

Advice as a tool to tackle poverty



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A bit about Citizens Advice Sheffield

- Independent local charity, part of a network of c. 250 local Citizens Advice organisations
- Over 180 staff and more than 30 volunteers
- Also a Law Centre (employing 3 solicitors)
- Advice & Advocacy
- Advice includes generalists and specialists - we have experts on welfare benefits, immigration, debt, housing and employment

The challenge: getting advice to the people who need it the most in a diverse city with significant areas of deprivation against a background of increasing needs and finite resources

Striking a balance

Open access



Targeted services

Open Access Advice

c. 10k contacts per quarter

- multi-channel - phone and email
- holistic advice - most clients have multiple issues
- 95% issues fully dealt with in first call
- empower those who can to self-serve
- follow up casework where needed

Access supported by:

- direct referrals
- community access points
- community language lines
- interpreting services



Targeted services

- supporting people with the most complex needs
- full case work
- tailored to a particular client group
- usually working in partnership
- not all face to face but it has a key part to play

a few examples:

Patients with life-changing diagnoses/ injuries

- Spinal Injuries
- Cancer
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Sickle Cell

In person support where patients are, supported by strong links with clinicians.



People using food banks

In person advice at 12 food banks each week

- clients often have complex needs and are in crisis
- follow up casework after initial meeting
- shared goals to enable financial independence (where this is possible)



Mental health service users

- links between debt/ poverty and mental health are well known
- long established service embedded within NHS, base on site
- supports clients in community as well as those on wards, including under section
- having the time to build trust with clients is critical
- supports timely discharge



D/deaf clients

- Long established and trusted by community
- Full advice in British Sign Language
- Face to face and video appointments
- Support often involves supporting clients to understand letters or raising concerns about housing issues, finances or appointments
- Full casework where needed



Also in development

- ICB funded advice in GP practices
- targeted provision in partnership with community organisations supporting people from ethnic minority backgrounds
- updated website to include webforms and potentially webchat

And ongoing work to secure future funding for all our services

Thank you

