles	1
Falkirk	1	Ross and Cromarty	2
Fife	10	Shetland	1
Nairn	13	West Dunbartonshire	2
Lanarkshire	16	total	18
Renfrewshire	2		
Stirlingshire	1		
Tayside	9		
total	82		

Our clients

The service background of people seen varies between regions, depending on the proximity of bases and where veterans settle. Nationally, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of clients with an Army connection.

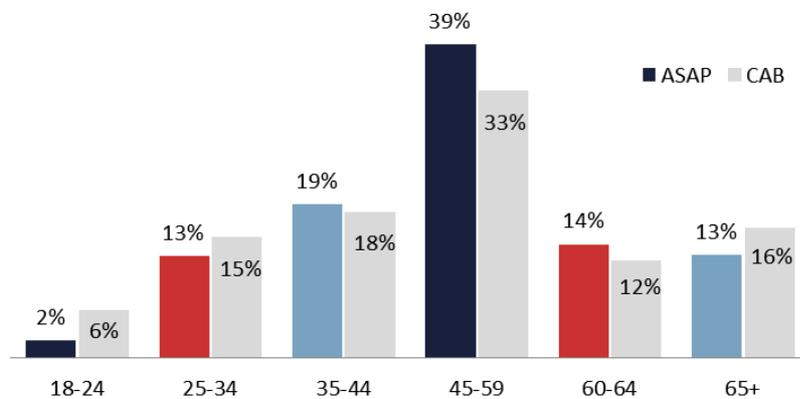


Figure 3: Service status of clients



The proportion of clients in each group is broadly similar to previous years.

Figure 4: Age range of clients

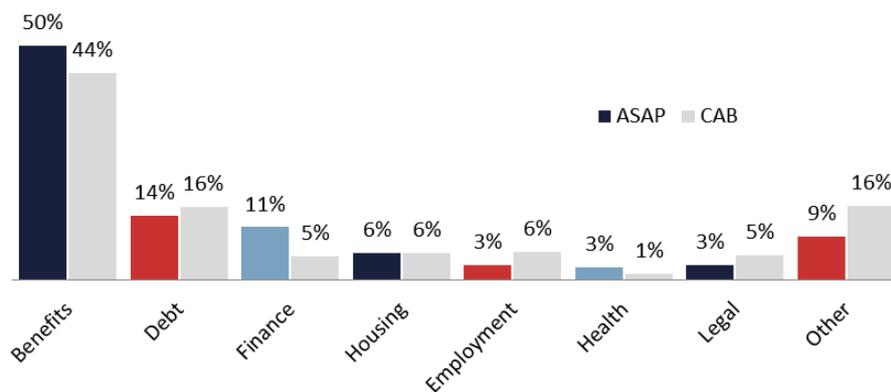


Compared with the bureau average, ASAP supports fewer younger people, and proportionately more in the 45-59 age range. Older clients, age 65 plus, will also be supported via Unforgotten Forces, and reported separately.

Advice needs of ASAP clients

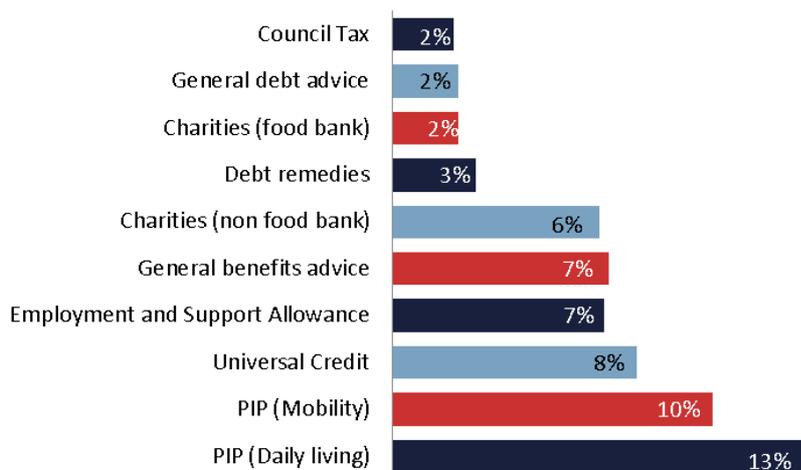
Changes to the way in which advice provided is recorded within the bureaux service have resulted in a reduction in the instances of advice provided. The number of times an ASAP client access advice is significantly higher than the bureau average, indicating that ASAP continues to offer valuable support to vulnerable people who present with multiple problems. Feedback from advisers indicates that the complexity of cases is increasing as people present with greater crisis, hardship and immediate need than previously.

