

The story of influence



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Published histories of the Citizens Advice service

The Story of Citizens Advice Bureaux

M.E. Brasnett, 1964

Inform, Advise and Support: Fifty Years of the Citizens Advice Bureau

Jean M. Richards, 1988

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Judith Citron, 1989

Introduction

by **John Fingleton**, Chief Executive,
the Office of Fair Trading



Through its direct relationship with consumers, independently championing their rights, Citizens Advice is a unique barometer for the effects of the OFT's actions in delivering our mission of making markets work well for consumers. Through its influencing work, Citizens Advice has a real impact on changing policies that really affect people's lives.

In 1977, the OFT funded the first specialist policy role at Citizens Advice. The story of its policy work, outlined in this history, shows how this one post has developed to become a strong force for change.

I am delighted that what started 30 years ago has grown into such an effective consumer voice today. We congratulate Citizens Advice on its 70th birthday, and look forward to continuing our close working relationship long into the future.

"If all the knowledge which resides in a movement of this kind could be made available for the purposes of men who make legislation we have a force for the welfare and well-being of mankind that is equal to none."¹

Foreword

by **David Harker**, Chief Executive
of Citizens Advice



The twin aims of the Citizens Advice service are expressed today as: 'To provide the advice people need for the problems they face, and to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives'. Although the wording was different 70 years ago, the intention was the same, and this brief summary of our social policy work emphatically shows how we have fulfilled that aim from the very beginning.

The last 70 years have seen an intense pace of change, dramatic developments in the way we live our lives, and increased expectations across society. From 1939, when a new generation faced the unfamiliar problems of war, to today's recession, when many people are facing redundancy and debt for the first time, Citizens Advice Bureaux have been open to everyone to offer advice on any subject, and advisers have consistently alerted policy makers to the impact of their decisions on real people.

This history tracks the CAB service's action on policy issues from the particular difficulties of war-time – such as bombs and rationing – through the rise of consumer issues in the 1950s, a particular influx of housing problems in the '60s, benefit confusion in the '80s, and up to the sudden and dramatic impacts of the economic crash of 2008.

Many of the problems will be familiar to readers of all generations, while others are specific to their time, but they all involve the commitment of bureau advisers nationwide, and the passion of central policy teams – all of whom join the Citizens Advice service to make the world a better place.

¹ Sir Wyndham Deedes, then Vice Chairman of the National Council of Social Service, speaking at a national conference 'Citizens Advice Bureaux after the war' – Caxton Hall, Westminster, 5 and 6 May 1945.

Finger on the pulse

'The report of the Citizens Advice Bureaux Committee reads like a summary of the development of present day social administration, so widespread is the scope of the movement and so closely does it reflect the various changes in social conditions in the last few years'².

As a nationwide network, providing advice to everyone on every subject under the sun Citizens Advice has, from its earliest years, had a unique perspective from which to spot emerging trends and identify the most pressing problems of the day. It not only produces direct case evidence based on the experiences of real people, but highlights trends across regions and across the country.

When the service started in war-time, it was common for families to face sudden financial difficulty when the bread-winner was called up for duty. Bureaux helped families complete applications for all the war-time allowances available to them, but also witnessed the distress caused by delays in processing those applications. Raising this with the Assistance Board (the government body responsible for checking the applications), bureaux were able to negotiate schemes to help speed up the procedure – in some cases persuading the Board to open offices in many more places.³

A report from Southwark CAB in 1944 describes its work during the flying bomb period beginning in June 1944: 'The frequent alerts, the dreaded drone of the flying bomb before it cut out overhead, and the interval between the cut-out and the explosion, were not easy to face. Mothers with young children, worrying already about husbands overseas, had an almost unbearable burden to carry.' For the first few weeks, there was no evacuation scheme in place and the bureau and the Charity Organisation Society (COS) helped people make private arrangements to leave London, as well as doing all they could for those who remained. Their evidence of the urgent need for an evacuation scheme was presented to the Ministry of Health, and Southwark CAB was immensely relieved when a Government evacuation scheme was finally announced.



Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, London

² *A Page of Modern Social History* in the *Local Government Journal*, September 1959.

³ From *The Story of Citizens Advice Bureaux*, Margaret Brasnett, 1964.

Citizens Advice also used its evidence to secure important changes to rationing. Pregnant women 'owed their extra clothing coupons to representations by the Citizens Advice Bureau'⁴, while a regional group of bureaux reported success in 1948 – after several months of lobbying – in their attempts to get extra cheese rations for gardeners, where only agricultural workers with agricultural insurance cards had previously been eligible.

As lifestyles change, so do the issues brought to bureaux: for example, the explosion of hire purchase and credit agreements in the 1950s brought the associated problems of consumer scams, high pressure and mis-selling, as well as issues of customer satisfaction and redress. Bureaux began to see more people who did not understand and could not afford to pay the agreements they had signed up to, and whose debts were mounting up, leaving them little money for rent and food. Swift to respond to new problems, the Citizens Advice service took action in 1955. The report that came out of this work, *Hire purchase and credit buying*, set out CAB evidence and called for change, including better consumer education. This evidence fed into the Board of Trade's Molony Committee on consumer protection, set up in 1959.

Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, London



4 *Punch* magazine, May 1950.

FINGER ON THE PULSE

'Citizens Advice Bureau workers uncover trading irregularities and legal anomalies more quickly than anyone else. Among the first to proclaim the appalling abuses of hire purchase trading in the 1950s, Citizens Advice Bureau workers collected such damning evidence that many of the shadier practices were eliminated by the Hire Purchase Act'⁵.

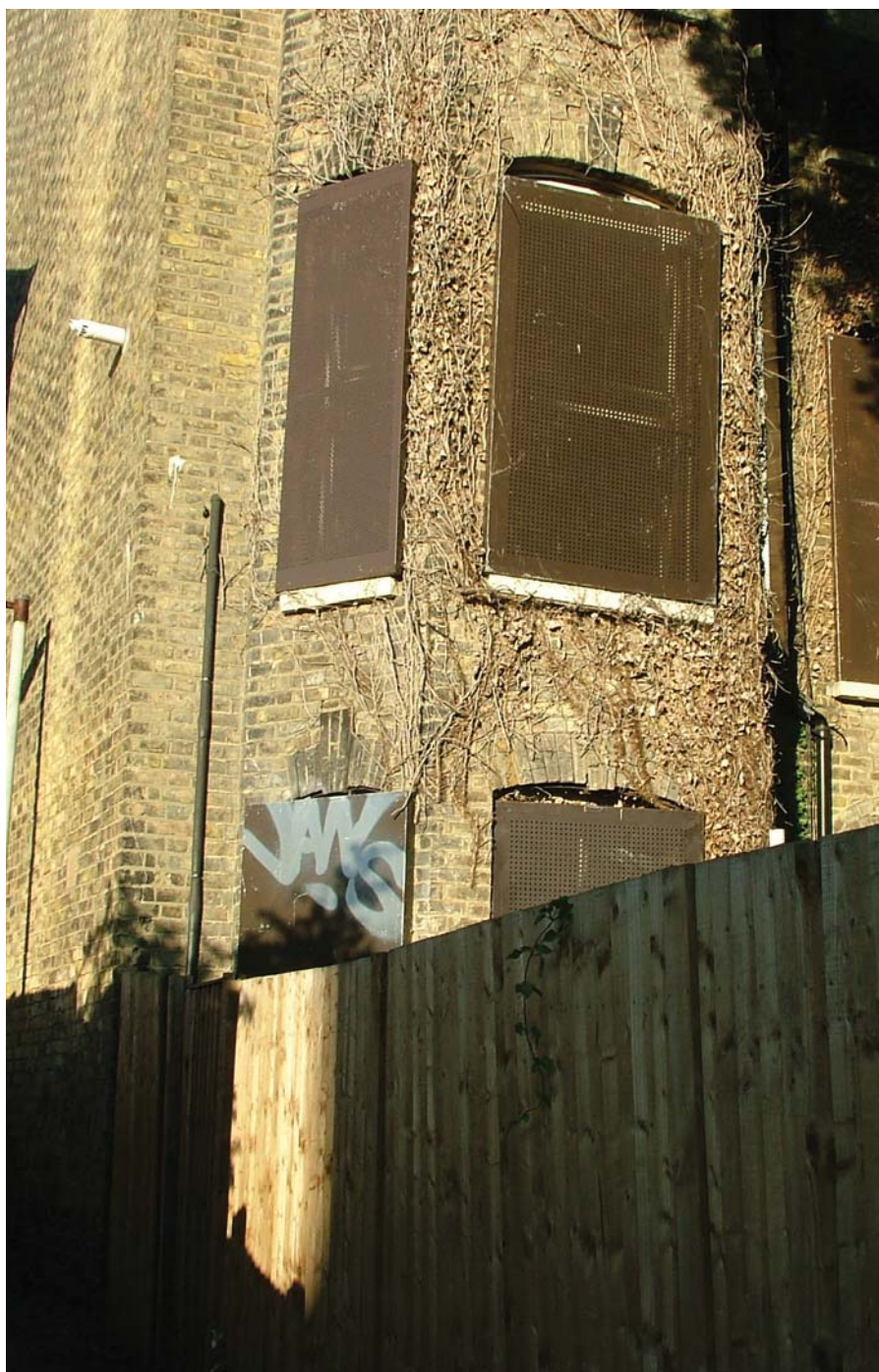
The national network is key to the organisation's effectiveness in registering the scale of a problem. In the year after the Child Support Act came into force in the early 1990s, bureaux wrote nearly 3,000 evidence forms giving examples of the problems arising from its implementation, and providing a hard evidence base for the organisation to brief MPs, provide evidence to the Social Security Select Committee, meet with the responsible Government Minister and ultimately influence the changes that were made to the system.

