

Modelling our value to society in 2016/17

Technical Annex:

The difference we make: Our impact in 2016/17



**citizens
advice**

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Why do we measure our value?

Evidence allows us to be better ambassadors for our work: fully explaining why people need support and what we achieve.

Ultimately, as a charity, it's right that people want to be sure we provide value for money — and we need to demonstrate this in a way anyone can understand.

And we can. In 2016/17 we doubled the return of the money invested in our service. This demonstrates our services are good value for money, a crucial statement in the context of squeezed public finances.

We first started looking at our financial value to society in 2014, and have revisited it annually. This is now our fourth estimate. It's a testament to the strength of our previous work that we've kept closely to what's gone before. We've brought the methodology up-to-date with fresh evidence, and ensured we're only putting a value where we can be sure we're mitigating societal detriment.

We've always approached looking at our value with the same mindset. We aim to tell our story credibly, using arguments true to the difference we aim to make, backed-up with robust compelling data.

And we only put a value on what we can firmly evidence. As our evidence shows, it's likely that we only scratching the surface of how our work benefits the people we help and society as a result. Ours is a minimum return, but a credible one. Keeping to the known facts and challenging ourselves to extend our insight is true to who we are as an organisation. We have data and insight at our heart, and constantly aim to build on what we know about how problems affect people's lives - and what resolving those problems achieves.

For most, the figures alone will be enough. But we also produce this annex that explains our workings — a crucial part of being transparent in what we say.

We also know we can't just communicate our value in strict financial terms — it only gives part of the story. Our report, *The difference we make: our impact in 2016/17* launches the start of a conversation about impact, and we'll be sharing about what we're learning about how our services work in the coming months.

Modelling our value

How do you measure the impact and value of Citizens Advice?

A service that directly helps millions of people a year, each with their different and unique backgrounds, problems and needs. We aren't driven by a one size fits all approach. We meet people in the midst of their problems and tailor our advice to help each person find a way forward.

It's not uncommon to hear our clients refer to the help they received as priceless, life changing or invaluable. Alongside debts managed, jobs kept and rights established, we are aware of lives not only changed but also lives saved through suicide prevented, families kept together, worries, stress and depression overcome and a new sense of confidence and purpose ahead. We also hear how those who volunteer with us have gained confidence, self-esteem, new paid employment and reduced depression. How do you put a value on all of that?

We can't speak to all our clients about their experience. So we survey large, robust and representative samples of the people we help to understand the outcomes we helped to achieve and the impact that had on their life.

This year, we've gone further than before. The results of our new *Outcomes and impact research* are used extensively in our impact report and modelling. This is our most robust and extensive research to date, where we've followed up with more clients on new areas where we make a difference. We thank the 3,600 participants who gave us their time and responded, as well as the 3,700 clients that took part in our regular evaluation of our consumer helpline. We've also previously surveyed nearly 1,500 volunteers to ask about their experiences, again we thank them all.

Outcomes and impact is one thing – value is another. With new compelling impact evidence, we've built on our previous cost-benefit analysis work. We use New Economy's cost benefit model, and thank their economics team for their guidance in how best to approach calculating Citizens Advice's value to society. The model used has been reviewed and approved by HM Treasury, using robust methodology it also takes account of the latest evidence and data. It enables us to show our value both to the Government in terms of exchequer benefits and more widely benefits to society.

Within our impact report and these technical workings, we have still stuck to what we know and used caution when making assumptions. We don't yet put an overall value on our education or research and campaigns work we know would boost our value further still.

So against the backdrop of 2.7 million individuals with different needs and the transformative effect that advice can have, we still acknowledge that the findings here are simplified and likely to underplay our true value. But the message is clear. Life is complicated, we're here to help. Free, impartial advice is crucial and highly valuable to individuals, government and society as a whole.

What is our financial value to society?



All of our activities and the way we work come together to benefit individuals, government and society. Our value stems from the way we help with problems that can affect individuals, and the detrimental impact they can have on their lives. This includes working with those most in need. Advice and education, research and advocacy can mitigate this detriment – through resolving problems now and preventing them in the future.

This saves money for the government, significantly for local authorities through helping to prevent evictions and homelessness, the Department for Work and Pensions through helping to maintain people in work rather than on benefits, and the NHS through improving people's health and well-being. It also benefits society through healthier, happier people moving forward with their lives with new confidence, participating in their community and working more productively – this is our value to society.

Our modelling also allows us to show how fiscal savings are attributed to specific government departments, for example:

Department for Work and Pensions through reduced out-of-work benefits £155 million	Local authorities through reducing cases of homelessness £70 million	Department of Health by reducing the use of health services £50 million
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In 2016/17, the Citizens Advice service received £218 million in funding.¹ This is a provisional figure covering all that we do, running and staffing local advice centres, telephone call centres, developing our website, and our corporate roles including research and campaigns. Funding comes from central government, the Welsh Assembly, the Money Advice Service, local authorities and a range of other funders.

When we put a conservative financial estimate on our value, it exceeds our funding considerably.

What is the aim of this technical annex?

The purpose of this document is to explain how we've done this - to sit alongside the main report, *The difference we make: Our impact in 2016/17*,² that speaks about our value. We want to be transparent with our evidence and where we've made assumptions so that people can hold us to account. It is the responsible thing to do.

We've split this document out into three main sections:

- **Our fiscal benefits and public value:** This shows how we've used the New Economy model to demonstrate the value associated with some of our key arguments for advice provision and working with volunteers.
- **Our benefits to individuals:** Some of the value of advice provision accrues directly to our clients, and we've produced estimates of this from our management information and impact research.
- **Our value is likely to be greater:** We haven't put a financial figure on everything we do and this final section explains where else we may be creating value to society as well as future impact research plans.

¹ Annual reports and accounts from Citizens Advice and each local Citizens Advice detail the funding bodies and amounts.

² Available at: citizensadvice.org.uk/impact

Our fiscal benefits and public value

Working with the New Economy tool

Central to how we conceive our value is a simple premise: we create value through the positive impact we have on individuals' lives, which in turn benefits local communities and society. These individuals might be our clients, or members of the public who benefit via our research and campaigns work, or our volunteers.

We have looked at where we can put a financial value on our work with these individuals, using a cost benefit tool created by New Economy.³

This has been developed with and approved by HM Treasury economists to ensure that the methodology is robust and it takes account of the most up to date research and data. The model considers the following types of benefit:

- Fiscal benefit: financial savings to local and national government.
- Public value: economic and social benefits.

It is impossible to put a value on everything that we do and every way we help our clients. Therefore we have identified some of the main areas where we can show we have a positive direct impact and where there is evidence appropriate to the New Economy model, namely around the benefits of advice and of working with volunteers.

We've used the tool in consultation with accompanying guide, that has been produced in accordance with the HM Treasury Green Book and designed with central government department analysts⁴.

