



Face Value

Impact Report 2015/16



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No one should have to face their problems alone...

Who we helped and what we achieved in 2015/16

The Citizens Advice network in Scotland



Over 310,000 clients

were advised and 1 million pieces of advice given out



£120 million

in financial gains achieved for those who used our service



30%

of our clients come from Scotland's most deprived areas. We help some of the most vulnerable in society



Over 4 million

unique page views of our Scottish self-help website, Advice for Scotland



Every 19 seconds

we provide a piece of advice

The Scottish Citizens Advice Bureaux



266,800 individuals

helped: that's 1 in every 14 adults in Scotland, who had help solving issues that were affecting them

How we achieved this...



Thanks to 3,400

paid staff and skilled volunteers we can provide all this



2,395

skilled volunteers contribute their time to deliver £10 million of value to the service



6 months

of training is given to our volunteer advisers, who come from a range of professional and skilled backgrounds



For every £1

of core funding received, the Citizens Advice Bureaux network in Scotland returned £11 of value

By helping individuals in all these ways, we add value for society as a whole

Executive summary

The impact of the Citizens Advice service in Scotland

In our first report of this kind, we demonstrate the impact of the Scottish Citizens Advice service on the 310,000-plus clients¹ who received help in 2015/16, as well as touching on the wider benefits of our work to the rest of society.

To set these achievements in context, in the introductory section of the report you can find a summary of:

- Why we're needed
- What we do
- Who we help.

While the latter section of the report explores:

- The impact of our advice by theme
- Some of the key outcomes of our research, policy and campaign work in 2015/16
- The additional social value added by our highly skilled volunteers.

Delivering return on investment

While Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) operates at a national level, each of the 61 Citizens Advice Bureaux are governed and managed at a local level, operating as individual charities. This ensures that they have a real grassroots presence in the communities that they serve.

Funding for the service comes from a number of sources. Most Citizens Advice Bureaux receive core funding from local authorities to deliver advice services. Bureaux also receive specific project funding to deliver special services such as Kinship Care advice services or Pension Wise guidance. Citizens Advice Scotland receives a core grant from the UK Government and consumer and project funding from the UK and Scottish Governments amongst others.

As the recipients of public funding, we are committed to measuring, understanding and demonstrating the value of the advice we provide.

1. www.cas.org.uk/about-us/scottish-citizens-advice-network-statistics

Scotland's citizens continue to face challenging circumstances: strains on employment, finances and the everyday cost of living are bringing people to the service with an increasing number of complex and inter-related issues.

We believe that every citizen in Scotland should have access to free, impartial and confidential advice that helps them make informed decisions, whenever they need it and however they choose to access it. Whether that's face-to-face, over the phone or online, people know that wherever they see the familiar blue and yellow of our brand, they are guaranteed the same high quality of free, impartial and confidential advice.

Last year, the Citizens Advice service provided advice, education and support to help over 310,000² people in Scotland deal with issues which they were unable to face alone – equivalent to over 1 in every 14 adults³ in Scotland.

The Citizens Advice network is also on the front line when it comes to witnessing and understanding the impacts of changes to policies and public services. Using our evidence base we can provide information to decision makers to help them improve services for citizens.

What we do – our structure

An introduction to Citizens Advice in Scotland

The Scottish Citizens Advice network is the largest independent advice service in the country.

The service is made up of: the national umbrella organisation, Citizens Advice Scotland; 61 Citizens Advice Bureaux; the Citizens Advice Consumer Service, and the Extra Help Unit. Our service has a footprint across every community in Scotland.

This network of charities provides advice across a range of locations and channels:

- 61 independent Citizen Advice Bureaux operate in almost 300 locations across Scotland⁴: from Edinburgh city centre, to the Highlands and Islands, providing free, impartial and confidential support. The majority of our clients (86%) access our service through a bureau⁵.
- One of the bureaux, Citizens Advice Direct, provides a free, national telephone advice service.

