

SACAB Community Benefits Policy

A visible presence for over 80 years, the Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) network have a proud and long history of delivering volunteer-led community benefit services to citizens and communities the length and breadth of Scotland. People's wartime needs for advice and advocacy prompted the origins of our services. Those activities remain our chief focus in today's world, and have been proven as ever more relevant by citizens' needs during the pandemic and cost of living crisis. Benefiting the communities we serve is an essential expression of our mission and values outlined in the CAS Strategy 2022-25.

It is the policy of the CAB network to integrate community benefit into the ongoing processes of delivering a holistic advocacy and advice-giving service across local communities in Scotland. At both national and local levels, CAS explicitly stewards and uses its resources to benefit local citizens and communities.

The aims of The Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAS) are:

- We provide free, independent, impartial and confidential advice and information to ensure that people are not disadvantaged by lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, or through difficulty in expressing their needs effectively.

And equally:

- We campaign and influence to tackle the root cause of the problems people face, and to work to strengthen their rights.

Definition of Community Benefit

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) network in Scotland defines a community benefit as a programme or activity that improves the well-being and health of local communities. A community benefit is:

- Responsive to identified local priorities determined in collaboration with the lived experience of local citizens.
- A universal, non-judgmental service for all the community for advice across 16 generalist areas listed in **Annex A**.
- Directly integrated and emerging from the network's strategic planning, service delivery and budgeting processes and within the stated confines of our charitable objectives rather than commuted payments. A community benefit is planned and implemented through our advice services objectives and delivers measurable outcomes that are beneficial to citizens and communities through the whole holistic service and not just via specific projects.
- Indirectly effective in reducing the burden on government and other community efforts through prevention and early intervention of advocacy and advice. For example, the CAB network results in health costs savings of

around £22 million a year. That is because when people go to a CAB and say, have their incomes maximised they avoid further negative outcomes associated with a lack of income, be that physical health or mental wellbeing.¹

Current levels of Community Benefit – advice

Currently, CAS our 59 member CAB and the Extra Help Unit (EHU), form Scotland's largest independent advice network. CAB deliver frontline advice services in over 280 service points across the country, from city centres to island communities and are present in 29 of 32 Scottish local authorities, we aim to deliver a CAB or outreach services to all 32 Local Authority areas. Within the network, the EHU has a team of caseworkers based in Glasgow who assist vulnerable consumers from across Scotland, England and Wales with energy and postal service complaints, so our services benefit communities across the whole of GB.

For example, In 2021-22 the Network (CAB & EHU):

- Advised over 174,500 clients,
- Dealt with almost 640,500 advice issues,
- Assisted clients to complete over 25,000 benefit forms,
- Recorded over 2,000 tribunal and court outcomes; 86% of the cases were won/upheld,
- Helped clients gain over £132 million,
- The self-help website Advice in Scotland received approximately 4.3 million-page views,
- For every £1 funded to cover the CAB core advice service, £12 is returned to the community in client gains.

Current levels of Community Benefit – advocacy

Alongside reactive advice provision on mitigating client circumstances arising from existing policies and processes, we continue to champion greater advocacy for local change. We seek to get involvement and lived experience of citizens to prevent detriment, and therefore play a generative role in fairer and more just local communities in terms of benefits but also avoidance of further negative outcomes. This is a core benefit derived from our funding/service model and one that any form of outside funding ultimately contributes to across Scotland.

We have demonstrated for years that locally based advocacy by local volunteers can also make systems fairer from the ground up by design through local people with lived experience delivering community benefits to their peers the length and breadth of Scotland. The CAB network across Scotland delivers real value to the fair markets or just economy dimensions in terms of the delivery and use of community wealth, benefits for all communities. Further to this, our advocacy aim makes systems fairer

¹ https://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/economic_value_of_advice_report.pdf

by design, implementing the prevention and early intervention ethos of the Christie Commission².

The Citizens Advice network campaigns for change based on the issues advisers see in CABs across Scotland. As the holders of the largest evidence base on social issues outside the public sector in the country, we take our data and real life examples to persuade policy makers to deliver change. In recent years we have seen real success in this, such as shaping the legislation around Scotland's new social security system, encouraging more telecoms providers to offer social tariffs for those on low incomes as well as better protections for private rented sector tenants and people in debt and facing bankruptcy.

Community Benefit through Volunteering

As a volunteer-led and delivered service we also deliver employment and financial in-kind benefit to communities. Project funding also contributes to the fixed costs of providing this wider service and also wider community benefits. For example, of the volunteers whose journey is known, 35% of those leaving the service go on to paid employment or further education. Over 1,500 volunteers contributed more than 496,000 hours of their time in 2021-22, the monetary value of this contribution amounts to over £7.7M. 50% at the last count were retired and not looking to leave the service for the aforementioned positive destinations.