The table below describes key aspects of how the model works, the evidence needed to populate different fields, as well as broad details of how we've interpreted and applied the model to reflect the impact we achieve through our work with our clients and volunteers.

³ Available at: neweconomymanchester.com

⁴ New Economy. (2014) *Supporting public service transformation: cost benefit analysis guidance for local partnerships*

Model aspect	Description	Citizens Advice application
Affected population	Number of individuals at risk of the associated problem.	Figures are taken from our management information, in conjunction with impact research, on the number of individuals affected.
Level of engagement (%)	Percentage of individuals who have engaged with the service.	We have assumed 100%, as our client figures are taken from our management information which is based on individuals that have engaged with the service and that have received a service.
Level of retention (%)	Percentage of individuals that are retained throughout.	
Impact (%)	Percentage of individuals that have achieved a relevant outcome.	The scale of our impact has been taken from impact research, primarily our <i>Outcomes and impact research</i> .
Deadweight (%)	Factoring into our assumption of our impact what might have happened if we did not exist, or our service was not used.	For advice, we have evidence that shows that only approximately 20% of our clients would have been able to solve their problems without us ⁵ . However, we have used 50% throughout to be conservative. We have applied the same principle for the value of volunteering.
Optimism bias correction	Correction (0% to -40%) given in response to a level of uncertainty or over-optimism of the strength of, and confidence in, the data, evidence or assumptions made.	The optimism bias we have used varies according to the arguments and assumptions made. In general, we have taken 15% away when using our <i>outcomes and impact research (2017)</i> , but have made other corrections too where we want to add additional caution. Where we have strengthened our evidence base this year, we have still been conservative when revisiting any corrections (eg reducing the optimism bias by just 5% rather than a full level).
Analysis time frame	The length of time chosen to assess the benefits of the service.	We use a one year time frame. This is likely a minimum estimate - our benefits likely last longer - but we have based this on what we know for sure.
Unit cost estimates	New Economy have worked with the Cabinet Office to produce a database of mostly national estimates for service costs and savings, related to fiscal benefits and public value.	
GDP deflator	Unit cost figures have derived by New Economy on the basis of DWP analysis given in prior years. The cost benefit tool therefore applies a GDP deflator in order to align values to current prices. ⁶	

⁵ Citizens Advice. (2017) *Outcomes and impact research*: 77% of Citizens Advice clients said they would not have been able to resolve their problem without us.

⁶ Further details are available in the accompanying guidance paper: New Economy. (2014) *Supporting public service transformation: cost benefit analysis guidance for local partnerships*

The value of our advice provision

Our estimate of the value of the Citizens Advice service advice provision, in fiscal benefit and public value:

Savings to local and national government (fiscal benefits): £426 million Reduction in health service demand, local authority homelessness and out-of-work benefits	Wider economic and social benefits (public value): £2.5 billion Improvements in health, well-being, participation and productivity
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Our advice and support helps to prevent detriment occurring or escalating further. For example, through giving employment advice we may help the individual to maximise their income. We might prevent the person from falling out of work and onto benefits, thus saving government money. We may help the individual's mental well-being as well, preventing costs to GPs, the health service and boosting productivity in the workplace. Ensuring that clients have the income they need to maintain a good standard of living targets the social determinants of health, and reduces the likelihood they will have to turn to high-cost credit to keep up with rent and utilities. This income is also spent locally, benefiting local communities.

The main arguments where we can evidence our financial value concern:

- Keeping people in employment or helping them back to work.
- Preventing housing evictions and statutory homelessness.
- Reducing the demand for mental health and GP services.
- Improved mental well-being.
- Improved positive functioning.
- Improved family relationships.

Our modelling also allows us to show how fiscal savings are attributed to specific government departments, for example:

- £155 million to Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) through reduced out-of-work benefits.
- £50 million to Department of Health by reducing the use of health services.
- £70 million to local authorities through preventing cases of homelessness. This is only a fraction of our true value to local authorities: there is significant benefit in helping clients negotiate local processes, such as welfare reform changes, and managing debts owed to local government.

Our advice areas

We give advice on all sorts of different issues and problems that are presented by our clients. However, our main advice areas can be broken down into debt, welfare, housing, employment and consumer issues.

When working with the New Economy cost benefit model, we often take an approach to consider debt clients separately from other clients. This is because the cost-benefit model does not include an argument about the value to society of resolving a debt problem. Instead, we need to be able to evidence the effects of debt on people's lives, and the likely negative outcomes as a result of their problem if we had not intervened and solved their problem (e.g. losing their job, being evicted or becoming homeless).

These negative effects are not unusual. Our management information and our evidence shows that debt advice is often intertwined with other areas. For example, someone with debt problems often needs housing advice (rent arrears) and may be struggling to cope at work.

Likewise, experiencing detriment as the result of a problem is common for our clients - 9 in 10 say that they experienced a negative effect on their life, such as increased anxiety, or instability in their housing or employment situation.

The extent of this detriment can vary. Our new outcomes and impact research allows us to understand the extent or severity to which the problem affected someone (on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is 'to a great extent'). We use this to focus our affected population on those we know are highly likely to have experienced the negative consequences of their problem.⁷

When considering our value, we take the following conservative approach:

- We take the affected population of debt clients as those that report having severe detriment (5) as a result of their debt in particular areas (eg. their employment, housing stability etc.). This focuses on those that were highly likely to otherwise have required state intervention - we then evidence where this detriment was mitigated, and the client reported an improvement following advice. It is likely that our true affected population is likely to be bigger - debt clients that were affected to a lesser extent could still have been at risk of needing additional public services - and therefore our value is likely to be greater, but we have been cautious in our approach.
- For other advice areas, where the detriment is the presenting issue they turned to us about (e.g. homelessness), we use our management information to report the number of people we saw last year. We use a wider

⁷ Similarly, following advice, we can also understand to what extent they felt any benefits or improvement in their situation.

scale of detriment and impact (3-5), as we can be more certain of the detriment and impact associated.

Throughout our workings, for each argument we make, we therefore either present: (a) two figures, one for our debt clients and one that covers all other areas of advice or (b) a combined figure for all our unique clients seen in 2016/17, where appropriate.⁸

We have also taken steps to deduplicate our figures. It is common for our clients to have more than one advice need and these can span different areas of advice. We do not want to double count someone with debt problems and housing problems and count them on both sides. So we have started with debt clients and removed any duplicates from other areas of advice.

Our evidence

Our modelling of the value of advice provision and understanding of our impact is underpinned by evidence from management information and impact research.

Management information:

Our daily interaction with our clients, and our centralised CRM with standardised methods of recording and processing details of clients problems, gives us an unprecedented understanding of the issues that are affecting our clients. This allows us to spot high-level trends as well as look at problems in granular detail and see how they can interact. It also means we know a lot about the profile of our clients and the nature of their lives, enabling us to understand who it is that is seeking help. We also record the outcomes we achieve for our clients, where these are known.