In the early 2000s, an increasing number of bureau evidence forms highlighted clients' negative experiences of unregulated claims management companies offering 'no win no fee' agreements for personal injury compensation. This led to joint work with the Law Society to improve standards, and – with assiduous lobbying – ultimately achieved Government agreement that statutory regulation was required.

Society itself has changed significantly since 1939, and Citizens Advice works pro-actively to identify and reach out to those communities who might be in particular need. In 2001 for example, the Citizens Advice service was deeply concerned about the rise in racial harassment and race hate crimes in England and Wales following the terrorist attacks of September 11th in America. Many bureaux were already involved in local partnerships to promote racial equality and tackle discrimination, and in May and June 2002, the service launched *Bridging communities*, a policy action guide on the promotion of equality.

It is now a regular part of bureau strategy to reach out to and communicate with vulnerable groups on issues specific to them: for example, Stoke on Trent bureau brought together different voluntary and statutory agencies in a conference on refugees. Practical action included a report to the Local Strategic Partnership on the needs of refugees, the establishment of a working group to examine education provision for refugee families and better housing support for them.

The national economic and political climates influence the issues seen in bureaux, and the credit crunch of 2007/08 caused an alarming increase in mortgage arrears and repossessions for homeowners struggling to manage their repayments. Citizens Advice acted swiftly to alert policy



makers to the importance of protecting homeowners – and tenants – from losing their homes. With compelling evidence, they persuaded the Government of the importance of preventing homelessness, and a number of measures were implemented very quickly, including a pre-action protocol for lenders planning to repossess homes; changes in support for mortgage interest payments; regulation of sale and rent back agreements, and protection in law for tenants whose landlords were facing repossession.

Lifestyles may have changed since 1939, but the position of Citizens Advice as a responsive and relevant voice has not: it still gives government and regulators an early warning of the likely or actual impacts of their decisions, and has its finger on the pulse of 21st century Britain, just as it did 70 years ago.

Real stories, real people

The Citizens Advice service was described by Lord Beveridge as 'a window through which social workers and legislators could see the man in the street'⁶.

At the heart of any call for change made by the Citizens Advice service are the human stories that show the impact of problems on real people, their families and communities – inadequate housing, delayed benefit payment, harsh debt enforcement, high pressure selling schemes or unfair employment practices. Bureau case notes – always presented anonymously – provide graphic illustrations of people's experiences, and the service uses them to demonstrate to policy makers and service providers the impact of their decisions.

In the aftermath of the second world war, the population faced severe housing shortages. Enemy bombing had destroyed many homes, and Citizens Advice Bureaux saw increasing numbers of homeless or over-crowded families, and decreasing levels of emergency accommodation. The 1957 Rent Act relaxed tenancy controls in the rented sector, and led to a further influx of enquiries to bureaux. Records from Bethnal Green CAB in 1960 describe young families unexpectedly confronted with eviction when they had thought themselves secure, or tenants faced with demands for ever higher rents, as they were no longer protected by rent controls.

Both nationally and locally, Citizens Advice used examples of these problems to raise awareness of the housing crisis, and to press for change. A 1954 memorandum, *Housing the Homeless*, drew heavily on individual stories to illustrate the impact of the provisions made for temporary accommodation of homeless people. Local authorities used the report to raise the issue with the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. They in turn came to the Citizens Advice service for more evidence to help inform their development of housing policy.

The stories from Bethnal Green CAB undoubtedly helped prompt the London County Council (LCC) to acknowledge the problem of housing provision, and to open a new Reception Centre for homeless families in Hackney in 1961 – which was full within one month of opening. Recognising the value of the bureau's evidence, the LCC approached them again in 1962 for help with a research project into the causes of homelessness. Citizens Advice still receives a steady stream of requests from researchers to look in detail at its case evidence.

⁶ From *The Story of Citizens Advice Bureaux*, Margaret Brasnett, 1964.

Members of Parliament frequently quote bureau evidence to back up the case for change. When consumer problems became one of the new issues of the 1950s, Mr Gresham Cooke, MP for Twickenham, spoke at a second reading debate of the Advertisements (Hire Purchase) Bill on 1 February 1957:

“In case anyone should be under any illusion as to whether members of the public over-commit themselves under hire purchase, I should say that Citizens Advice Bureaux have given me many examples... One was the case of a man and his wife and two children with a total income of £7 a week paying 42s. rent and rates, 3s.2d. insurance, 15s. coal clubs, 10s. clothing clubs, 34s.6d on hire purchase of furniture, leaving 36s. a week for food and other necessities. Another was of a man and his wife and seven children with a total income of £9 14s.6d and various charges and commitment, who were paying 30s. a week for furniture.”

George Marks/Retrofile/Getty Images



REAL STORIES, REAL PEOPLE

By the 1980s, the benefit system was causing a range of problems for bureau clients. Bureau evidence on housing benefit was quoted in a speech by Michael Meacher, MP for Oldham West, made during an Opposition Day Debate on Occupational Pensioners (Housing Benefit) on 19 January 1984:



Library photos posed by models. John Birdsall/Press Association.

Case study:

In July 2009, a Leicestershire CAB saw a woman who had worked at a hairdressers' salon for five years. When her father caught swine flu, she told her employer, expecting to be sent home just in case she was infectious. She was extremely distressed to be dismissed on the spot without notice.

“A review of the [housing benefit] scheme has just been published by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, based on 10,000 inquiries. The information thus collected offers one of the most comprehensive and damning indictments ever published of a Government measure... There is nothing I can say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that will more vividly illustrate the fear and the hardship that is being caused, the crassness and nonsense of what is being done, than to conclude by quoting three of the multitude of examples that are cited in the report. [In] the first example the bureau had... calculated that a client, a widow with two children, should only be paying rent of around £7, rather than the £19 asked of her by the council... [The CAB] then contacted the local authority, who stated that the amount suggested to our client was merely a guess... In the second example... [a] client aged 78 was unable to afford his diabetic diet as he insisted on paying his rent in full. The third example is that of a couple, one a retirement pensioner... on supplementary benefit and therefore not liable to pay any rent. ... who received a rent arrears statement for £93, which was incorrect. They were not informed that they were now on housing benefit, so they paid £213 out of their reduced income... In the meantime they ran up a debt to the London Electricity Board of £90.”