2. www.cas.org.uk/about-us/scottish-citizens-advice-network-statistics

3. *Advice in Scotland, A summary of evidence gathered by Citizens Advice Bureaux about their work, 2015-16*

4. www.cas.org.uk/about-us/scottish-citizens-advice-network-statistics

5. *Total number of clients for the full Citizens Advice service is 310,963 of which 266,795 (86%) are bureaux clients*

- Also available is the Citizens Advice Consumer Service, a telephone advice service for clients experiencing issues with consumer goods and services.
- The Extra Help Unit is a telephone-based referral service which investigates energy and post complaints on behalf of vulnerable domestic and micro-business consumers.
- The Advice for Scotland website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland provides a helpful source of self-help information for individuals experiencing issues across a broad range of topics.
- Citizens Advice Scotland provides training and information to the client-facing organisations, as well as a rigorous quality assurance and monitoring programme, ensuring that the same high quality of advice is available across Scotland. Citizens Advice Scotland also carries out research, policy work and campaigning, based on a statistical analysis of the advice sought by clients, as well as providing support for bureaux development and national projects, among many other activities.



61 member Citizens Advice Bureaux

Over 3,400 paid staff and volunteers providing advice and assistance

**Over 910,000
advice issues**



Extra Help Unit

Specialist casework for people in a vulnerable position regarding energy and post

Over 9,900 cases



Citizens Advice Consumer Service

Advisers based in Stornoway giving consumer advice over the phone

Over 106,000 cases

7

In 2015/16 the Citizens Advice Service helped over 310,000 clients living in Scotland

Clients gained almost £120 million, with support from the service

6

Who we help

8



Dan's* story

The Citizens Advice service helps clients across the full spectrum of Scottish society. Dan's story gives an insight into some of the reasons why clients might turn to us for advice:

Dan was an ex-serviceman with 19 years' service, who hadn't worked for three years due to a brain haemorrhage. He first approached a West of Scotland Citizens Advice Bureau for help accessing Legal Aid regarding road traffic accidents, but they were also able to help him claim disability benefits. A year later, Dan returned, seeking support to appeal the rejection of his Employment Support Allowance (ESA) claim; he was also now living in temporary accommodation, having split up with his wife. The Citizens Advice Bureau supported Dan for a subsequent six-month period of no income, while Job Seeker's Allowance and Crisis Grant claims were also disallowed. During this time, the bureau helped Dan to make appeals and access support from charities until his ESA claim was finally successful, with no need for him to be reassessed for a further 24 months.

**The client's name has been changed to preserve anonymity*



Who are our clients?

There is no such thing as a typical client but statistical analysis does allow us to identify certain patterns: for example, 30% of our clients come from Scotland's most deprived areas⁷ (vs 21% of the national population).

Our client profiles by issue

By looking at clients who sought specific advice on one issue in 2015, we can identify differences in client profiles⁸:



Financial clients

are most likely to be male or to live in council-rented accommodation



Benefits clients

are most likely to be unable to work due to ill-health or disability



Consumer clients

are more likely to be owner-occupiers or to live in Scotland's least deprived areas

⁷ [awaiting publication]

⁸ Who are you? Issue 4, Client Advice Profile 2015, P3

The impact of our advice on citizens and society

Adding value for citizens and society

Everyone faces problems in life. We commonly see clients in situations where a single problem has multiplied, leaving them feeling overwhelmed and unable to take action. Often, if such situations are left to escalate further, not only can the consequences for the individual be devastating, but if public services are required to intervene, the financial costs to society can also be high.

Good and timely advice is essential in such situations – helping to improve the financial health of citizens and often their mental and physical health as well, resulting in savings to public finances in areas such as health, social services and justice.

Improving financial health

One of the main ways that we can quantify the impact of our advice is by measuring the resulting financial benefits or Client Financial Gain (CFG). This includes money gained by accessing a benefit the client is entitled to, and money saved by effectively managing debt.

The Citizens Advice Bureaux network recorded Client Financial Gains of almost £120 million in 2015/16, of which the EHU contributed just under £400,000⁹.

In addition, the Citizens Advice Consumer Service gave advice to consumers on products and services with a value of over £175 million¹⁰.