Outcomes and impact research (2017):

This year, we conducted a large-scale national survey with a representative sample of 3,600 clients. This comprised of a follow-up telephone questionnaire with clients, focusing on the client journey from beginning to end.

Following-up with more clients, and taking a quota-based approach to our sample, enables further analysis of this data to greater granularity (eg our main advice areas). As a result, we have a more detailed understanding of the effects of problems and impacts of advice.

This research sample was representative of the overall population of clients in terms of the type of problems clients had, how they accessed the service and their demographic profile.

⁸ We have taken the number of unique clients from management information recorded within our CRM, and focused on clients that have received a certain level of intervention from us.

The majority of calls took place 3-5 months after the client sought advice at the local Citizens Advice. Some clients fell outside this frame due to efforts to fill sample quotas and the time it took to fill different groups.

A margin of error of +/- 2% is associated with overall statistics. These include:

- 7 in 10 people are helped to have their problem solved.
- 4 in 5 clients said our help improved their lives in other ways, such as reducing stress, improving finances and stabilising housing or employment circumstance.

This builds on our previous *National Outcomes and Impact Research* (2014), where we undertook research with 2,700 clients. While we have kept to 15% optimism bias correction based on the standard of our evidence, we can take added confidence from the fact that we now have two significant and robust datasets that demonstrate the efficacy of our local advice.

We'll be publishing further analysis and methodology from our *Outcomes and Impact research* in the coming months.

Expertise from advice and policy specialists:

Citizens Advice draws on the expertise of advice and policy specialists to deliver its services.

Our expert advice team are specialists in specific advice areas, providing consultancy to our local network on client cases, helping to ensure our advice is right, relevant and up-to-date. We also have teams of policy researchers and campaign officers who seek to understand systemic problems, pose policy solutions and campaign for change.

In producing our modelling, we've consulted with colleagues, using their detailed knowledge of the problems experienced by our clients and Citizens Advice policy research to help build our financial arguments.

Keeping people in employment or helping them back to work

When someone loses their job, it is common for them to claim one of the out-of-work benefits, such as jobseeker's allowance, employment support allowance or universal credit. There may also be additional benefits paid such as housing benefit, council tax benefit and tax credits. There may also be a loss of income tax revenue and national insurance contributions to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Preventing someone from losing their job, or helping someone into work, is of benefit to the exchequer through lower benefit payments and higher tax revenues. There are also some benefits to the NHS around reduced use of health services from staying in employment.

Our advice can help people stay in work. For our debt clients, this is often a secondary outcome. Our evidence shows that 14% of employed debt clients severely worry about losing their job as a result of their debt problem⁹. Our evidence also shows that after advice, 31% of these clients report feeling much more confident with their job security¹⁰.

Our employment advice has much more direct impact in helping people to stay in work. For those with problems at work concerning pay and entitlements, terms and conditions, dispute resolution and wrongful dismissal, advice can solve problems and lead to more secure work outcomes. Of these clients, 54% said their employment issue was causing them to struggle to stay in work¹¹. We solve 61% of these employment problems and 61% of clients said they could not have done this without Citizens Advice.¹²

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
20,079	31%	50%	15%
Debt clients who were employed (41% of all our 349,802 debt clients in 2016/17), ¹³ who said their debt problem was causing them to severely struggle to keep their job (14%) ¹⁴	Of these clients, 31% said that their employment situation was now much more secure (5, on a scale of 1-5) after advice ¹⁵	We assume 50% would have been able to resolve their work situation without help and advice. This is the standard deadweight we use throughout the report.	Our evidence is based on a robust national analysis of outcomes, which was carried out in 2016/17.

⁹ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Citizens Advice management information

¹⁴ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

¹⁵ Ibid.

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
50,518	61%	50%	15%
We saw 128,153 clients with an employment problem relating to terms and conditions, pay and entitlements, workers rights, dispute resolution, unfair, wrongful and constructive dismissal - 73% were still employed. ¹⁶ 54% were worried about losing their job as a result of their problem. ¹⁷	61% are helped to solve their employment problem. ¹⁸	Standard 50% deadweight	Our evidence is based on a robust national analysis of outcomes which was carried out in 2016/17.

Fiscal benefit	£9,800 ¹⁹	£164,419,424
	Unit cost applied for reduced benefits payments and health impact [93.829 GDP deflator applied]	Total value in 2016/17
Public value	£14,610 ²⁰	£245,119,162
	As above	Total value in 2016/17

¹⁶ Citizens Advice management information.

¹⁷ *Outcomes and impact research*, 2017

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ New Economy unit-cost database: Department for Work and Pensions response to parliamentary questions, HC Deb 6 February 2013, vol 558, col 352W

²⁰ Ibid.

Preventing housing evictions and statutory homelessness

When someone has housing problems, the impact and associated cost can be severe if the situation is not resolved. Housing problems can lead to eviction and homelessness resulting in costs for landlords, the court system and, more significantly, for local authorities who must step in to offer temporary accommodation to those who are made statutory homeless. These problems and costs can be exacerbated in local areas where demand for housing is high, leading to high rental values and lengthy waiting lists for social tenancies.

Much of our housing advice seeks to prevent these costs from occurring, through resolving issues with landlords, challenging eviction notices and agreeing payment plans for rent and mortgage arrears.

Again, we separate debt clients who have housing problems through rent arrears, from clients who approach us directly about housing problems, threatened eviction and homelessness.

Two sets of tables are produced and presented below. The first relates to the prevention of costs associated with legal proceedings in serving eviction notices. The second relates to the costs prevented to local authorities in meeting duties to provide temporary housing to those made statutory homeless.

Preventing housing evictions

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
104,941	42%	50%	15%
Of all debt clients (349,802), 30% of were worried about losing their home as a result of their debt problem to a great extent (5) ²¹	42% said that their housing situation was now much more secure after advice (5, on a scale of 1-5) ²²	Standard 50% deadweight	Our evidence is based on a robust national analysis of outcomes, which was carried out in 2016/17. ²³

²¹ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ As we are focusing on a smaller group of debt clients who are severely affected - therefore likely underestimating our true affected population and value - we have kept to 15% without further correction.

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
20,106	68%	50%	15%
Number of unique clients with possession orders (deduplicated from debt clients)	Proportion of clients who said that their problem was solved after advice ²⁴	Standard 50% deadweight	Our evidence is based on a robust national analysis of outcomes, which was carried out in 2016/17.

Fiscal benefit	£6,180 ²⁵	£167,197,693
	Unit cost used for reduced costs of legal proceedings and repair of property [90.715 GDP deflator applied]	Total value in 2016/17
Public value	£6,180 ²⁶	£167,197,693
	As above	Total value in 2016/17

On the advice of New Economy, we have subtracted £500 from the unit cost for both fiscal and public value. This reflects that £500 in these figures represents some of the costs to Local Authorities in terms of providing temporary accommodation.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ New Economy unit-cost database: Shelter. (2012) *Research Briefing: Immediate costs to government of loss of home*

²⁶ Ibid.