More recently, as the Tribunals Courts and Enforcement Bill passed through its second reading in March 2007, Oliver Heald, MP for Hertfordshire North East said:

“Some of the examples given by Citizens Advice bureaux are worrying. One of them involved bailiffs forcing their way into a London woman’s flat to recover a parking fine that had, in fact, been imposed many months after she had sold the car concerned. She had confirmation of the change of ownership from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, but the bailiffs threatened to call the police, accused her of assaulting them and then listed property that they were going to take from the flat and said that they would not take it immediately if she paid them £200. Her grandmother, who was visiting, paid on her behalf, even though that woman did not owe a penny.”

Journalists love human interest stories, and Citizens Advice encourages clients who are willing to talk to the media to highlight the case for change through their personal stories: Just one example from the 1990s was that of a profoundly deaf mother with almost total paralysis whose disability living allowance was significantly reduced following a brief visit from the Benefits Agency during a Benefit Integrity Project launched to combat alleged benefit fraud. Citizens Advice experience had indicated that the review was ill thought out, and poorly administered by officials with little knowledge of disability, and this mother’s experience was a prime example. Assisted by Hazel Grove CAB she appealed against the decision and also agreed to be

interviewed by *The Observer*. Following the press coverage, she learnt that her allowance would be reinstated. On the same day the Government announced new safeguards for people whose disability living allowance might be reduced after such a review.

Today, the Social Policy Department of Citizens Advice receives over 40,000 individual evidence reports from bureaux every year, on a diverse range of policy subjects. Bureaux send these reports when they feel the law is inadequate or inequitable, where service provision has broken down, where the client has experienced harsh or unacceptable practices, or where poor administration or discrimination has led to distress or hardship for an individual – and because they believe that policy should be changed to prevent such problems in the future. This evidence also provides a vivid illustration of what the problems mean in reality – impossible choices for older people between paying for food or fuel or medicines; parents scavenging to feed their children, and families turned out onto the street. Bureau evidence offers both the statistical scale of a problem and the real life story – a uniquely powerful tool in campaigning for change.

Dealing as it does with over six million advice issues every year brought by nearly two million clients, the Citizens Advice service still acts as a ‘window’ on to the difficulties, concerns and preoccupations of the man and woman in the street – just as it did during the war and post war years.

Speaking for all

'Anyone – poor or rich, educated or illiterate, young or old, native or foreigner – was welcome at the 200 bureaux which opened on the day war was declared'⁷.

Today, Citizens Advice Bureaux provide face-to-face services in over 3,300 locations, including the high street, community centres, health settings, courts and prisons. They are equipped to deal with any issue, from any visitor: debt, benefits, housing, employment, consumer issues, family matters, health, education, discrimination, immigration and the law. Technology allows another eight million people to access CAB advice from the public website – www.adviceguide.org.uk – while telephone and email services are constantly being updated.

The inclusiveness of the service ensures that its social policy evidence comes from people of all backgrounds, and not just from a single client group. This helps demonstrate to policy makers and service planners how their decisions impact on all members of the community. As technology has developed, so too has the sophistication of the service's data collection. The old hand-written day-books have been replaced by a network-wide electronic case management system, used by all bureaux, which enables the Citizens Advice Social Policy Department to analyse in depth the types of problems raised and the profile of the people bringing them.

Given the nature of their work, CAB advisers frequently see people at their most vulnerable, and serve some of the most disadvantaged people in our society. The determination of the Citizens Advice service to speak for all can clearly be seen in its vociferous challenges to discriminatory practices, and its commitment to promoting equality. For example, the Citizens Advice Rural Race Equality Project highlighted the extent of racism in rural communities. Set up in 1996 with funding from Citizens Advice and the Commission for Racial Equality, the project aimed to tackle rural racism. It undertook an audit of local agencies and produced a directory of contacts and resources, and sought to identify, as far as possible, the racism experienced by black, Asian and minority ethnic people. 'Report it' cards and posters encouraged people to report racist incidents, and to seek advice and support.

Throughout the history of the organisation, the Citizens Advice service has given a voice to its clients, not only by presenting evidence on their behalf, but also by empowering them to speak for themselves and campaign for others in similar situations. In 2006/07, the Gulbenkian Foundation funded *The Client Voice* project, which discovered enormous potential for greater involvement of clients in social policy. This was borne out in 2008, when Citizens Advice compiled a report entitled *This is child poverty* from postcards and emails sent directly to the social policy

⁷ *The Story of Citizens Advice Bureaux*, Margaret Brasnett, 1964.

department from people all over England and Wales. The policy team also filmed real families for a short DVD showing how child poverty affects their lives. Citizens advice Cymru continues to be an active member of the End Child Poverty Network Cymru.

Bill Sykes/Cultura/Getty Images

Case study:

After receiving bureau evidence of exploitation of Portuguese agricultural workers at the hands of 'gangmaster' employment agencies in East Anglia, Citizens Advice contacted the Portuguese European Consumer Centre (ECC) to alert them that Portuguese citizens coming to work in the UK were being exploited. As a result, the CAB service's concerns were highlighted on the front page of one of Portugal's main daily newspapers. This led to an effective information campaign in both countries about employment rights in the UK. Citizens Advice supplied names of the employment agencies cited in bureau evidence and encouraged bureaux to report all cases to the Employment Agency Inspectorate. Citizens Advice was invited by the Portuguese Government to speak at an inter-governmental conference on Portuguese migrant workers' experiences.



SPEAKING FOR ALL

In other surveys hosted on the Citizens Advice websites, clients have told their stories on the availability of NHS dentists, Post Office closures, contacting utility companies, dealing with debts, and the fees charged by letting agents. As we publish this history, the 2009 Equality Bill is passing through Parliament, and Citizens Advice supports implementation of the socio-economic duty on public bodies, which will help to protect many of those people who have responded to our surveys and shown us what life can be like for the poorest people in our society.

In the field of employment, Citizens Advice has been consistently vocal in highlighting instances of discriminatory practice, and calling for greater legislative protection. A Citizens Advice evidence report published in 1994, *Unequal opportunities*, examined the discrimination experienced by bureaux clients on grounds of sex, race, disability and sexuality, and found that existing legislation was inadequate. The report led

to greater links between Citizens Advice and other voluntary and statutory bodies working on discrimination issues. Bureaux also used the report to run local campaigns – Chilterns Area used it as the basis for a conference on discrimination in the workplace.

The Citizens Advice service has a long history of campaigning on issues affecting disabled people. In 1954 the National Citizens Advice Bureaux Committee submitted evidence based on bureaux experience to the Interdepartmental Committee on the Rehabilitation of the Disabled. Records from a group of Sussex bureaux between the 1950s and 1970s make frequent reference to requests from the service's head office for information on issues affecting disabled people.

In the 1980s, a Citizens Advice service AGM called for an end to 'the discrimination against married women which prevents them from applying for non-contributory invalidity pension and invalid care allowance' and in furtherance of this aim, supported organisations such as RADAR: The Disability Network and the Disability Alliance on this issue. In the 1990s, Citizens Advice, in conjunction with other interest groups, was successful in campaigning for an amendment to legislation to allow people to do voluntary work for up to 16 hours a week without losing entitlement to incapacity benefit.

In its 2004 report, *Out of the picture*, Citizens Advice focussed on the social exclusion faced by people with mental health problems. As a result of the report, the Finance and Leasing Association (FLA), one of the main credit industry trade associations, changed its code of practice to recognise the problems with debt faced by people with mental health difficulties, and together we produced a training video



Case study:

In 2008, Flintshire CAB celebrated a social policy success potentially benefiting thousands of carers across Flintshire. The County Council had a policy of charging both a disabled customer and their carer or personal assistant the full entry price at the local swimming pools. The bureau asked the council to review the policy under the Disability Equality Scheme. As a result, since 1 April 2008, a carer/personal assistant over 16, and supporting a disabled customer who can prove they are in receipt of high or medium rate disability living allowance, is no longer charged.