Measuring client satisfaction

Another measure of the impact of our service is the level of client satisfaction recorded. Of those who have sought advice from Citizens Advice in the last three years:



were satisfied with the service they received



would recommend the service to a friend or relative

And, of all those who responded to the survey:



said they regard the Citizens Advice Bureaux network as an essential community service

Survey of 1,004 individuals conducted by IPSOS MORI between 7 and 20 March 2016¹¹.

9. Client Financial Gains; based on data recorded by Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Extra Help Unit; collated by Citizens Advice Scotland for 2015-16

10. From data recorded by the Consumer Helpline during 2015/16 re. the cost of goods/services being complained about (collated/analysed by Citizens Advice Scotland)

11. Citizens Advice Scotland 2016

The impact of our advice by theme

Here we examine some of the key areas where we have made a substantial difference through the provision of advice and the sharing of our evidence base in 2015/16. We also look at some of the emerging issues which we are working on now, in order to make improvements at both a local and national level in the years ahead.

Social security changes

Citizens Advice in Scotland: the safety net beneath the safety net

The social security system is a safety net for people who need support at various times in their lives. However, it can be complex to navigate, particularly during a period of change.

Putting a value on our benefits assistance

The most common issue code recorded by bureaux in Scotland is 'benefits and tax credits' – accounting for over one third of total issues (38.7%) recorded for the period. This is an increase of 4% on the previous year's figure¹².

Often, we find that clients who seek advice in the bureaux are failing to claim one or more of the benefits to which they are entitled. In 2015/16 we recorded over £72 million in financial gains for our clients in relation to benefits – an increase of 22% on the 2014/15 figure of just over £59 million¹³. By helping clients access the benefits that they are entitled to, we can often prevent a crisis situation such as homelessness from developing: avoiding both trauma for the client and costs such as temporary accommodation for the local authority.

Further savings to the public purse are achieved by Citizens Advice Bureaux assisting clients in completing official forms. In 2015/16, we assisted clients in completing almost 27,000 benefit forms alone, a 19% increase on 2014/15¹⁴.

Our partnership approach to working with local authorities and public services is also starting to bear results in the area of benefits. For example, a new issues log has been established through which bureaux can report their most pressing issues regarding benefits administration to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). A partnership agreement has also been developed between bureaux and local Job Centre Plus.

In a project that won the Third Sector Government Partnership Awards in December 2014, Citizens Advice Scotland was successful in securing an additional £1.4 million in funding for the bureaux from the Scottish Government to help with social security changes.



£72 million
gained for clients



Income shocks

A shock from the system

In research carried out for the Citizens Advice Scotland 'Living at the Sharp End' report, it was identified that bureaux are seeing an increasing number of clients who are experiencing crisis situations as a result of income shocks – periods of no income. Income shocks can be caused by many factors, including:

- Gaps in benefit payments
- Illness
- Relationship breakdown
- Unemployment
- Insecure work such as zero hours contracts¹⁵.

Many clients have little resilience to such income shocks, which can quickly lead to crisis situations. Citizens Advice Bureaux are

too often seeing clients who have exhausted all forms of government support and have no option but to turn to food banks – a modern-day indicator of hardship. One in 10 clients seeking advice on food parcels is homeless¹⁶; one third are unable to work due to ill health and over one third have a disability.

Demand for food banks is rising at an alarming rate, with related queries having increased by 90% since 2013/14¹⁷. The inability to afford food is of course just one symptom of a greater problem. If someone is unable to eat, they are also unable to afford other essentials: commonly known as the 'heat or eat' dilemma.

Through our service in Scotland we continue to help these vulnerable clients on a case-by-case basis, while continuing to compile case evidence to inform wider policy change.



Debt

Dealing with debt

Manageable finances underpin every area of life. We help clients from across the debt spectrum: from providing budgeting advice, to intervention where a client is facing property repossession or even imprisonment. Our aims are always to stop debt escalating further, to stabilise the client's current financial situation

and to maximise opportunities to improve their financial situation in the future.