Preventing statutory homelessness

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
56,668	42%	50%	15%
30% of all debt clients who were worried to a great extent about losing their home as a result of their debt problem, who have dependent children or are disabled. ²⁷	42% said that their housing situation was now much more secure after advice (5, on a scale of 1-5) ²⁸	Standard 50% deadweight	Our evidence is based on a robust national analysis of outcomes, which was carried out in 2016/17. ²⁹

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
20,114	67%	50%	15%
Number of unique clients with threatened homelessness (deduplicated from debt clients) who have dependent children or are disabled	Proportion of clients who said that their problem was solved after advice ³⁰	Standard 50% deadweight	Our evidence is based on a robust national analysis of outcomes, which was carried out in 2016/17.
10,581	67%	50%	15%
Number of unique clients with actual homelessness (deduplicated from debt clients) who have dependent children or are disabled	Proportion of clients who said that their problem was solved after advice ³¹	Standard 50% deadweight	Our evidence is based on a robust national analysis of outcomes, which was carried out in 2016/17.

²⁷ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ As we are focusing on a smaller group of debt clients who are severely affected - therefore likely underestimating our true affected population and value - we have kept to 15% without further correction.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

Fiscal benefit	£2,501 ³²	£51,984,886
	Unit cost applied for reduced costs of statutory homelessness, such as temporary accommodation	Total value in 2016/17
	[90.715 GDP deflator applied]	
Public value	£2,501 ³³	£51,984,886
	As above	Total value in 2016/17

Reducing the demand for mental health and GP services

We've been able to further evidence our impact on our client's health this year. We've reconfirmed that having a problem can negatively affect someone's mental health or physical health: 82% felt more stressed, depressed or anxious, and 60% felt their physical health worsened.³⁴

Without resolving problems, these issues can get worse and lead to appointments being made with GPs and prescriptions for treatment, including talking therapies. Our clients report that problems exacerbate health conditions: nearly 1 in 2 needed more help and support from health services.³⁵ Our clients also state that they spent more time discussing non-clinical issues with health professionals.³⁶

In addition, forthcoming Citizens Advice research shows that a fifth of GP consultation time is spent attending to non-medical related issues, such as relationship breakdown, debt problems and issues at work.³⁷ Moreover, the majority of GPs said that this meant less time to see other patients, increased the stress of their job and led to extra costs for their practice and the NHS.³⁸

Our advice helps. In general, 70% felt less stressed, and 46% said physical health improved following our support. For those with health conditions, 57% felt better able to manage their existing health conditions; 42% said they needed less help and support from health services.³⁹ This is also supported by GP feedback, which suggests that receiving advice can help improve patients' health and wellbeing.⁴⁰

³² New Economy unit-cost database: Shelter. (2012) *Research Briefing: Immediate costs to government of loss of home*

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

³⁷ Forthcoming Citizens Advice research into the impact of advice in primary health settings, due to be published in the autumn. Also supported by similar findings in: Citizens Advice. (2015) *A very general practice: how much do GPs spend on issue other than health?*

³⁸ Citizens Advice. (2015) *A very general practice: how much do GPs spend on issue other than health?*

³⁹ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

⁴⁰ Forthcoming Citizens Advice research into the impact of advice in primary health settings.

We use our impact research together with external evidence from Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme statistics, that states the number of people with stress, depression or anxiety that should be receiving therapy.⁴¹ This is supported by older findings from the Civil Society and Justice Survey that shows that a proportion of people with advice needs seek help from public health services.⁴²

We present three tables: one for reducing the demand for talking therapies for those with stress and or anxiety related ill health; another on reducing GP consultations for those with mental health problems; and one for reducing GP consultations for those with physical health problems. For these arguments, we've looked at the impact on all our clients - both debt and otherwise.

Reducing the demand for mental health services (talking therapies)

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
204,117	38%	50%	20%
Total number of unique clients (1,584,308) who say their issue is causing stress, anxiety or depression (82%) ⁴³ - 15% of those with anxiety or depression estimated to require IAPT. ⁴⁴	38% of those with stress, depression and anxiety to the extent of having been to see a health professional, reported having to see health professionals less as a result of advice. ⁴⁵	Standard 50% deadweight	Our evidence is based on a robust national analysis of outcomes (15% optimism bias correction). ⁴⁶

⁴¹ NHS service standards state that IAPT services should be providing timely access to treatment for at least 15% of those who could benefit people with anxiety disorders and depression: www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/adults/iapt/service-standards/

⁴² Figures taken from: Citizens Advice. (2010) *Towards a business case for legal aid. Paper to the Legal Services Research Centre's eighth international research conference*. For those with mental health problems, 22% sought help from a GP and 8% from talking therapies. For those with physical health problems, 66% sought help from a GP.

⁴³ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

⁴⁴ NHS IAPT service standards: www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/adults/iapt/service-standards/

⁴⁵ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

⁴⁶ We have previously applied an optimism bias correction of 25% - we have conservatively lowered this based on improvements in our evidence.

Fiscal benefit	£830 ⁴⁷	£29,288,475
	Cost of provision for adults suffering from stress and anxiety [83.940 GDP deflator applied]	Total value in 2016/17
Public value	£4,671	£172,644,919
	As above	Total value in 2016/17

Reducing the demand for GP services (mental health)

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
1,104,263	42%	50%	20%
Total number of clients who say their issue caused stress, anxiety or depression (82%) - and had visited a health professional in the last year ⁴⁸	42% of affected population reported having to see health professional less as a result of advice ⁴⁹	Standard 50% deadweight	Our evidence is based on a robust national analysis of outcomes (15% optimism bias correction). ⁵⁰

Fiscal benefit	£39 ⁵¹	£7,424,458
	Cost of GP consultation [97.450 GDP deflator applied]	Total value in 2016/17
Public value	£39	£7,424,458
	As above	Total value in 2016/17

⁴⁷ New Economy unit-cost database: Kings Fund. (2008) *Paying the Price - The cost of mental health care in England to 2026*

⁴⁸ *Outcomes and impact research*, 2017

⁴⁹ *Outcomes and impact research*, 2017

⁵⁰ We have previously applied an optimism bias correction of 25% - we have conservatively lowered this based on improvements in our evidence.

⁵¹ New Economy unit-cost database: GP contact - cost per face-to-face consultation with patients (average 11.7 minutes)

Reducing the demand for GP services (physical health)

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
846,020	42%	50%	20%
Total number of clients who say their issue caused physical health problems (60%) and who had visited a health profession in the last year ⁵²	42% of affected population reported having to see health professional less as a result of advice ⁵³	Standard 50% deadweight	Our evidence is based on a robust national analysis of outcomes (15% optimism bias correction). ⁵⁴

Fiscal benefit	£39 ⁵⁵	£5,688,179
	Cost of GP consultation [97.450 GDP deflator applied]	Total value in 2016/17
Public value	£39	£5,688,179
	As above	Total value in 2016/17

⁵² *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

⁵³ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

⁵⁴ We have previously applied an optimism bias correction of 25% - we have conservatively lowered this based on improvements in our evidence.