© iStockphoto.com/Alex Barnwell

aimed at raising the awareness of debt collection staff about mental health problems.

Since 2005, many bureaux have run seminars for small businesses and community organisations, to raise awareness of changes in equality laws, including those relating to religion and belief, and sexual orientation. The service's response to the Discrimination Law Review and other related consultations resulted in many of its recommendations being incorporated into the 2009 Equality Bill.

In May 2008, the Equality and Human Rights Commission awarded Citizens Advice a grant of £40,000 for developing the service's capacity to undertake social policy work on human rights and discrimination issues, which will ensure that the organisation continues to speak for everyone who comes through its doors or uses its services – poor or rich, young or old, native or foreigner.

The power of the network

“I should like to believe that local authorities and central Government will monitor the changes and trend of cases brought to Citizens Advice Bureaux. If it were possible to use the wisdom and experience of Citizens Advice Bureaux to run the housing department more efficiently, the savings would be enormous.”⁸

Another unique strength of the Citizens Advice service is the network structure: locally focused bureaux tackle issues particularly facing the people they serve, but also join together in regional groups, or as a national voice, with a passionate determination to make things better wherever change is needed.

Bureaux were set up as independent, local, charitable organisations joined in a common purpose and united by a central administration. The national office provided the supply of information to support their advisory role, as well as gathering from them details of their case load and the types of problems they were seeing. As the organisation has grown and developed, much work has been put into developing its corporate identity, to ensuring compliance with its aims and principles, and to delivering consistent quality across its many parts, while still maintaining the strength of the network structure.

A major advantage of a network organisation of the size of the Citizens Advice service is the support and inspiration that constituent members can give and take from each other. From the service's early years, groups of bureaux established themselves as county committees, sharing experience and expertise. While these groups were not solely focused on social policy, they could identify common issues raised by clients, and allowed for discussion about solutions. This sometimes involved local action, and sometimes meant raising awareness with the Regional or National Committee. Today, bureaux share experiences of successful work by writing Local Action Report forms (LARFs) which are published in the monthly *Social policy bulletin*.

A meeting of the South East Citizens Advice Bureaux Regional Committee in 1954 reported that a small group had been set up to consider the social aspects of hire purchase including clothing clubs and credit drapery schemes. A later meeting confirms that the group's concerns had been referred to the national organisation, which in turn informed the Government's Board of Trade Committee on consumer protection.

⁸ Peter Bottomley, Member for Woolwich West – parliamentary debate on Citizens Advice Bureaux, 28 May 1982, Hansard column 1178.

In the 1980s, as efforts increased to raise the profile of social policy work across the organisation, area social policy groups began to take shape. Advertising their group to fellow bureaux in 1988, the Yorkshire and Humberside social policy group stated that its aim was to be effective in three ways:

'Getting the best outcome for the individual client; Making sure that the benefit can be spread to other clients with similar problems; Trying to prevent the problem in the future'.

Today over 80 per cent of bureaux are part of a social policy group and it is through these groups that much of the local action takes place. In addition to discussing current trends and priorities, groups meet with local service providers or agencies to influence policies and practices in their areas. They run local campaigns or produce evidence reports on issues which their advice work has shown to be problematic for their communities.

Persistence is often required: Sevenoaks CAB achieved success in 1995 following a four year campaign, working with others in the area, to re-open their local Job Centre. When it closed in 1990, the bureau set up a town employment watchdog whose members included local employers, social workers, unemployed people and the local MP. Its first success was the setting up of a job-advertising board at the library. Next, a mobile job centre was organised, and then a job club for the long-term unemployed. But as people from Sevenoaks still had to travel to neighbouring job centres to sign on for benefits, the group campaigned and succeeded in obtaining travelling expenses for them. The final victory was achieved with the re-opening of the Job Centre in 1995.



Area Director of HSBC Allan Wilkinson with Moira Macfarlane, Bureau Manager of Alnwick CAB at the first installation of a HSBC cash machine in Warkworth, Northumberland, December 2006, following a Citizens Advice campaign.

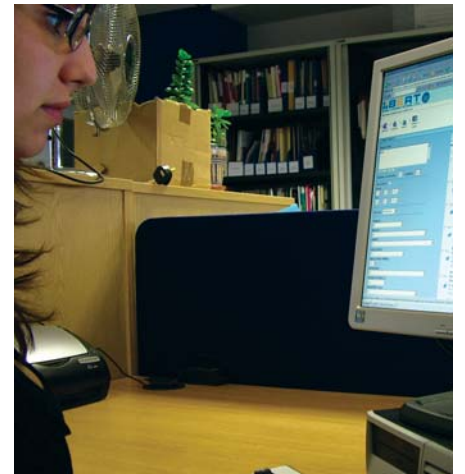
1941 – The objects of the CAB service include: ‘To collect information on the kind of problems which are at any specific time causing difficulty or distress and to bring such problems to the notice of those who have power to prevent or solve them’.

1955 – A Citizens Advice sub-committee is set up, which publishes a report *Hire purchase and credit buying*, providing factual information and making recommendations for change.

1971 – Pilot of a new information retrieval form, the forerunner of today’s social policy bureau evidence forms. Following a successful pilot, the scheme is adopted in 1972.

1977 – Information Retrieval Officer post funded by Office of Fair Trading. This is the first dedicated social policy staff resource in Citizens Advice service central office. Improvements to social policy systems follow, including development of an accessible data bank of client problems that can be used at any time to determine Citizens Advice experience in particular subjects.

Key milestones in the development of our social policy work



1980 – First *Information retrieval bulletin* is produced – the forerunner of today's *Social policy bulletin*.

1983 – The then Minister of State for Consumer Affairs expresses concern about the alleged politicisation of the CAB national organisation and calls for a comprehensive review. The Lovelock Review finds that the social policy aim was 'proper and useful' and that the service would be 'open to criticism if it did not undertake this work'. The service also receives increased funding.

1985 – A new department – Policy, Comment and Development Division – is created, incorporating Information Retrieval, Research and Development, Press and Publicity, and Parliamentary Liaison.

1991 – Citizens Advice service Annual General Meeting agrees to re-word the aims of the service to emphasise the equal status of twin advice and social policy aims:

The service 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.

1992 – A new Social Policy Department is created.

2001 – First publication of *Evidence*, an externally focussed publication to highlight the social policy work being carried out by Citizens Advice.

2003 – Introduction of Citizens Advice electronic case recording system enabling bureaux to submit evidence forms electronically. By April 2008, all bureaux were using it to send Citizens Advice evidence forms.

2006 – Citizens Advice aims are rewritten in plain English:

- to provide the advice people need for the problems they face
- to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

2007 – Bureau evidence retrieval tool (BERT) becomes operational – enabling the Social Policy Department to search the vast electronic evidence database according to key words, time periods, geographical area and client profile.

– Appointment of a National Assembly for Wales Liaison Officer providing the first Wales specific public affairs post in response to the devolution of government in Wales.

2009 – Today, there are four teams working on policy issues in Citizens Advice – Consumer Policy Team, Welfare Policy Team, Campaigns Team, and Press and Public Affairs including Parliamentary work.

