



ARMED SERVICES ADVICE PROJECT Half Year Report 1 October 2017 – 31 March 2018

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 ten 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 2017 – 31 March 2018

- Advisers helped 1319 individuals over the period, supporting them with 5,696 new and repeat issues. This resulted in an average of
 - 5 issues per client for face to face advice in the regions
 - 1.4 issues per client for the helpline.
- The split of clients across the Services showed 74% of clients connected to the Army, 13% to the RAF and 13% to the Royal Navy / Merchant Navy.
- The majority of ASAP clients are ex-serving (79%), and a further 11% are dependents or carers of ex-serving personnel. Serving personnel make up 7% of the client group, and dependents or carers of serving the remaining 3%.
- 47% of issues raised were about benefits, 15% concerned debts. Financial issues including charitable grant applications accounted for 12% of issues raised, and housing 6%.
- Clients may gain financially as a result of the advice and 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 six month period was £1,109,535. A total of 403 clients benefited from a financial gain; the average financial gain per client was £2873.

From the start of the service on 1 July 2010 to 31 March 2018, ASAP has supported a total of 12,577 individual clients with more than 62,500 new and repeat issues. The client financial gain since the start of ASAP is £10,527,226, which is a return of £3.83 for every £1 of funding received.

1. Our clients

Table 1: Number of clients in each region

Region	October – December 2017	January – March 2018
Citizens Advice Direct National Helpline	115	130
Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire	52	48
Argyll and Bute	28	24
Edinburgh and Lothians	80	93
Falkirk	48	67
Fife	88	117
Inverness, Moray and Nairn	60	90
Lanarkshire	130	133
Renfrewshire	65	58
Stirlingshire and Clackmannanshire	43	47
Tayside	74	86
Total	783	893

Notes:

- The ASAP service in the Falkirk area is jointly funded by Falkirk Council and the ASAP funding partnership.
- 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.

The number of clients is broadly similar to the same period last year, however there has been an increase in the number of issues recorded, continuing the trend from the previous quarter indicating that the support needs of clients are becoming increasingly complex.

2. Advice needs of ASAP clients

Figure 1: 5,696 new and repeat issues raised by clients

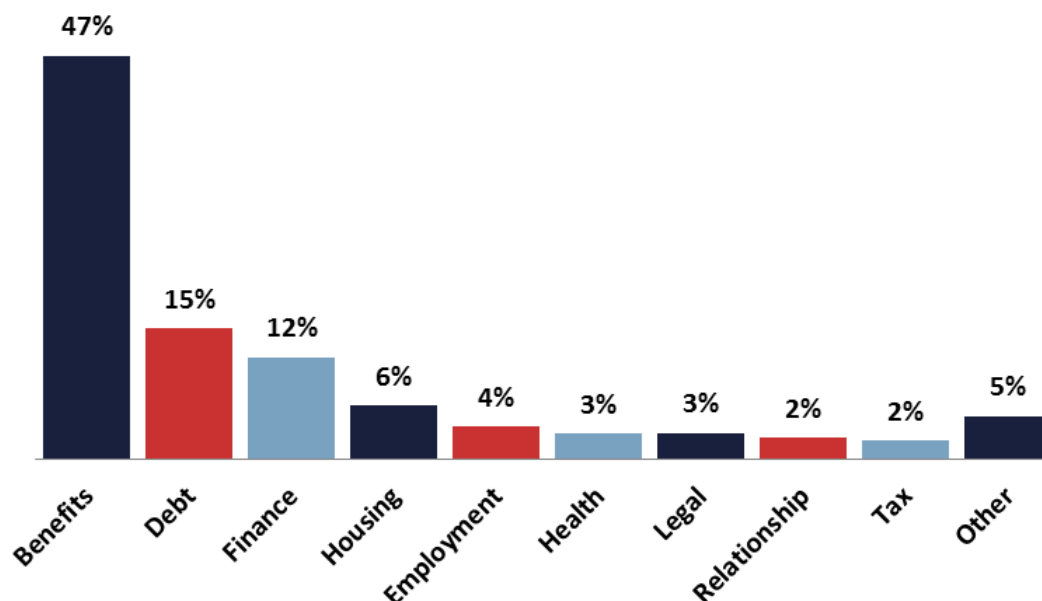
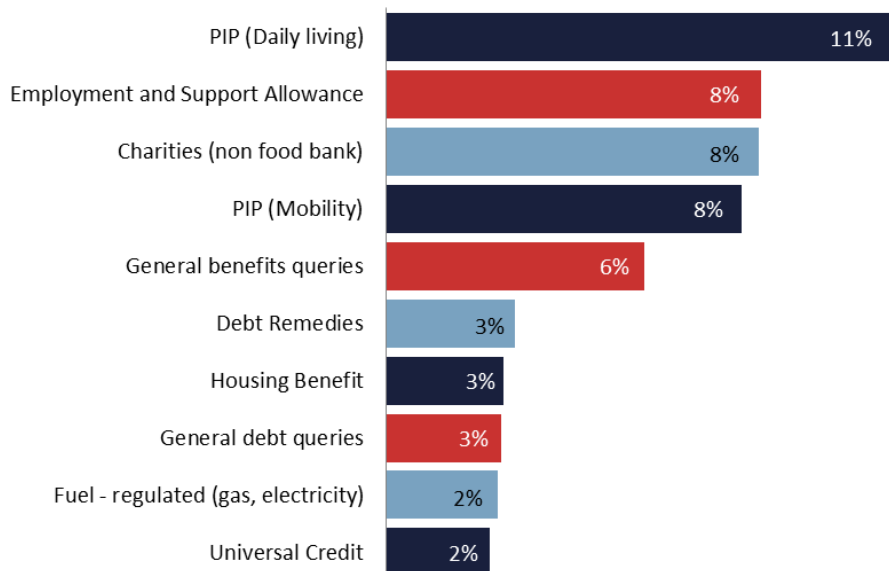