⁵⁵ New Economy unit-cost database: GP contact - cost per face-to-face consultation with patients (average 11.7 minutes)

Improved mental well-being

There is a benefit to society from having people who have positive mental well-being. This can improve functioning at work and therefore increase productivity, at home and in society. Boosting mental well-being increases confidence, decision making, resilience and social functioning.

The evidence used in New Economy's cost benefit model is based on apportioning the willingness to pay value for the Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALY) impact of depression across all the domains of well-being as set out in the National Accounts of Wellbeing. In simple terms, how much people would be willing to pay for an improvement in their depression for one year.

Our research shows that problems can have a profound impact on mental well-being. Both our impact research and separate studies using the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scores (WEMWBS)⁵⁶ show that problems are bad for mental well-being and resolving them has a positive impact.

This year, we have considered two domains of improved wellbeing of individuals - emotional wellbeing and positive functioning (autonomy, control and aspirations).

Improved emotional wellbeing

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
1,299,133	62%	50%	35%
Total number of clients who say their issue is causing mental health problems, stress, anxiety or depression (82%) ⁵⁷	62% of the affected population report feeling less stressed, depressed or anxious following advice. ⁵⁸	Standard 50% deadweight	We use a high optimism bias reflecting that while our evidence shows impact on mental health, we have a limited capacity to show the scale of improvement reported. ⁵⁹

Public value	£3,500 ⁶⁰	£1,037,940,898
	[88.272 GDP deflator applied]	Total value in 2016/17

⁵⁶ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017; Health Outcomes Monitoring Toolkit pilot results, 2014.*

⁵⁷ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ We have conservatively lowered our optimism bias correction from 40%, because we have improved our evidence, and are focusing on improvement within the affected population.

⁶⁰ New Economy unit-cost database: willingness to pay value for the Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALY) impact of depression across all the domains of wellbeing as set out in the National Accounts of Wellbeing

Improved positive functioning (autonomy, control, aspirations)

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
950,585	43%	50%	35%
Total number of clients who say their issue is making it harder to manage day-to-day (73%) ⁶¹	43% of affected population report finding it easier to manage everyday life ⁶²	Standard 50% deadweight	We use a high optimism bias reflecting that while our evidence shows impact on mental health, we have a limited capacity to show the scale of improvement reported. ⁶³
Public value	£3,500 ⁶⁴		£526,728,465
	[88.272 GDP deflator applied]		Total value in 2016/17

⁶¹ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ We have conservatively lowered our optimism bias correction from 40%, because we have improved our evidence, and are focusing on improvement within the affected population.

⁶⁴ New Economy unit-cost database: willingness to pay value for the Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALY) impact of depression across all the domains of wellbeing as set out in the National Accounts of Wellbeing

Improved family relationships

Solving problems can have a wider impact on family relationships. In some cases this can prevent relationships breaking up and all the additional costs that can occur, personally, to society and to the state. Here we use evidence from the impact research to show that receiving advice and solving problems has a benefit to society, together with the Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALY) impact of improved family relationships as set out in the National Accounts of Wellbeing.

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
396,077	25%	50%	35%
Total number of clients who say their issue is causing family relationship problems (37%) ⁶⁵	25% of affected population report improvements in family relationships after advice ⁶⁶	Standard 50% deadweight	We use a high optimism bias reflecting that while our evidence shows impact on mental health, we have a limited capacity to show the scale of improvement reported. ⁶⁷

Public value	£8,500 ⁶⁸ [88.272 GDP deflator applied]	£309,883,164 Total value in 2016/17
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⁶⁵ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ We have conservatively lowered our optimism bias correction from 40%, because we have improved our evidence, and are focusing on improvement within the affected population.

⁶⁸ New Economy unit-cost database: willingness to pay value for the Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALY) impact of depression across all the domains of wellbeing as set out in the National Accounts of Wellbeing

The value of working with volunteers

Our estimate of the public value of working with volunteers:

**Wider economic and social benefits (public value):
£92 million**

Improvements in health, well-being, participation and productivity

We couldn't reach as many people as we do without our 23,000 volunteers. They come from a wide range of backgrounds, helping us deliver advice and education through our local network, and supporting witnesses in local courts.

We have management information and research that allows us to consider the wider economic and social benefits of volunteering in our local Citizens Advice, for our 19,000 local network volunteers.

Our continual investment in their development ensures our clients receive quality advice and support. It also has tangible benefits for volunteers and society, through happier, healthier and more productive citizens. This is an additional benefit to society, through the way Citizens Advice delivers its service.

The main financial arguments cover the public value created through enabling local network volunteers to:⁶⁹

- Move into work through the experience and confidence gained during their time at a local Citizens Advice.
- Develop skills that can lead to better salaries and employment prospects.
- Better manage mental health conditions, such as depression.
- Improve self-esteem, reduce isolation and increased ability to get on.
- Improve community relationships, through increased community trust and sense of belonging by working with local people.

⁶⁹ The main arguments where our volunteering research is appropriate to the New Economy model are around the public value benefits associated with volunteering. We have therefore not applied a fiscal benefit of volunteering. This is also takes into account that our research is from a few years ago, and therefore requires a higher optimism bias.

Our evidence

Management information:

Citizens Advice collates information about the local network on an annual basis through our Characteristic Survey.

This includes details about volunteer profile and volunteering hours from 2016/17.

Value of volunteering research:

In 2013, Citizens Advice undertook research with our volunteers to find out about the benefits of volunteering with a local Citizens Advice.⁷⁰

Nearly 1,500 volunteers and trustees completed online surveys with structured multiple-choice questions. This self-selecting sample is broadly representative of the demographic makeup of our volunteers, and the number of responses provides a statistically-valid representation of volunteer experience.

⁷⁰ Published as: Citizens Advice. (2014) *CAB volunteering: how everyone benefits*

From volunteering to paid employment

Nearly 1 in 5 of our volunteers are seeking paid employment, and our management information shows that when our volunteers leave us, 29% do so for paid employment.⁷¹ Our impact research evidences that Citizens Advice is a constructive environment that helps volunteers develop themselves and their skills, and that volunteering can play in providing the opportunity to build up the necessary skills, experience and confidence that help people move into work.⁷²

Helping people back into work benefits society through reduced out-of-work benefits payments and increased productivity.