Figure 5: Advice was given 12,374 times



The proportion of benefits issues recorded by ASAP has increased slightly over the year, while the proportion of the other main issues has remained the same. ASAP clients raise proportionately more benefits and health issues than general bureau clients, giving an indication of the particular support needs of ASAP clients. The finance category includes charitable applications, and the high proportion of advice in this area compared with the bureau average is indicative of our close working relationship with SSAFA for access to charitable support.

Figure 6: Top 10 advice issues



The proportion of benefits issues relating to ill-health has increased slightly compared with last year, while the roll-out of Universal Credit has seen the proportion of issues increase significantly. The bureaux network now also offers a Help to Claim service for people making their UC claim. Support for access to charities and food banks indicates the level of need of the clients supported.

Who we've worked with

ASAP is an integral part of the support network for the Armed Forces community in Scotland. Our strength lies in our ability to work with a wide range of organisations to support our clients, whether Service related, statutory or voluntary, bridging the gap between the Service experience of our clients and the civilian world.

In the last year we have continued to work with a wide range of organisations. ASAP advisers undertook outreach sessions with partner organisations such as Veterans First Point in a number of regions, in veterans centres, residences and breakfast clubs, as well as prison in-reach to support prisoners and their families. They provided joint support for clients through combined outreach sessions and home visits, for example with the Veterans Welfare Service. Following the introduction of the new Poppyscotland Welfare Support Service our advisers have worked with their local representatives to support mutual clients.

ASAP advisers continue to build and refresh relationships with local and national organisations, through the provision of training and presentations, for example to DWP staff and veterans champions, and maintain close relationships with various local authority departments to both access support for clients and encourage referrals. They provide regular training to bureau volunteers to maintain awareness of Armed Forces related issues and support available.

In areas with military bases, advisers have continued to support serving personnel and their families through local clinics and presentations, building strong working relationships with welfare staff, the HIVE, Personnel Recovery Centre and Army Chaplains Department.

Advisers can record referrals into and out of ASAP when working with other organisations to support clients. Following changes to case recording introduced earlier this year, referrals within the CAB service, including passing cases from the ASAP helpline to regional ASAP adviser, are not included in the statistics below. Referrals are not routinely recorded for every client, so the data below indicates the range of organisations we work with rather than representing the complete picture.



Most common referrals into ASAP

Self-referral / family / friend	30%	Other Service related charity	7%
Veterans First Point	10%	Other bureau service	7%
SSAFA	8%	Veterans UK	3%
Poppyscotland	8%	Military Welfare Service	2%

The bureau network provides many specialist services, for example debt, energy or housing advice, and tribunal representation. Some of this is provided directly by ASAP advisers, and in other cases ASAP facilitates access to these services.



Most common referrals from ASAP

SSAFA	20%	Veterans First Point	4%
Other Service related charity	13%	Veterans Scotland	4%
Veterans UK	8%	Poppyscotland	4%
Other bureaux service	7%	Legion Scotland	3%
Local authority service	5%	Fares 4 Free	3%

Unforgotten Forces



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's Older Veterans

ASAP is part of the Unforgotten Forces Consortium, and works closely with partners including the Defence Medical Welfare Service and Age Scotland to support mutual clients. ASAP provides support for older veterans across the regions and through the helpline, with outreach in local hospitals and centres for older people. Bureaux not already involved in ASAP are supported to engage with older veterans.

The UF Volunteer Support Officer has developed a new suite of training materials specifically for Unforgotten Forces, used by bureaux across the network.

Training our advisers

ASAP advisers are dealing with a particularly vulnerable client group, which means that they need a specialist skill set and a detailed knowledge of matters relating to the Armed Forces in addition to general advice skills. All advisers have access to the specialist bureau courses, for example in employment and welfare rights. Regular training days are arranged for advisers with speakers from a range of organisations to foster new partnerships and ensure they are aware of the services available. Advisers complete the Mental Health First Aid for the Armed Forces course, and take advantage of other courses as they arise, including Veterans in the Criminal Justice System and Age Scotland Dementia awareness.

The UF Volunteer Support Officer, together with the CAS training team, produced e-learning modules to support Unforgotten Forces. Training units about the needs of the Armed Forces community are available to all bureau advisers across Scotland.