THE POWER OF THE NETWORK

In addition to providing the evidence base for the national organisation's social policy work, the regional and local networks of bureaux have also played a vital role in its publicity and consequent effectiveness. In 1984 for example, the national organisation published an evidence report *Housing benefit: the cost to the claimant*, and encouraged bureaux to undertake local social policy work with their MP and local press. In reporting on this national campaign, a subsequent *Social policy bulletin* commented:

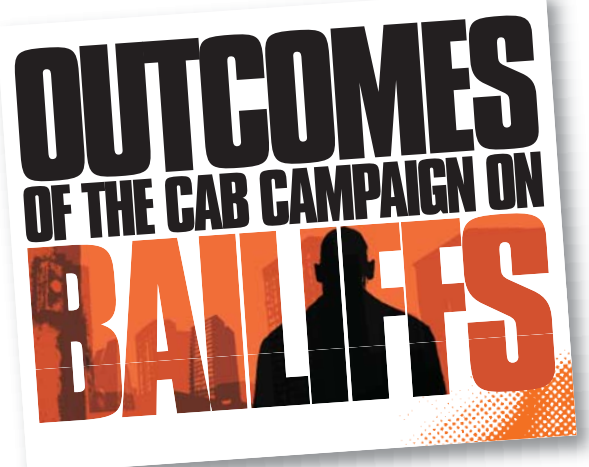
"The tremendous work undertaken by bureaux with their local newspaper, radio and TV stations together with the impressive amount of public and parliamentary attention paid to the Citizens Advice service report, were important factors in getting the government to reconsider the amendments to the regulations and to announce a review of the scheme..."

Increased strategic coordination of its campaigning power across the organisation has been a key development of social policy work in the Citizens Advice service over the last decade. National campaigns are carefully planned to bring the full force of the Citizens Advice service to bear on particular problems. A good example of this is the *Putting bailiffs on the spot* campaign which was launched at the 2006 Citizens Advice service Annual conference. The campaign had two aims: to influence the content of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Bill, which

contained reforms to bailiff law; and to influence local authority practices in relation to enforcement of council tax by bailiffs.

For bureaux, the campaign involved collecting evidence on council tax bailiffs, and checking it against criteria from legislation and the Government's National Standard for Enforcement agents; lobbying their MPs for independent regulation of bailiffs; using local media to highlight the campaign's objectives; and influencing their local authority's practices on the use of bailiffs.

For Citizens Advice nationally, the campaign involved analysing the findings from the bailiff audit forms to influence the content of the Bill; lobbying and briefing peers and MPs during the passage of the Bill through Parliament; meetings with civil servants and ministers to discuss concerns; and using the national media to highlight concerns about the Bill.





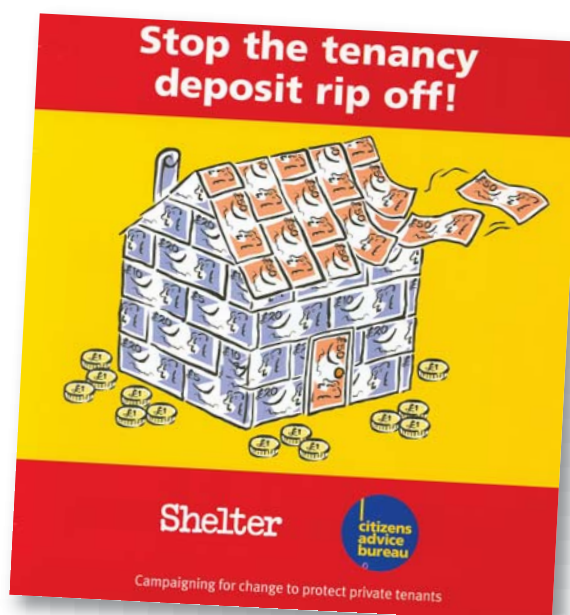
As a result of campaigning by Citizens Advice and others, the Government:

- Agreed to reintroduce plans for bailiff regulation and proposals went out for consultation. Subsequently the Government announced that the Security Industry Authority would be the independent regulator.
- Announced better safeguards on the extended power of forced entry set down in the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Bill. They also promised that the power would not come into force until regulation was in place.
- Published a policy statement on the Bill which included a commitment to exempt domestic pets from seizure by bailiffs.

Nearly 50 bureaux took the campaign further at a local level, by holding meetings with their local authorities and bailiffs. For example, campaigners from North Somerset CAB achieved some important policy changes when they met their local authority. It changed its policy on when and how to refer cases to bailiffs and set limits on what the bailiffs could do and charge when collecting council tax arrears. The national campaigns team have used the outcomes of local work by bureaux with their local authorities and bailiffs to pull together a best practice protocol. This was published in July 2009, and endorsed by the Local Government Association and the Welsh Local Government Association.

Other successful nationwide campaigns have included the introduction of tenancy deposit schemes, provision of more free cash machines and protests against Post Office closures.

In its 70th year, the service faces a number of significant challenges: an ever more diverse population; the worst economic recession since the 1930s; increasing competition from new providers in the advice sector; and the accelerating pace of developing technology. While a few individual bureaux may struggle to adapt, there is no question that the service will face up to the challenges, emerging stronger and fitter, and will continue to influence local and national policy makers for the next 70 years and beyond – thanks to the power of the network.



Respect and cooperation – working with others for change

In a recent stakeholder study, partner organisations gave Citizens Advice a mean score of 7.3 out of 10 for effectiveness.⁹

As well as the power of its own network, the Citizens Advice service has had the advantage of strong links with other organisations, from national and local government and industry regulators, to service providers, representative bodies such as the Law Society, and other voluntary and welfare organisations. While Citizens Advice may take a critical stand, it makes a point of offering constructive criticism which is always based on evidence. The voice of the service is therefore respected by the majority of stakeholders, and collaboration with Citizens Advice can add significant impact to a campaign for change.



David Harker (Citizens Advice), John McFall MP and Joanna Elson (Money Advice Trust) celebrate the launch of *With a little help from my friends* – a joint report with Advice UK, the Institute of Money Advisers and the Money Advice Trust – on improving self-help debt advice services.

In the early days, new bureaux were often established by existing charitable organisations, and the nature of the work – answering questions on every subject under the sun – meant that bureaux had to make the best possible use of all local resources. In the 1940s, Citizens Advice bureaux regularly worked with local lawyers to provide the Poor Man's Lawyer scheme, so that when the new legal aid scheme was being developed in the 1940's, Citizens Advice was asked to contribute its views. Citizens Advice continued to monitor the scheme, and some 30 years later, the Law Society's Secretary for Legal Aid, Seton Pollock, praised the 'excellent work done by Citizens Advice Bureaux in uncovering gaps in the legal aid system'¹⁰. The two organisations still work closely together and in the last few years have established the 'Access to justice alliance' to campaign on civil legal aid issues, which included a mass lobby of Parliament in 2006.

A National CAB Committee report from 1959–1961, commented on the Citizens Advice service recommendation for greater education on home making and budgeting:

⁹ Opinion Leader Stakeholder Study, 2007.

¹⁰ *Reader's Digest*, January 1971.

‘Interest has been engendered amongst organisations like the Red Cross, the Women’s Institute, and the YMCA who through their members have opportunities of experimenting in this work... CAB HQ are constantly consulted by these organisations, by educationalists, by the Force’s Resettlement Panels and by social workers generally who are engaged in work of this kind, and have been greatly helped by the day-to-day experience of bureaux in advising on family budgeting, and the many other home-making problems’.

In the 1950s and 1960s, many bureaux worked with their local Old People’s Welfare Committee (OPWC). In 1959 Citizens Advice Bureaux in Sussex worked with the local OPWC to press the local telephone exchange to improve telephone services for older and disabled people. Today, Citizens Advice is campaigning with the newly merged Help the Aged/Age Concern to ensure that the network of post offices in the UK, which are particularly vital for older people, can remain financially viable.



Access to justice alliance mass lobby of Parliament in 2006.

