

# Background notes on the CAB Service

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Service works to fulfil two aims:

- to ensure that individuals do not suffer through lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities or of the services available to them, or through an inability to express their needs effectively

and equally

- to exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services, both locally and nationally.

The advice given by bureaux is free, independent, impartial and confidential. The Service is non-judgmental, offering assistance as appropriate to all callers. It aims to be equally accessible to everyone who seeks or needs its help, regardless of age, class, race, religion, gender, disability or sexuality. All advice workers, whether paid or volunteer, are professionally trained to provide an accurate, quality service and to be supportive to clients.

The CAB Service works to:

**inform** people about the law and how it affects them; about their rights and responsibilities; and about how they may be able to satisfy their needs

**advise** people on the options available to them and on the potential consequences of different courses of action

**support** people as they consider and decide what to do, listening to their concerns and helping them move forward

**assist** people in pursuing their chosen course of action by negotiation, representation and referral to other sources of help needed

**influence** those responsible for policies and services by bringing to their notice the problems people experience and recommending changes

Citizens Advice Bureaux deal with over six million enquiries a year, giving detailed information, advice and support to people on every subject. The majority of problems concern social security benefits, debt, employment, housing and the law.

CAB advice is delivered from over 2,800 locations across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Over 20,000 volunteers work in the bureaux, together with over 5000 paid staff including bureau managers and specialist advisers. Together they provide the largest advice service in the world.

Each bureau is a separate charity managed by its own trustee board, and must meet membership quality standards in order to affiliate to Citizens Advice, the national association. Citizens Advice provides a range of services to support bureaux in their work: these include the Information System, training, field support, quality audits, social policy, press and publicity, parliamentary liaison and information technology.

Local authorities provide just over 50% of bureau funding, with the balance provided by a range of funders including the Legal Services Commission, Community Fund, Health Authorities and other public bodies.