Figure 2: Top 10 advice issues



As full service Universal Credit is rolled out this is likely to become more prominent as an issue for our client base. It is striking that the main issues dealt with are access to benefits and charitable applications, with Attendance Allowance and food bank referrals each accounting for 2% of issues.

3. Who we've worked with

ASAP continues to work with many organisations at a local and national level to ensure that people who work with those who might benefit from our support are aware of the service. This includes attendance at AGMs of bureaux, SSAFA and local branches of veterans' organisations; relevant meetings and networking; stands and presentations at conferences. A number of advisers provide successful outreach services at their local Veterans First Point centre, and other local centres supporting veterans.

This facilitates ASAP advisers making referrals to and receiving referrals from a wide range of organisations, including prisons, Serving units, the Personnel Recovery Centre, Legion Scotland and veterans housing providers, as well as local authority departments, health professionals within the NHS and organisations supporting people with health issues such as SAMH, Combat Stress and MacMillan.

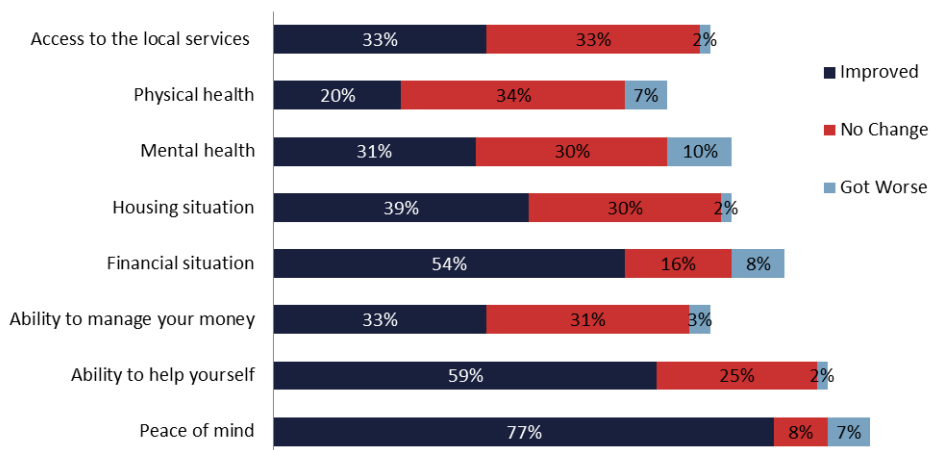
ASAP advisers work closely with other specialist advisers within their bureau, including money advisers, housing officers and representation units, supporting clients to access these services.