Debt queries were among the top three advice issues recorded by Citizens Advice Bureaux in 2015/16¹⁸. New debt queries were raised on over 95,000 occasions in 2015/16, accounting for 17% of all new issues recorded during this period¹⁹.

18. *Advice in Scotland, A summary of evidence gathered by Citizens Advice Bureaux about their work, Advice in Scotland 2015-16, Citizens Advice Scotland Research Team*

19. *Advice in Scotland, A summary of evidence gathered by Citizens Advice Bureaux about their work, Advice in Scotland 2015-16, Citizens Advice Scotland Research Team*

The most common debt-related issue that clients sought advice on was Council Tax arrears²⁰; debt pages on our Advice for Scotland website were viewed over 180,000 times and profiling of debt-only clients revealed that they were slightly more likely to be in part or full-time employment (52%) than anything else²¹.

Overall in 2015/16, we were able to support clients seeking debt advice by reducing debts by almost £27 million²²; as well as helping clients to reschedule over £134 million of new debt recorded for over 14,000 cases – an average £9,000 of debt owed per case²³.

Changes to consumer credit

Proportionately clients are now presenting with fewer consumer credit problems year-on-year²⁴.

This reflects constraints on consumer credit – with many now simply unable to access loans or credit cards. This decrease also reflects the results of a three-year campaign by Citizens Advice Scotland on payday loans, which resulted in a cap on charges, restrictions on the use of continuous payment authorities and ‘roll over’ loans, and improved creditor practices. This has resulted in a 64% fall in payday loan issues at bureaux in Scotland over the last two years.

Similar campaigning work on credit brokers has also had a positive impact for consumers. In 2014, Citizens Advice Scotland published research that subsequently allowed the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to take action in the industry, resulting in a 94% fall in credit broker cases being reported by the Citizens Advice Consumer Service helpline in 2015/16.



Debt

queries were among the top three of all issues recorded



95,000

occasions where new debt queries were raised in 2015/16



17%

of all new issues recorded during this period were debt-related



180,00+

views recorded for our debt pages alone



Council Tax arrears

was the most common debt-related issue raised



64%

fall in payday loan issues recorded

20. *Advice in Scotland, A summary of evidence gathered by Citizens Advice Bureaux about their work, Advice in Scotland 2015-16, Citizens Advice Scotland Research Team*

21. *Who are you? Issue 4, Client Advice Profile 2015*

22. *Client Financial Gains; based on data recorded by Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Extra Help Unit; collated by Citizens Advice Scotland for 2015-16*

23. *Debt statistics recorded by Citizens Advice Bureaux, collated by Citizens Advice Scotland for 2015/16*

24. www.cas.org.uk/publications/living-sharp-end, P22, 17.03

Housing

Private renting dominates housing queries

Scottish Citizens Advice Bureaux provide advice on over 40,000 new housing issues each year (41,061 in 2015/16)²⁵.

Advice regarding privately-let properties accounted for the highest proportion of all housing related advice in 2015/16 (26%) – twice the proportion of queries relating to local authority housing or owner-occupied properties for the same period²⁶.

How we are influencing housing policy

Our evidence helped to support the review of private tenancies and the recommendations on the need for reform in the private rented sector market to better protect tenants' rights. This is likely to benefit consumers living in 267,000 private rented sector homes in Scotland.

Seeking an end to homelessness

Advice sought by our clients in relation to homelessness has increased by 6% from 2014/15²⁷ and the issue will continue to be a focus of research for Citizens Advice Scotland.

In our response to the 'Homelessness in Scotland' inquiry in 2014, we submitted written evidence to the Committee's inquiry on how local authorities are meeting their duties to people who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness since the abolition of the priority need test in 2012.

From bureaux evidence we found that local authorities were having some challenges in implementing the preventative 'Housing Options' approach. This had led to some clients being deterred from making a homeless application, which does not comply with their legal rights.

Citizens Advice Scotland recommended national guidance on Housing Options be published to ensure clarity for all local authorities on how they can combine a preventative approach, while at the same time ensuring that the statutory rights of homeless people are respected. We also suggested further investigation be carried out on the reasons why the proportion of people assessed as 'intentionally homeless' had increased.