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
3048	29%	50%	25%
13% of local volunteers (16,564 - excluding trustees) are seeking paid employment ⁷³	29% of volunteers leave for paid employment ⁷⁴	50% standard deadweight applied	Our impact figures are a statistically valid representation, from a self-selecting sample

Public value	£14,610 ⁷⁵	£5,338,870
	[93.829 GDP deflator applied]	Total value in 2016/17

⁷¹ Citizens Advice management information

⁷² *Value of volunteering research*, 2013

⁷³ Characteristic Survey 2016/17: 13% of 16,560 volunteers are seeking paid employment

⁷⁴ Characteristic Survey 2016/17

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Skill development leading to better salaries and employment prospects

Volunteering can also benefit those already in work, as it provides people the opportunity to try out new skills and broaden their career options, while remaining in employment - a chance they might not otherwise have had. Volunteers benefit from practical skill gain in areas such as IT skills, customer service and team-work, and employers gain from the enhanced skills and experience that their employees gain.

Our volunteers report that their volunteering experience has enabled them to progress in their career as well as increased salaries.⁷⁶ There are also benefits to the state, through increased taxation and reduced use of tax credits.

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
1,184	19%	50%	25%
15% of all local volunteers (18,987 - including trustees) are in paid employment ⁷⁷	19% of volunteers report increased salary as a result of volunteering ⁷⁸	50% standard deadweight applied	Our impact figures are a statistically valid representation, from a self-selecting sample

Public value	£921 ⁷⁹	£83,394
	[90.715 GDP deflator applied]	Total value in 2016/17

⁷⁶ *Value of volunteering research*, 2013

⁷⁷ Characteristic Survey 2014/15: 15.7% of 20,700 volunteers are in paid employment

⁷⁸ *Value of volunteering research*, 2013

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Better manage mental health conditions

In any given year, 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health condition, including anxiety or depression⁸⁰. For those with such mental health conditions, volunteering may provide the opportunity to socially engage with other people, participate in society and be more confident about being in a workplace.

Our evidence suggests that volunteering reduces individuals' stress levels and that those with existing mental health conditions feel better able to manage their condition. This includes feeling able to work more effectively, more productively and with less need for health interventions.

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
1,519	23%	50%	25%
8% of all local volunteers identified as having a mental health condition ⁸¹	23% of volunteers with a mental health condition reported seeing a doctor less ⁸²	50% standard deadweight applied	Our impact figures are a statistically valid representation, from a self-selecting sample

Public value	£4,671 ⁸³ [83.940 GDP deflator applied].	£729,016 Total value in 2016/17
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⁸⁰ Mental Health Foundation, accessed July 2016:

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-statistics/

⁸¹ *Value of volunteering research*, 2013

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

Improved well-being of individuals

Volunteering with our service can have a positive impact on how people see themselves, respond to those around them and their capacity to respond to life's challenges. The benefits are hard to pinpoint or articulate, but have a significant value thanks to the impact they have on an individual's quality of life.

Increased confidence/self-esteem

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
18,987	78%	50%	40%
All local network volunteers applicable	78% report increased confidence ⁸⁴	50% standard deadweight applied	We use a high optimism bias reflecting that while our evidence shows impact on mental well-being, we do not know the scale of improvement reported

Public value	£3,500 ⁸⁵ [88.272 GDP deflator applied]	£17,593,781 Total value in 2016/17
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Reduced isolation

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
5,364	54%	50%	40%
Local volunteers that are over 65 ⁸⁶	54% of retired volunteers report feeling less at risk of social isolation ⁸⁷	50% standard deadweight applied	We use a high optimism bias reflecting that while our evidence shows impact on mental well-being, we do not know the scale of improvement reported

Public value	£8,500 [88.272 GDP deflator applied]	£8,429,541 Total value in 2016/17
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⁸⁴ *Value of volunteering research*, 2013

⁸⁵ New Economy unit-cost database: Based on apportioning the willingness to pay value for the QALY impact of depression (£35,400 per annum) across all the domains of wellbeing as set out in the National Accounts of Wellbeing.

⁸⁶ Characteristic survey, 2016/17

⁸⁷ *Value of volunteering research*, 2013

Positive functioning (autonomy, control, aspirations)

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
18,987	87%	50%	40%
All local network volunteers applicable	87% report feeling more empowered and equipped as a result of volunteering ⁸⁸	50% standard deadweight applied	We use a high optimism bias reflecting that while our evidence shows impact on mental well-being, we do not know the scale of improvement reported.

Public value	£3,500 ⁸⁹ [88.272 GDP deflator applied]	£19,603,853 Total value in 2016/17
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Improved emotional well-being

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
15,000	34%	50%	40%
Before volunteering, 79% of volunteers felt stressed sometimes, fairly often or often ⁹⁰	Since volunteering, 34% of volunteers feel less stressed to a moderate or large extent ⁹¹	50% standard deadweight applied	We use a high optimism bias reflecting that while our evidence shows impact on mental well-being, we do not know the scale of improvement reported

Public value	£3,500 ⁹² [88.272 GDP deflator applied]	£6,030,669 Total value in 2016/17
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⁸⁸ *Value of volunteering research*, 2013

⁸⁹ New Economy unit-cost database: Based on apportioning the willingness to pay value for the QALY impact of depression (£35,400 per annum) across all the domains of wellbeing as set out in the National Accounts of Wellbeing

⁹⁰ *Value of volunteering research*, 2013

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² New Economy unit-cost database: Based on apportioning the willingness to pay value for the QALY impact of depression (£35,400 per annum) across all the domains of wellbeing as set out in the National Accounts of Wellbeing

Improved community well-being

Volunteering with the Citizens Advice can increase knowledge about the issues affecting their local area, as well as the opportunity to interact with a cross-section of the wider community. As a result, volunteers are likely to feel more connected to their community: it can have a positive impact on an individual's sense of belonging, as well as counter the negative effects of feeling isolated.

This makes for stronger and more cohesive communities.

Affected population	Impact (%)	Deadweight (%)	Optimism bias correction
13,177	90%	50%	-40%
69% of volunteers felt not at all or little engaged with their community before volunteering ⁹³	90% feel more part of their community since volunteering ⁹⁴	50% standard deadweight applied	We use a high optimism bias reflecting that while our evidence shows impact on mental well-being, we do not know the scale of improvement reported

Public value	£8,500 ⁹⁵ [88.272 GDP deflator applied]	£34,258,991 Total value in 2016/17
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⁹³ *Value of volunteering research*, 2013

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ New Economy unit-cost database: based on apportioning the willingness to pay value for the QALY impact of depression (£35,400 per annum) across all the domains of wellbeing as set out in the National Accounts of Wellbeing

Value to the people we help

Our estimate of the value of Citizens Advice in direct value to clients through advice provision:

Benefits to individuals through advice provision is at least:

£2.8 billion

Value to individuals of debt advice:

£649 million

Through client debts-written off

Value to individuals of consumer advice:

£140 million

Through benefits to consumers

Value to individuals of benefits advice:

£2 billion

Through benefit and tax credit gains for clients

Our financial modelling for these benefits is slightly different, as the New Economy cost benefit tool doesn't provide the ability to evidence the financial benefit to individuals. We know that advice provision can have direct beneficial consequences for individual clients, and this can range consumer detriment reversed through to debts managed through rescheduling or being written-off.