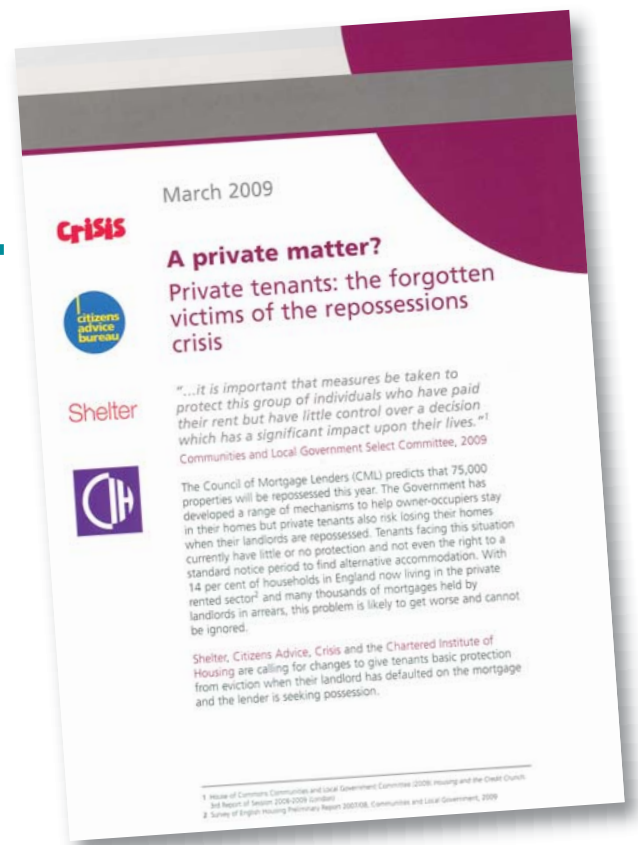
RESPECT AND COOPERATION – WORKING WITH OTHERS FOR CHANGE

The value of Citizens Advice input into social policy development has been recognised by governments throughout its 70 year history. In 1945 – addressing a Citizens Advice service conference – the Minister of Health acknowledged ‘the very valuable evidence’ contributed to government committees on legal aid and on rent control, and a 1956 article in *The Municipal Journal* demonstrates the range of its influence:

‘Views are increasingly sought through their headquarters on many social problems: marriage and divorce (for the Royal Commission); the operation of the county courts; gaps and anomalies in national insurance schemes; the rehabilitation of disabled people and on the social implications of the increasing use of hire purchase.’

Bureaux workers joined local National Insurance or National Assistance Advisory Committees, and the national Secretary of the Citizens Advice service was one of the few lay representatives on the Franks Committee, set up in 1955 to look at newly developing tribunals.

Today the views of the Citizens Advice service on proposed changes to policy or legislation are constantly sought by government, and the service has responded to 64 consultation papers so far in 2009 alone. Representatives of Citizens Advice sit on numerous influential bodies organised by government to advise on policy development, including the DWP Senior Stakeholder Forum and Policy and Strategy Forum; HM Revenue & Customs customer representative group; the Financial



Inclusion Task Force and the Fuel Poverty Task Force; the Housing Finance Forum and the Consumer Finance Forum – both set up in 2008 to examine issues for lenders and consumers in the context of the economic crisis; and in the Welsh Assembly Government, Citizens Advice contributes to the Financial Inclusion Steering Group.

From the beginning, Citizens Advice has been a respected voice in the world of social policy, and while it reaches across a broad range of issues, it also recognises the value of working with others on specific campaigns. From national coalitions to local partnerships, from simply sharing evidence, to lobbying MPs, we will work with others to change the world.



Representatives from HSBC, Lloyds TSB, Wessex Water, 1st Credit and GE Home Lending take part in the 'Ask the creditors' panel at the first Citizens Advice Money conference in 2007.



Citizens Advice joins the End Child Poverty rally in London in 2008.

Spreading the word – Citizens Advice in Parliament and in the media

'Mrs Strachey, of the Pilgrim House Bow Citizens Advice Bureau said: 'The people who come to us, what they give to us, what we send to the National Council of Social Service, and what they in turn send to Parliament, eventually will help to formulate new legislation... What people tell us will change the laws of the country.'

Successful lobbying requires a careful balance of private influence on those with the power to change things, and wider exposure to apply public pressure for change. Traditionally, many bureaux have enjoyed good relationships with their local MPs, while Citizens Advice engages with Members of Parliament in Government and in opposition, and is respected for its independence and sound evidence-based arguments. It also has a high profile within the media, and Citizens Advice representatives are regularly invited onto television and radio programmes, as well as spreading the word in print and online.

Case study:

In 2000, Citizens Advice began a campaign to abolish charges for family visitor visa appeals. The Government introduced a right of appeal for people refused visas to visit their families in the UK, but also proposed fees of £280 for a paper-only appeal, and £580 for an oral hearing. Such fees were unprecedented in the social welfare tribunal system. Citizens

Advice considered them to be racially discriminatory, and a barrier to justice, and wrote to the relevant Government Ministers. Its concerns were highlighted on the BBC Radio 4 *Today Programme*, and in *The Guardian*, and the Government reduced the fees to £150 and £500. At its AGM in 2000, Citizens Advice agreed to press for total abolition of the fees – a decision reported on the front page of the *Asian Times* and in the *Caribbean Times*. It prepared parliamentary briefings (as did other national organisations such as the Immigration Advisory Service, and the Immigration Law Practitioners' society), and in November 2000, Lord Judd opened a House of Lords debate with a speech written by Citizens Advice, and several peers quoted extensively from the service's briefing. During a similar debate in the House of Commons, the Home Secretary agreed to conduct an internal review of the appeal mechanism, which led to a further reduction in fees, in January 2001, to £50 and £125, as well as an interdepartmental review team to examine the matter further. In July 2001, Citizens Advice issued a further briefing to MPs highlighting that despite the latest reductions, the number of appeals

was well below the Government's forecast. In December, Citizens Advice published a short paper: *Family visitor appeals*, the first year, and in February 2002, the Home Secretary announced that he was minded to abolish the fees following the outcome of the review. Finally, in May 2002, the fee was set at zero, prior to legislation being introduced which repealed the power to charge fees for these appeals.



Sky News interview Alex MacDermott, Creditor Liaison Policy Officer in 2008.



This is a composite advertisement. The top part features a headline 'Tenants need eviction safety net' with a sub-headline 'Campaigners seeking protection against defaulting landlords, says Holly Thomas'. Below the headline is a photograph of a family (a man, a woman, and a child) smiling together. The bottom part of the advertisement is a dark box with white text: 'Tax Free Savings', 'ISA Direct Reward. 3% AER for 12 months, guaranteed.', and 'A great tax free rate.'

SPREADING THE WORD – CITIZENS ADVICE IN PARLIAMENT AND THE MEDIA

Lack of resources undoubtedly limited the way the service approached the media in its early social policy work, but the media has always recognised the value of Citizens Advice in presenting the public voice. A Finchley CAB worker recalled urgent telephone calls during the war from an MP and broadcaster, Douglas Houghton, seeking information for his radio programme *Can I Help You?*: 'Mr Houghton used Finchley Citizens Advice Bureau as a source of information on the population's general anxieties arising from the traumatic experience of war'. A 1949 article in *the Times* emphasised the usefulness of Citizens Advice Bureau statistics in highlighting the problems people were experiencing in the post-war peace, and *Punch* magazine in 1950 described Citizens Advice Bureaux as 'extremely sensitive instruments of social research from which the Government could gauge the pressure of particular problems'. Local media was – and is – used by bureaux both to reach a wider audience with preventative advice, and to highlight issues of concern to the local community. The 1960 records from Bethnal Green CAB are typical of local bureaux activities, including letters in local newspapers, lobbying of the Borough Council, and

partnership work with other organisations on welfare of the homeless.

In the early 1980s, resources for social policy work in Citizens Advice began to increase, and policy officers engaged more pro-actively with the media and with MPs. The Association's 1982/83 annual report comments on the increased awareness of the wealth of information held by bureaux, and notes that 'MPs have used the information and views expressed by the Association in a wide range of parliamentary activities including committee work, debates, parliamentary questions and ten minute rule bills'. In the same year, the service held a series of press briefings to highlight bureau experience of debt in the recession which proved successful in gaining national publicity.

Since then, the profile of Citizens Advice has grown dramatically, and the resulting publicity is a powerful tool in achieving change. Citizens Advice evidence reports consistently receive high levels of attention in both the media and Parliament.