25. *Advice in Scotland, A summary of evidence gathered by Citizens Advice Bureaux about their work, Advice in Scotland 2015-16, Citizens Advice Scotland Research Team, 'Housing'*

26. *Advice in Scotland, A summary of evidence gathered by Citizens Advice Bureaux about their work, 2015-16, Citizens Advice Scotland Research Team*

27. *Advice in Scotland, A summary of evidence gathered by Citizens Advice Bureaux about their work, Advice in Scotland 2015-16, Citizens Advice Scotland Research Team, 'Housing'*

Fuel poverty

The Extra Help Unit has statutory duties to assist vulnerable consumers and those who are disconnected from their energy supplies or who have been threatened with disconnection, including pre-payment off-supply cases. During 2015/16 the Extra Help Unit supported 1,176 Scottish consumers – equivalent to almost 3.5 per day²⁸.

The vast majority of clients supported were domestic consumers (94%) and the majority of issues recorded related to billing errors (38%), with metering in second place (21%) and debt/disconnections the third most common issue (19%)²⁹.

The largest proportion of Extra Help Unit clients (79%) had credit meters, while 19% had pre-payment meters. Those consumers on pre-payment meters were over twice as likely (37%) than those on credit meters (15%) to report issues in relation to debt and/or disconnection³⁰. The Extra Help Unit provided support to advice agencies on 137 occasions through the 'Ask the Adviser' service.

Paying the poverty premium

These statistics reflect what is known as the 'poverty premium' – whereby people on a low income pay more to access essential services because they are neither in a position to obtain credit nor sign a contract for services.

As part of a long-running campaign on the poverty premium, the Consumer Futures Unit has reviewed the energy, finance and telecommunications sectors to consider how companies could alter their business models to alleviate the poverty premium on low-income consumers. This work, along with research commissioned by Citizens Advice (England & Wales), will help form the basis of a wider business and consumer engagement and empowerment campaign later in 2016.

The Consumer Futures Unit has also worked with Citizens Advice (England & Wales) and the Extra Help Unit to provide evidence about Scottish Power's customer service and complaints handling performance in 2015/16. Consequently, the company was fined £18 million by Ofgem, which will fund energy-related projects as part of a government levy.



94%
of clients supported were domestic consumers



38%
of issues recorded related to billing errors



91%
Extra Help Unit client satisfaction



almost
£35k
(£348,127) in financial redress achieved

28. *Advice in Scotland, A summary of evidence gathered by Citizens Advice Bureaux about their work, Advice in Scotland 2015-16, Citizens Advice Scotland Research Team, 'Extra Help Unit'*

29, 30. *Advice in Scotland, A summary of evidence gathered by Citizens Advice Bureaux about their work, Advice in Scotland 2015-16, Citizens Advice Scotland Research Team, 3.39, 'Extra Help Unit'*

Digital exclusion

Digital by default: what does this approach mean for our clients?

In today's tech-driven world, those unable to access or afford digital devices are finding themselves sidelined from completing many essential online activities. With governments and other organisations moving to a digital-by-default model of delivery, this presents issues for those counted as 'digitally excluded'.

Only 24% of our clients said that they would be able to apply for a benefit on their own without any problems³¹; while nearly three quarters of all Citizens Advice Bureaux clients said that they would struggle to apply for a job online.

The top two barriers to completing any application online, as quoted by clients were³²:



49%

had never used a computer before



16%

Cited health issues, including physical disability or mental illness

As well as providing advice, Citizens Advice Bureaux assisted clients with completing over 27,000 benefits related forms³⁴; this is before taking into account proposed changes with the rollout of Universal Credit, which are likely to increase demand for support in this area.