4. What we've done for clients

We ask clients what they think of the service we provide, and how it has helped them. Over the last six months, 61 clients responded to the survey. Of these, 92% rated the service they received from ASAP as very good or good.

The main outcome reported as a result of the support received from ASAP was increased peace of mind, reported by 77% of respondents. A significant proportion also reported improved ability to help themselves and improved financial situation.

Figure 3: Outcomes for our clients



The ASAP helpline provides support to clients who are struggling to find the local support they need:

An Army veteran contacted several veterans charities for support after his benefits had been sanctioned for missing an appointment, despite explaining that he is sometimes unable to leave the house due to anxiety. The loss of benefits had left him without food or electricity. The charities he had spoken to suggested that he contacted SSAFA, however he had been unable to do so. The client has also spoken to a few local foodbanks, but they were unable to help without a referral.

The ASAP helpline adviser located a foodbank that was able to help the client that day, however the client was unsure if he would be able to travel there. The helpline adviser also referred the client to the local ASAP adviser, who was able to make a referral to a closer foodbank, and provide support with the benefits situation. Meanwhile the helpline adviser also contacted SSAFA who visited the client to assess the short term support requirements for food / electricity until the client's benefits situation was resolved.

We support people with a range of different issues which can impact on their wellbeing:

A Royal Navy veteran with mental health issues was in dispute with his neighbours and local council over the parking of his motorcycles and lack of driveway. The ASAP adviser successfully negotiated a settlement in which the veteran removed two motorcycles and agreed to build a shed. The local council agreed to put in a driveway for his motability car, thus providing a dedicated parking space. The neighbour was happy that the shed would remove unsightly motorcycle parts beside the house, and the veteran had a major source of stress removed.

ASAP advisers support clients in extremely difficult situations, and provide feedback to inform policy issues:

An Army veteran was medically discharged with physical and mental health issues. He has been working, but was on long term sickness leave. His employer gave him incorrect information about his benefit entitlement once he was on reduced pay, and failed to issue the correct paperwork, causing the client stress regarding the expectation of the hours he has to work, loss of benefits and affordability of his mortgage payments. The ASAP adviser was able to support the client to access the benefits he was entitled to, highlighting the need for skilled, independent advice for people in situations that make them more vulnerable.

5. Project Developments

5.1. Unforgotten Forces – supporting older veterans

The Citizens Advice Bureau service in Scotland is a member of the Unforgotten Forces consortium, through ASAP. ASAP already works with all members of the Armed Forces community, regardless of age, and has therefore used some of the funding to increase capacity in ASAP regions to support an increased number of veterans aged 65 and older. This has led to an increase in adviser or administration support hours, involvement of other bureau staff or volunteers and new outreach in venues working with older people. The Livingston Bureau hosted a successful Unforgotten Forces launch event for local partners in February.

The funding also provides a Volunteer Development Officer who is working with bureaux not currently involved in ASAP to recruit and train volunteers to support our client group, with an emphasis on older veterans. We are pleased that Dumfries and Galloway CAB and Caithness CAB will start providing specialist support to older veterans this month.

5.2. Expansion of ASAP face to face support

We are pleased to announce that, supported by Poppyscotland, ASAP is now able to provide face to face advice in Ayrshire. The service is based in East Ayrshire CAB, and will be rolled out over the next few months as the advisers complete their training.

5.3. Strategic review of ASAP

ASAP is in the eighth year of service delivery. We are currently undertaking a strategic review of the service provided to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of our clients, the bureaux delivering the service and our funders. The information gathered will be used to inform future discussions with our funders and service developments.

Finally

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

“I found my adviser excellent in dealing with all my problems, the adviser got me benefits I did not know I was entitled to. They solved all my money / benefits problems which has enabled me to now live a better life.”

Contact

Claire Williams, Armed Services Advice Project Co-ordinator, Citizens Advice Scotland
claire.williams@cas.org.uk
0131 550 7186

May 2018