As well as its work with press, radio and television, Citizens Advice reflects modern communication habits, and is using web-based media to tell its clients' stories.



Citizens Advice staff meet the then Prime Minister, John Major at a Conservative party conference in the early 1990s.

Case study:

In 2005 Citizens Advice published a report, *Money with your name on it?* which examined the impact on low income families of poor administration in the tax credit system. The report highlighted how many families had been plunged below the breadline and into mounting debt. It called for a limit to the recovery of overpayments so that families could not be left with weekly incomes below minimum levels, and stressed that urgent improvement in tax credit administration was necessary if the scheme was to achieve its anti-poverty objectives and not frustrate them. The launch of the report attracted overwhelming media coverage, resulting in the Leader of the Opposition raising the issue at Prime Minister's Question Time on the same day. In an extraordinary response, The Prime Minister apologised for the 'hardship and distress' that had been caused to some families, telling MPs 'I accept that there are serious issues to be addressed, and we are addressing them'. Subsequently, Ministers instructed the Revenue to suspend the recovery of excess overpayments until it had resolved disputes with claimants and to make extra payments to the hardest hit. In December 2005 the Chancellor's pre-Budget report announced changes to the tax credit system reflecting many of the key recommendations made by Citizens Advice.

As part of the *End Child Poverty* campaign, it asked parents to talk on a YouTube video about the impact of their financial difficulties on their children. The video, and an accompanying report, gave an insight into the financial, emotional and physical impact of poverty on children in modern Britain. Citizens Advice will continue to give a public voice to some of the families behind the statistics.

In Parliament and in the Welsh Assembly, as well as regularly providing briefing notes and meeting with Members to discuss key bills, Citizens Advice also contributes evidence to Select Committee inquiries, organises two All Party Parliamentary Groups, supports Citizens Advice Bureaux to work with MPs at a constituency level, and manages an extensive Citizens Advice presence at the party political conferences. Relationships with MPs have recently been further cemented by the introduction of the Citizens Advice Parliamentarian of the Year award – winners to date have included John McFall MP, Dr Vince Cable MP, and Ian McCartney MP – Parliamentarians who recognise the vital role played by Citizens Advice, and who themselves will help us to spread the word on behalf of the people we all serve.



Citizens Advice Parliamentarian of the Year 2009 winner, Ian McCartney MP, with Senior Public Affairs Officer, Bethan Collins.

A selection of CAB service social policy achievements

1940s

- Bureaux provide evidence of the urgent need for evacuation during the flying bomb period of 1944, which contributes to a Government decision to begin an Evacuation Scheme for mothers and children.
- In 1945, the Government Minister for Health pays tribute to the 'valuable evidence which came through the Citizens Advice Bureaux to the Committee on Rent Control' and also to the Lord Chancellor's Committee on legal aid.
- Bureaux representations influence Government rationing policy, including extra clothing coupons for expectant mothers and extra cheese for gardeners.
- In 1948/49, bureaux in the South East raise concerns that the Assistance Board is not robust enough when dealing with husbands who fail to maintain their wives. The National Committee takes this up with the National Assistance Board, which instructs its field officers to address the issue.
- Southwark CAB secretaries serve on the 1949–50 Ministry of National Insurance Local Advisory Committee and on the Regional Advisory Committee of the London Council of Social Service.
- Lord Beveridge's book *Voluntary Action* is published in 1948, saying that Citizens Advice Bureaux 'render much more than an individual service; they help to make a better, more united community... They are, at the same time, invaluable collectors of information about economic and social conditions'.

1950s

- Media reports acknowledge the contribution played by bureaux evidence: *Punch* magazine describes bureaux as 'extremely sensitive instruments of social research from which the Government could gauge the pressure of particular problems'. *The Economist* refers to the cordial attitude of government to the CAB service as shown by its 'readiness to receive – or even request – reports as to where, in their vast operations, the shoe pinches the public'.
- In 1953/54, the service is represented on the National Council's Standing Committee on legal aid and members take part in a deputation to the Lord Chancellor to press for the implementation of the remaining sections of the Legal Aid and Advice Act.
- In the same period, the CAB service contributes evidence for the National Council of Social Service to submit to the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce, and the Citizens Advice Bureaux National Committee is asked to comment on proposals from other organisations.
- Housing problems dominate bureaux workloads: a 1954 memorandum *Housing the Homeless* is produced by National Council for Social Service, together with the National Council of Family Casework Agencies, drawing heavily on bureaux experience of the effect of temporary housing provision on family life.

- The Secretary of the National Citizens Advice Bureaux Committee is one of the few lay representatives on the Franks Committee set up in 1955 to look at newly developing tribunals.
- Consumer problems increase with the rise of hire purchase and credit agreements: A Citizens Advice sub-committee is set up in 1955, which publishes a report *Hire purchase and credit buying*, providing factual information and making recommendations for change. Citizens Advice submits valuable evidence to the 1959 Molony Committee on Consumer Protection.

1960s

- Central government re-instates funding as the Ministry of Housing and Local Government makes a grant 'in appreciation of the service rendered by the citizens advice bureaux to the community', followed later by the Board of Trade.
- The National Citizens Advice Bureaux Committee submits evidence in 1963 to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government's Impact of Rates Committee showing that 'few local authorities used their powers to relieve hardship caused by rate increases'. An interim measure is subsequently rushed through Parliament 'to require relief in certain circumstances and to share the cost with the national exchequer'.
- Citizens Advice provides evidence to government and other organisations on housing, social services, legal aid, marriage and divorce, jury service, prisoners and their families, mental health issues and employment.
- A letter is sent to the Clerks of larger Boroughs by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, acknowledging the help given by bureaux in the field of housing, and urging local authorities to review their provision of advice services for their people.
- The Secretary of Bethnal Green CAB assists in a research project commissioned by the London County Council looking into the causes of homelessness, and the findings are presented to the Minister of Housing and Local Government for discussion.

1970s

- A January 1971 *Reader's Digest* article comments on the 'vital evidence' provided to commissions by the CAB service and quotes praise from the Law Society's Secretary for Legal Aid for the 'excellent work done by Citizens Advice Bureaux in uncovering gaps in the legal aid system'.
- Bureaux evidence on the 1971 census is reported to the Registrar General, incorporated into the official census report, and is used to improve the next one.
- In 1970, the Dutch Government approaches the Board of Trade for advice on hire purchase laws; the Board of Trade offers bureau evidence on hire purchase as being one of the best guides they could give them.
- Bureaux evidence on problems with estimated gas and electricity accounts leads to a discussion with the Chairman of the Electricity Council on the BBC 1 television programme *24 Hours*. Citizens Advice then has meetings with both the Electricity and Gas Councils.
- In 1977, as a result of the Citizens Advice service's commitment to consumer problems, the Office of Fair Trading funds an Information Retrieval post for two years. This is the first staff resource dedicated to policy work.

1980s

- In 1982, Citizens Advice responds to a Department of Environment consultation on mobile home legislation. Citizens Advice recommendations are accepted and the mobile homes Act 1983 substantially improves security for mobile home owners.
- In 1983, bureaux evidence was used in a BBC2 programme *Out of Court* on difficulties encountered by employees who had non-itemised deductions taken from their wages. The programme's interest was stimulated by Holywell CAB in North Wales, who had contacted them with a case story.
- The 1984 Citizens Advice service report *Housing benefit: the cost to the claimant* achieves widespread public and parliamentary attention, resulting in concessions over amendments to housing benefit regulations, and the launch of a review.
- In 1986, bureaux in Greater London produce a report *Out of service*, which shows the Inner London Supplementary Benefit offices to be at breaking point. Correspondence and meetings with the Secretary of State, result in his visiting two London bureaux.
- Bureaux evidence is referenced in Parliament during a debate on social security changes.
- Citizens Advice submits evidence to a review on fuel debt and the Fuel Boards' Code of Practice, and a number of amendments are made to the Code – but the service would like the revised Code to be stronger!
- Citizens Advice persuades an electricity board to receive a breakdown of a client's financial circumstances on a CAB form and to use it to help agree a repayment schedule.