What Citizens Advice Scotland is doing to promote digital inclusion

Our main impact on the issue of digital inclusion will come from compiling a strong evidence base to put before policy makers. During two weeks in August 2015, we asked all clients presenting with a benefits issue to complete a paper-based survey. One of the key findings of this research was that just 55% of those surveyed had a computer at home³³. You can view the complete findings at: <http://www.cas.org.uk/publications/bridging-digital-divide>

At Citizens Advice Scotland we will continue to work with partners across the public, private and third sectors, lending our expertise to resolve issues around computer and Internet access in the hope that we will be able to demonstrate the positive impact of our digital inclusion work in the next few years.

31, 32, 33. 'Bridging the Digital Divide', Measuring the progress of digital inclusion amongst Scottish Citizens Advice Bureaux clients, Patrick Hogan, P6, 'Intro'

34. Based on data recorded by Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Extra Help Unit; collated by Citizens Advice Scotland for 2015-16

Strength in numbers

Often, if a problem can't be solved through advice alone, it may be part of a wider systemic problem. This is where the Citizens Advice Scotland research and campaigning functions come to the fore.

Information is recorded on each client issue and a statistical analysis of this information is combined with research and policy insight to produce a robust evidence base.

Our research and campaign work

We are proud to have one of the most powerful evidence bases on social policy issues in Scotland. This anonymised client profile data on 25,000 clients⁴⁰ covers information such as locality, client groups, deprivation levels and urban/rural classification.

In 2015/16, Citizens Advice Scotland was able to draw information from over 7,000 case extracts provided by Citizens Advice Bureaux, illustrating key social policy and consumer issues and their personal impact. These 'real time' case examples and statistical evidence are used to give governments early, reliable evidence of where policy changes are required to mitigate the effects on some of the most vulnerable in society.

What does the impact of this work look like?

We are able to demonstrate the impact of our research and campaign work by evidencing that the original systemic issue has been addressed; that fewer people are being negatively impacted and that mitigation or recourse is available for those still affected by the original issue.

From informing public policy to raising public awareness, here is a snapshot of our research and campaign work and what it has delivered for the citizens of Scotland in 2015/16:

Scam reporting has **increased by almost a third** in Citizens Advice Bureaux and **50,000 people** are better informed.

Benefits claimants will be given the choice of **when and how** their Universal Credit payments will be made.

59,000 workers will benefit from the adoption of the Citizens Advice Scotland definition of the 'exploitative' zero hours contracts on the Scottish Government's Business Pledge website.

Consumers are **more informed** on parking charges and have benefitted from the new third party appeals service.

A new Disability Benefits Assessment Commission is to be established, which will **benefit over 190,000 disabled people**.

Almost 3,000 will benefit from a new Consumer Panel and a longer time to make complaints to the Scottish Legal Complaints Commission.

At least **one million Scots** with rural postcodes, who routinely face **surcharges, late delivery** or who are being **refused delivery** altogether when shopping online, seek to benefit from a working group set up by the Scottish Government as a result of extensive lobbying. This generated a statement of principles, setting out best practice for retailers, which was supported by the Scottish Retail Consortium.

Campaigns

The wide variety of issues that we campaigned on in 2015/16 included:

Scams Awareness Month

In July 2016, Citizens Advice Scotland ran Scams Awareness Month, a national campaign which aims to create a confident community of consumers by raising awareness of common scams and encouraging people to report them and share their experiences. Bureaux across Scotland took part, actively engaging 6,000 consumers face-to-face through local activity and events. In total, 27 national and local press stories achieved a potential readership of 954,696 and our social media campaign reached 336,000 people.

Big Energy Saving Week

In October 2016, Citizens Advice Scotland led on the co-ordination of Big Energy Saving Week (BESW) in Scotland. This supported consumers to manage their fuel bills by spreading awareness of methods to save money and energy and by signposting them to information and advice. Scottish Citizens Advice Bureaux delivered an extensive programme of events and activities during the campaign period, which reached 3,653 people. The press and social media campaign had a total reach of 534,864. During the campaign, the participating bureaux established links

and worked closely with 39 other local organisations, increasing local networking and partnership working opportunities.

Tough Act to Follow?