Service developments

The ASAP Helpline moved to Motherwell CAB in June 2019, following a competitive tender process within the bureaux network. Motherwell CAB provides a number of multi-channel services including Universal Credit Help to Claim and Money Talks Team, and has been an ASAP bureaux for face to face advice since July 2010. We are pleased to be able to utilise that expertise for the ASAP helpline. Clients supported by the helpline are now recorded in their local bureau site, so that if they need to access local face to face support their case record can be accessed by the appropriate bureau, whether in an ASAP region or not. This integrated approach smooths the client journey, reducing the need to request additional information, and enables proactive contact to be made with the client. It also allows the helpline to undertake more desk based casework, and facilitates the provision of remote advice for clients who are happy to access support in this way, providing client choice in the method of support. We look forward to developing this service further.

CAS and Poppyscotland are undertaking a strategic review of ASAP to inform future funding renewal and ensure that ASAP continues to meet the needs of clients, and build on the collaborative work already undertaken with the new Poppyscotland Welfare Support Service.

What we've done for clients

The ASAP helpline provides a wide range of advice to clients, undertaking casework to support them with multiple issues, as well as making referrals for face to face support:

The client is an Army veteran who was medically discharged due to hearing issues which developed through his service. Over the years the client developed additional health conditions which has affected his mobility. His hearing condition has affected his confidence in social situations, increasing his anxiety.

The ASAP adviser supported the client with a number of issues:

- *Established potential benefits entitlement and the claiming process*
- *Blue Badge and details of how to claim, to overcome mobility issues and help with daily activity*
- *Identified the functionality of hearing aids currently used was limiting the clients' day to day activity, provided details of the Royal British Legion Veterans Hearing Fund and claiming process for access to improved hearing aids.*

Legion Scotland are currently assisting client with a War Pension claim as he is disputing the original award.

The helpline adviser made a follow up call to the client to check on the progress of the Veterans Hearing Fund claim, which is ongoing. The client was very grateful for being advised of the scheme as it – if successful – allows him to have use of a better hearing aid, provided him the hope of integrating more socially and being able to enjoy his daughter's wedding in the near future.

Bureau based advisers deal with complex cases, supporting clients, including serving personnel, with a wide range of issues:

A serving soldier requested assistance because he was paying Council Tax on his home and also while staying in barracks. The issue was resolved by finding appropriate regulation that allowed the soldier to reclaim Council Tax through the military system. As he is being deployed on an operational tour he was reminded that he can claim a rebate from Local Authority while deployed.

Our clients frequently have complex support needs, which cannot be dealt with by general bureau advisers:

An RAF veteran was referred by a local hospital, after losing his memory following an accident at work. He needed support to access benefits, and adaptations made to his home. The ASAP adviser supported the client with successful applications for PIP and ESA, and worked with SSAFA to access funding to modify access to his garden and purchase a PC with special software to enable a memory treatment programme.

Although we support many clients with benefits and debt issues, our support encompasses all sorts of practical assistance:

An Army veteran requested employment support. The ASAP adviser supported the client in drafting a CV and personal statement, and worked with RFEA to secure the client a job interview as Front of House and Security manager with a financial house in Edinburgh, for which the client was successful.

We work with multiple partners and agencies to access support for our clients:

The wife of an elderly Navy veteran approached ASAP. Her husband, in his early 90's, had a dementia diagnosis, and she was looking for help to access support. As the veteran did not want respite care, the focus was on support that could be provided in the home, as the client is unable to leave her husband alone and is struggling to get out. The ASAP adviser arranged for a Dementia Adviser from Alzheimer's Scotland to visit the client to identify the support they can offer.

The veteran also suffers visual and hearing impairment. A referral was made to the Scottish War Blinded Hawkhead Centre. If the veteran is able to go there once a week his wife will be able to go out herself. Fares 4 Free were involved to ensure the veteran could attend the centre. The adviser also involved Hearing Forces to help with the veteran's hearing loss, and a local transport service who help take people to appointments.

The comments our clients make demonstrate the value of the service we provide to them:

"I have been a veteran for over 40 years and no one has advised me on what I may be entitled to after all this time. Adviser is very well mannered, thorough and helpful. Cannot recommend this service enough."
ASAP Helpline Client

Having supported a severely disabled veteran with a complex benefits application, he emailed his thanks:

"To say thank you does not cover the help you have provided yet again. The anxiety stress and worry that a letter from the DWP can cause whilst suffering mental illness can't be highlighted enough. So on that note I took the liberty this morning in bringing the work both you and Veterans Welfare Service do to the minister at the Scottish Parliament. I will also highlight these facts to the Minister for DWP at Westminster today also. With the utmost respect and thanks."

November 2019

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