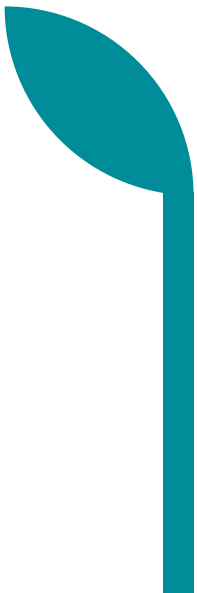
1990s

- Citizens Advice achieves amendments to the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill 1992, significantly improving protection for employees seeking to enforce their legal rights.
 - Examples of local action on bailiffs include: Bracknell CAB uses its local paper to encourage people to stand up for their rights against bailiffs; Halifax CAB negotiates with its local authority resulting in a new Code of Practice on collection of council tax arrears; Wavertree CAB persuades court officials to investigate the activities of the bailiffs contracted to the court, and the court changes its firm of bailiffs; Wakefield CAB sets up a multi-agency liaison group and improves relations in the area.
 - The Council of Mortgage Lenders jointly commissions Citizens Advice and the London Housing Unit to examine how lenders can improve their services to borrowers and avoid possession. The 1992 report *Avoiding possession – arrears management in practice* is distributed to all building societies.
 - The Citizens Advice report *High and dry* prompts meetings with several water companies to discuss their collections policies. Southern Water work with local bureaux on a register of people with special needs, and South Staffordshire agree to review their practices and charges.
 - In 1994, Citizens Advice publishes *Benefit of the doubt* in anticipation of scrutiny of benefits for unemployed people in the forthcoming Jobseekers Bill. During the Committee Stage of the Bill, one of the service's main recommendations is accepted – that benefit be paid in full until a decision is made that someone is 'voluntarily unemployed'.
 - In 1995, a Government White Paper on child support includes measures recommended in the Citizens Advice report *Child support one year on* – including recognition for clean-break assessments; inclusion of travel to work expenses; and departure from formula on appeal in exceptional circumstances.
 - Citizens Advice campaigns in 1998 against changes in court fees, including the removal of fee exemption for those on income support and of the court's discretionary power to waive fees in cases of hardship. Four bureau cases are used as part of a successful Public Law Project judicial review of the new system. Exemption for income support claimants is restored and courts are able to remit fees again.
 - In 1999, Citizens Advice campaigns against the introduction of a new £80 court allocation fee – which is abolished within a year of introduction.
 - Citizens Advice persuades the Council of Mortgage Lenders to introduce a six year cut-off point for the pursuit of mortgage shortfall debt, where the sale of a repossessed property has not cleared the outstanding mortgage.
 - Middlesborough CAB highlights the needs of the local Asian community to the Benefits Agency, resulting in better liaison and a noticeable improvement in services.
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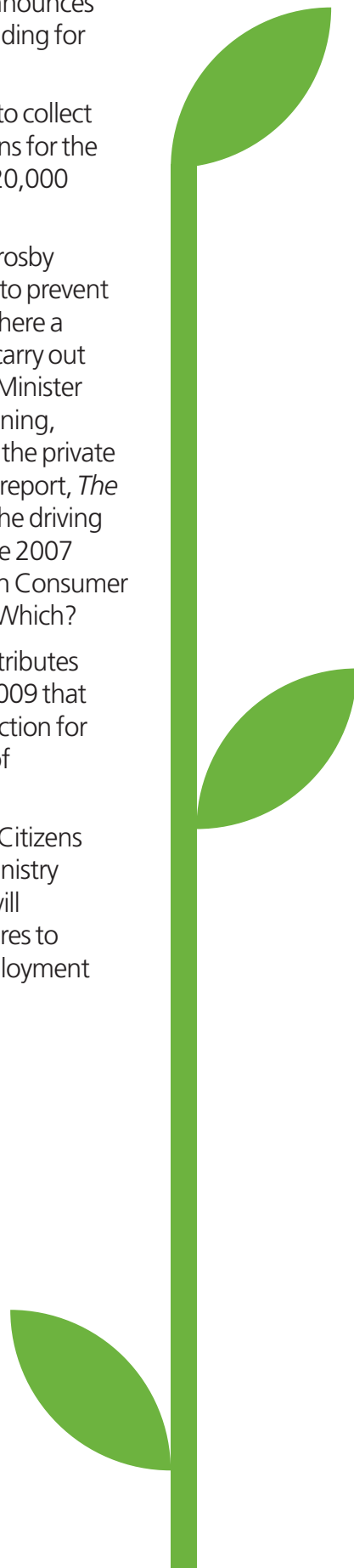
- South Somerset CAB campaigns against the expectation placed on disabled people to travel up to two hours for disability tribunal hearings. They obtain media coverage and meet with the Industrial Tribunal Service, with the result that much closer venues are provided.
- Millom CAB in Cumbria contacts the county education committee, when they find that clients on income support and family credit are being refused discretionary school clothing grants. The committee agrees that all families in receipt of these benefits will automatically qualify for the grants.
- Work undertaken by bureaux in Yorkshire in conjunction with the National Union of Miners leads to a decision by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council to review tests for qualification for new disablement benefit for sick miners.
- After much campaigning, Stamford CAB obtains agreement that travel warrants can be issued to clients to attend Social Fund interviews.
- Tower Hamlets CAB works with its MP and MEP to persuade the Home Office to change the wording of a letter to asylum seekers to avoid misinterpretation by benefit officials, which had been causing their benefit to be stopped.
- Jersey social policy subcommittee persuades a Working Party on Need to help support single young people under the age of 25 years who cannot live at home.

2000s

- Responding to the foot and mouth crisis, the CAB service launches emergency advice services for affected communities, and negotiates nationally with banks and building societies to ensure sympathetic treatment of rural businesses whose income is virtually stopped by the crisis.
- In 2002, Citizens Advice issues its first super-complaint on doorstep selling. The Office of Fair Trading agrees to investigate the problem. In 2008, UK legislation was changed to extend cooling off rights to all doorstep sales.
- Bureaux evidence on uniform costs and the fall in provision of local authority uniform grants leads the Government to produce guidance on uniform policies to schools in England; and the Welsh Assembly to pass a motion funding all Local Education Authorities in Wales to provide school uniform grants to pupils entering year 7.
- Citizens Advice launches a super-complaint in 2005 to the Office of Fair Trading on the cost and effectiveness of payment protection insurance. The matter is referred to the Competition Commission, and the Financial Services Authority fines a number of companies for poor sales practices.
- In 2007, Citizens Advice wins the 'Changing the World Award' from *Third Sector* magazine for its campaign to increase the number of free cash machines.
- New tenancy deposit protection law comes into force in 2007 after 15 years of campaigning by the Citizens Advice service. Together with Shelter, the Citizens Advice service wins a *PR Week* Public Affairs Award in 2004 for this campaign.



- The Department of Health announces an 11 per cent increase in funding for NHS dentistry.
- The Government agrees not to collect arrears of tax on small pensions for the tax year 2007/08 for some 420,000 low-income pensioners.
- Debbie Crew, an adviser at Crosby and Formby CAB campaigns to prevent retaliatory eviction in cases where a tenant asks their landlord to carry out repairs. In January 2008, the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, announces a major review of the private rented sector, citing Debbie's report, *The tenant's dilemma*, as one of the driving factors. Debbie Crew wins the 2007 Sheila McKechnie Foundation Consumer Action award, sponsored by Which?
- Citizens Advice lobbying contributes to Ofcom's confirmation in 2009 that it will introduce greater protection for consumers from mis-selling of mobile phones.
- In 2009 – after eight years of Citizens Advice campaigning – the Ministry of Justice announces that it will introduce 'tough new measures to improve the payment of Employment Tribunal awards'.



Written by **Alison Green**

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