Maximising available income for those facing real difficulties in their lives - limited and unstable income, poor health and changing circumstances - is often part of the way we help clients who come to us about other problems. Take-up of benefits that an individual is entitled to, for example, can help reduce financial difficulty, promote inclusion and benefit the economy.^{96 97}

We have only monetised the financial benefits where we have robust evidence with sufficient scale and average value to have confidence in our estimates. We have also only included figures that have a tangible monetary benefit to individuals.

⁹⁶ Eurofound. (2014) *Access to benefits, Unpublished working paper*

⁹⁷ New Economics Foundation. (2002) *The Money Trail*. This sets out the local multiplier effect, including the value of income maximisation in local spending through increased benefits take-up.

Therefore, our overall modelling for the benefits to individuals does not include:

- The debts we successfully reschedule - whilst this is of benefit to clients, the debt is still owed.
- Financial gain for individuals from charitable funds, or where goods and services have been provided in kind.
- Financial outcomes associated with housing, employment, relationships or other problems.

Our evidence

Our understanding of the value of advice provision that accrues directly to clients is underpinned by evidence from our management information and research.

Management information: We have again drawn on the substantial amount of data we hold about our clients and their problems to consider our impact.

Outcomes recording: Where a specific client outcome is known to have occurred, local Citizens Advice are encouraged to record it within our CRM, using a set of shared outcome codes that enable us to consistently record across the network.

Impact research: We have drawn on two primary sources of impact research:

- **Outcomes and impact research (2017):** In our follow-up research with our clients, we asked individuals about any specific outcomes that they achieved through our advice, and therefore we have the proportions of how those outcomes are distributed.
- **Consumer helpline satisfaction survey:** We conduct follow-up research every six months with a representative sample of clients who use our telephone consumer service. We then aggregate these figures, to produce a set of results based on feedback from 3,700 clients. As well as finding out details about whether we solved their problem and their client experience, we also ask consumers to tell us the financial worth of the service to them.

Value of benefits advice to individuals

646,700 clients with 1.9 million benefits or tax credit problems in local Citizens Advice in 2016/17 - 7 in 10 people, or an estimated 466,600 clients, will have their benefits or tax credit problem solved.

2016/17	Number of individual clients seen	Number of individual clients whose problem is partly or completely solved ⁹⁸
Local Citizens Advice	646,719	465,638

In 2016/17, we estimate that we helped:

- **93,000 clients successfully claim one-off awards for back payments, worth a total of £185 million, an average of £1,990 per client.**
- **303,000 clients gain a new award or an increase to their benefit worth a total of £1.9 billion, an average of £6,200 per client (per year)⁹⁹.**

2015/16 estimates	Proportion of clients (where problem solved)	Total number of clients	Average value per client	Total
Clients who had one-off benefit awards	20%	93,128 ¹⁰⁰	£1,990 ¹⁰¹	£185,323,797
Clients who had ongoing benefit awards	65%	302,664 ¹⁰²	£6,170 ¹⁰³	£1,867,439,916
Clients who had other benefit outcome	15%	69,846 ¹⁰⁴		
Total		465,638		£2,052,763,712 ¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*: 72% of clients are helped to solve their benefits problem.

⁹⁹ The financial value of ongoing benefit payments are annualised and the amount reported is for a single year regardless of benefit type.

¹⁰⁰ One-off benefit awards: 20% of clients with a benefit outcome had a one-off award, such as a back-payment (proportion based on 82,567 benefit outcomes recorded in 16/17 in CRM (20,041); and our outcomes and impact research).

¹⁰¹ One-off benefit awards: average value of a one-off award per client taken from 20,041 one-off awards outcome records where the financial value was recorded in CRM.

¹⁰² Ongoing benefit awards: 65% of clients with a benefit outcome had an ongoing award (proportion taken from 82,567 benefit outcomes recorded in 16/17 in CRM (52,597); and our outcomes and impact research)

¹⁰³ Ongoing benefit awards: Average value of ongoing benefit per client taken from 52,597 outcome records (of ongoing awards) where the financial value was recorded in CRM.

¹⁰⁴ Other benefit outcomes: 15% of clients (proportion taken from 82,567 benefit outcomes recorded in 15/16 in CRM; and our outcomes and impact research) These include resolving administrative issues, challenging civil penalties or arranging food provision through vouchers.

¹⁰⁵ For context in 2009/10 an estimated £7.5-12.3 billion was left unclaimed [DWP. (2012) *Income Related Benefits: Estimates of Take-Up in 2009/10*]

Value of debt advice to individuals

350,000 clients with 1.5 million debt problems in local Citizens Advice in 2016/17 - 7 in 10 clients, or an estimated 260,000 clients, will have their debt problem solved.

	Number of individual clients seen	Number of individual clients whose problem is partly or completely solved ¹⁰⁶
Local Citizens Advice in 2016/17	349,802	262,352

For reference, debt written-off is reported as a gain to individual, but debts rescheduled are not. Whilst this is of benefit to clients, the debt is still owed.

We estimate that we helped 59,000 clients write off debts worth a total of £649 million, an average of £11,000 per client.

2016/17 estimates	Proportion of clients (where problem solved)	Total number of clients	Average value per client	Total
Clients who had debt written-off	23%	59,035 ¹⁰⁷	£11,000 ¹⁰⁸	£649,384,607
Clients who had debt successfully rescheduled	32%	83,004 ¹⁰⁹		
Clients who had other debt outcomes	46%	120,313 ¹¹⁰		
Total		262,352		

¹⁰⁶ *Outcomes and impact research, 2017*: 75% of clients are helped to solve their debt problem.

¹⁰⁷ Debts written-off: 23% of clients with a debt outcome had debts written off (proportion taken from 97,097 debt outcomes recorded in 16/17 in CRM (21,849); and our outcomes and impact research).

¹⁰⁸ Debts written-off: Average value of debts written off per client taken from 21,849 outcome records (where debt written off) where a financial value was recorded in CRM.

¹⁰⁹ Debts rescheduled: 32% of clients with a debt outcome had debts rescheduled (proportion taken from 97,097 debt outcomes recorded in 16/17 in CRM (30,720); and our outcomes and impact research).

¹¹⁰ Other debt outcomes: 45% of clients (proportion taken from 97,097 debt outcomes recorded in 16/17 in CRM (44,528); and our outcomes and impact research). These include bailiff action stopped or suspended, improved health or capacity to manage, or utilities disconnection prevented.

Value of consumer advice to individuals

Our direct services in local Citizens Advice and our consumer service advised 784,000 clients on 1.2million issues in 2016/17.¹¹¹

We estimate that we helped 493,000 clients successfully resolve their consumer problem, 148,000 had a financial gain worth a total of £140 million, an average of £950 value per client.