In November 2015, Citizens Advice Scotland led on the design and implementation of a public awareness-raising campaign in Scotland during National Consumer Week. By supporting Citizens Advice Bureaux to participate in the national campaign through carrying out their own activities, Citizens Advice Scotland were able to increase the impact of the campaign nationally. In total, 39 main Citizens Advice Bureaux offices played an active part in the campaign and 41 local events were held, with direct face-to-face contact estimated at 5,000 consumers. Our social media campaign reached 142,152 users – 1,532 of whom were actively engaged.

Citizens Advice Scotland carries out national campaigns across Scotland, focusing in particular on action at a local level via the Citizens Advice Bureaux network to raise awareness. Much of the impact of this work will bear results in future years.

How we create social value

Our volunteers make the Scottish Citizens Advice service what it is

It's not only the results of the work we do in Scotland that create value for individuals and society, but also the way in which we work as an organisation too.

We are unique in that we have 2,395 highly skilled volunteers³⁵ who donate their time to the service. On average, our advisers undergo an initial six-month programme of intensive training, as well as ongoing training, in order to deliver advice through the Citizens Advice Bureaux network and the wider Citizens Advice service in Scotland. This allows us to create over £10 million in value every year in volunteer hours³⁶ – over and above the return of £11 for every £1 we receive in core funding⁴³.

What's in it for our volunteers?

There are considerable benefits to being a Citizens Advice volunteer. Our volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds: many are unemployed and find that the combination of the intensive training we provide, alongside the skills they develop through interaction with the public have a significant positive impact on their employability.

In fact:



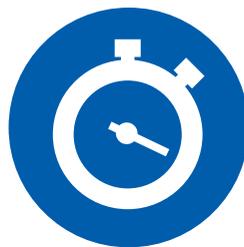
42%

of volunteers left the network to go on to employment or further education and training in 2015/16



71%

of our people are volunteers



7 hours

per week is the average contribution from each volunteer

Quite simply, we could not operate the Citizens Advice service without the considerable input of our volunteers

35. *Advice in Scotland, A summary of evidence gathered by Citizens Advice Bureaux about their work, Advice in Scotland 2015-16, Citizens Advice Scotland Research Team, 'Intro'*

36. <http://www.cas.org.uk/about-us/scottish-citizens-advice-network-statistics/local-authorities>

Our volunteers

Douglas

Generalist Adviser & Social Policy Co-ordinator at Ross & Cromarty Citizens Advice Bureau



"I joined as a volunteer after having had a heart attack; being inactive during recovery was getting me down.

"The area covered by our bureau is over 5,500 sq. km. and

includes many remote communities. I'm currently trialling consultations via Skype, which if taken forward, could help us to reach more isolated individuals and also enable volunteers to work from home if they have transport or health issues themselves."

Fiona

Welfare Rights Officer at Caithness Citizens Advice Bureau



"I came to the bureau after a bereavement meant I had to give up my job and move in with my parents. I was also having problems with my mental health and confidence.

"After volunteering for a year, I was offered paid work as a Welfare Rights Officer and have now been here two years. We help the clients, but we also provide massive support to each other. I certainly got my confidence back and I've learned skills that have carried me into a new, rewarding career."

Donnie

Board Member and former Adviser at Caithness Citizens Advice Bureau



"I retired in 1997 after 40 years advising on Radiological Protection and Health and Safety at Work. I'd also been appointed as Justice of the Peace and served as a Magistrate at the local District Court.

"After a year's training at Thurso Citizens Advice Bureau, I was ready to be 'let loose' on the public and volunteered at Wick and Thurso bureaux for 15 years – meeting and helping a diverse range of clients.

"I would recommend volunteering as an adviser to everyone who has the time."

Steven

Administration Volunteer – Citizens Advice & Rights Fife



"I've been volunteering in Leven Citizens Advice & Rights Fife in an administration role since I left college five years ago. I was looking for something useful to do that allowed me to give back to the community.

"I've been involved in setting up most of the systems here and have also trained other volunteers. Without volunteers, Citizens Advice & Rights Fife would not be able to provide the fantastic service it does – I hope to be part of the team for another five years at least!"