2016/17	Citizens Advice consumer service	Local Citizens Advice	Total
Number of individual clients seen	512,390	271,877	784,267
Number of individual clients whose problem improved or resolved ¹¹²	297,186	195,751	492,938
Number of individual clients whose problem improved/resolved who reported a financial benefit ¹¹³	89,156	58,725	147,881
Average value of gain per client ¹¹⁴	£950	£950	£950
Total financial benefit to individuals from consumer advice in 2016/17			£140,487,227

¹¹¹ Our consumer service is a GB wide telephone helpline and email service, figures presented here are England & Wales only.

¹¹² Consumer helpline satisfaction survey: our Consumer service resolves problems for 58% of clients. *Outcomes and impact research*: local Citizens Advice resolve problems for 72% of clients.

¹¹³ Consumer helpline satisfaction survey: 30% of consumer helpline clients report a financial gain (data from representative sample of 3,700 clients). Data for financial gain reported by clients of local Citizens Advice is not representative, so the consumer helpline rate of 30% has been applied.

¹¹⁴ Consumer helpline satisfaction survey: Average financial gain reported by clients of Consumer service is £950 (data from representative sample of 3,700 clients). Average financial gain reported by local Citizens Advice is not representative, so the Consumer service average value has been used.

Our value is likely to be greater

What we haven't monetised

In this report, we haven't tried to monetise everything, sticking instead to what we know and can firmly evidence, utilising credible costings and proxies to illustrate our value to society. There are many other outcomes to individuals and society from our work which have value, but these can be hard to put a financial figure on.

Establishing a counterfactual for if Citizens Advice wasn't here is difficult because we are so closely associated with how people seek advice and support, and are an embedded part of local communities. We have assumed that half of our impact is deadweight. In other words, in half the cases the situation would have got better, or resolved itself without us. This is a conservative assumption, as our evidence shows that only 20% of clients suggest they would have been able to resolve their issue without our help.

This is also true when considering the social value of how we work:

- We play a vital role in the communities we work in, but what this looks like in practice can alter dependent on local need. This is a real strength of our service, but makes producing an average financial value difficult.
- The way our network works together, and the additional benefits to individuals of getting advice from a local centre with a national infrastructure, is equally difficult to put a value on.

Advice

We have not included:

- Benefits to local government of helping clients negotiate local processes, such as welfare reform changes, as well as our role in helping local authority rent and council tax arrears to be rescheduled and reducing the associated administrative costs.
- Maximising clients' income, which has further spillover effects including for individuals' families, benefiting health and well-being and contributing to local communities and economies. Averting the detrimental costs associated with the impact on health of unsafe and substandard living conditions.

- The debts we successfully reschedule, benefiting those clients and also the creditors of debts being repaid where they might not have been, and averting the cost they would have incurred chasing them.
- Financial gain for individuals from charitable funds, or goods and services in kind, as well as financial outcomes associated with housing, employment, relationships or other problems.
- Keeping families together, preventing suicide and working with victims of domestic violence.
- Providing advice online: people visit our website 43 million times a year.
- We've also only monetised our impact for one year, but these kinds of impact have long running positive benefits for the individuals involved and the state.

Education

We have not included any of the benefit of our education work in our financial estimate. By educating and empowering clients we hope to mitigate some of their financial instabilities, helping the client to make informed decisions about their energy and wider finances, such as:

- Reduced energy bills and avoiding detriment associated with fuel poverty.
- Avoiding the detriment associated with problem debt, through making informed decisions and increasing financial stability for the future.

Evaluations of specific education projects have given us an initial understanding of their impact. We're now developing specific measures to understand in more detail the short and long-term impact of our educational activities.

Research and campaigns

This report has not included the financial benefits brought about by our extensive research and campaigns work, both locally and nationally. Putting a financial value on this type of work is difficult for many reasons:

- We build a detailed understanding of issues, how they affect lives, and continually engage with policy-makers and regulators, such as our work with Trading Standards. In these cases, there aren't always readily available success measures.
- We play a collaborative role in achieving policy and practice change: providing evidence to policy-makers and working alongside others to campaign for solutions. We therefore can attribute some of the impact to our work, such as the commitment to introduce a ban on letting agents' fees.

- Our previous research and campaigns work still benefits consumers today, such as security of tenancy deposits, the total cost of credit cap on payday loans and compensation and redress of mis-sold PPI.
- Through our campaigns, we give our clients a voice. This includes our recent work ensuring clients were registered to vote in the general election, and our ongoing work on experiences in the labour market. There is simply no measure to illustrate the power of this – it is unique.

For more information on research and campaigns successes and their value, see our impact report - *The difference we make: Our impact in 2016/17* - and also this our annual report.

Future impact research plans

Covering the sheer breadth of the work of Citizens Advice is no simple task.

Our impact and evaluation team will take this work forward over the coming years, exploring how we can measure the impact of our education and campaigns work, and extending our understanding of the impact of advice.

The difference we make: our impact in 2016/17

Our approach to impact reporting - including this year's report and technical annex - has been produced by the impact and evaluation team at Citizens Advice.

The impact and evaluation team provide evidence and insight to understand what works. We deliver robust evidence on why we are needed and the difference we make to our clients and society, enabling us to demonstrate the overall impact and value of Citizens Advice. We assess service effectiveness, seeking to show what works, why and for whom - to continually improve our service offer to clients.

We also work with others in the sector around impact and evaluation, shaping approaches and sharing findings.

Significant contributors: Stephen Rocks and Siân Whyte. Also to our 2016/17 team colleagues Carolyn Budd, Richard Williams, Alex Hayes, Satdeep Grewal - and more recently, Hazel Robertson and Jamie Mitchell.

Acknowledgements

Our financial modelling is the product of many years of work, and cross-team collaboration. Special thanks go to Hugh Stickland, for initiating and leading how we calculate our financial value, and his commitment to understanding what works.

Our impact report draws on our colleagues' design and editorial expertise - in particular, thanks to Natalie Peck and Stephanie Mulvey for all their hard work, and to Tom MacInnes and Alice Dyke for their insight.

Thanks also to our data team colleagues - with particular thanks to Pete Watson and Spencer Thompson. We would be unable to begin to evidence our impact without the comprehensive data and knowledge from this amazing team.

We're grateful to all the Citizens Advice clients who were involved in the research for this report, and also recognise the essential role that staff and volunteers across Citizens Advice play in diligently recording and processing client data.

We also appreciate the time and input from our colleagues in the expert advice team and policy research teams, who helped us to understand in detail the way that unresolved problems escalate and how interventions work in practice.

Final thanks go to New Economy for the development of the cost-benefit tool we used in our modelling, and to Julian Cox for his insight and guidance.

Published September 2017

citizensadvice.org.uk/impact

To find out more about our work, contact us: impact@citizensadvice.org.uk