Work with us to deliver Community Benefit through funding National Services

In delivering nationally funded services such as the Help to Claim or Money Talk Team services, we do not view contract outcomes as the only delivery for the client in question as we do not deliver benefits in isolation. Alongside any specific funded intervention, we provide holistic support to the citizens – this is hardwired into our services.

We don't determine specific community benefits to citizens or communities, as the right package of support depends on each individual, the reasons why they have accessed our services and what other problems they are experiencing. In addition, many of our service users are vulnerable and may need additional support to resolve their problems. It is important for us to explore all options with the client and find out what's best for them, so we can't be specific, but in and of itself that is also a clear benefit to the individual citizen and also to the wider community in terms of reducing cost pressures on public services.

Working with the CAB network not only delivers your service requirement for the contract or grant in question, but as a funder you also directly contribute to the advice, advocacy and volunteer benefits outlined above.

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/commission-future-delivery-public-services/>

Wider Community Benefits

We understand communities, their needs and circumstances. CABs are rooted within communities across Scotland. Their boards, trustees, managers, advisers and volunteers are drawn from within those communities. We thereby increase the reach, value and impact of work that we do through our understanding of local needs, meaningful local engagement, close partnerships and familiar outreach locations. CAS and the CAB network facilitate the involvement of small enterprises and work with third sector bodies and other business/enterprise models across Scotland.

Through our wider supply chain we provide contracting opportunities within communities. We promote innovation in the delivery of the economic, social and environmental wellbeing through our work in Civtech challenges which have wider community and economic well-being impacts and the ability to solve the broader service challenges for CAS but also for other partners.³

Our Sustainability and Climate Change Policy reflects our commitment to maximise our contribution to mitigating and limiting the effects of the global climate emergency.

Fair Work First principles are embedded in the Fair Work Policy and practices across CAS and our CAB network, including paying the living wage and providing development opportunities to paid staff and volunteers.

Reporting

CAS provides an annual report on our network-wide Community Benefit performance to the CAS Board and each individual CAB⁴. CAS and CAB will issue and disseminate this information to a diverse range of community stakeholders and make it annually available online so that the networks community benefit initiatives and performance are transparent.

Summary

Annex B is the Community Benefit Statement that represents the commitment for the Patient Advice and Support Service.

CAS believe that the policy, linked policies and the statement in Annex B, reflect how the CAB network in Scotland improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of communities across Scotland and of Scotland as a whole, reducing inequality and social disadvantages in every community through the training and recruitment of volunteers in local communities, advice and advocacy, effective partnership working and responsible employment practices.

³ <https://www.civtech.scot/civtech-challenge-7-9-enabling-organisations-and-volunteers-to-organise>

⁴ https://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/cas_annual_data_report_2021.pdf

Annex A: Advice Areas

Citizens Advice Network Advice Areas



Benefits



Consumer



Debt



Discrimination



Education



Employment



Finance and
Charitable Support



Health and
community care



Housing



Immigration,
Asylum and
Nationality



Legal
Proceedings



NHS Concern
or Complaint



Relationship



Tax



Travel,
transport
and holidays



Utilities and
communications



Annex B: Community Benefit Statement

Patient Advice & Support Service June 2022

The Citizens Advice Network is committed to maximising community benefits for our clients and communities through our activities and procurement/delivery. However, unlike other organisations or businesses we don't have the opportunity to make community benefit clauses contractual requirements which deliver wider social benefits in addition to the core purpose of a contract. In our core delivery of service, we deliver what is normally delivered via these clauses which are used to build a range of social, economic or environmental conditions into contract delivery. As a voluntary organisation and charity, the attached document, shows this can include provision of volunteering opportunities with progression into jobs and training places for particular groups, or delivery of advice and expertise to support local community outcomes around client financial gain and improved wellbeing as well as individual and community health benefits.

The Benefits of Volunteering

Volunteering can have huge benefits not only for the organisations recruiting volunteers, but also for the volunteers themselves and for the wider community.

Benefits for individuals

- Connecting with other people in the community
- Allowing you to share your skills, knowledge and experience with others
- Giving you a sense of purpose and meaning
- Feeling valued for your contributions to the community
- Opportunity to build your confidence and self-esteem
- Improving your physical and mental wellbeing
- Gain skills and experience for your personal development

Benefits for organisations

- Continue to deliver important services to the local community
- Build up capacity to expand their work and support more people
- Incorporate a wider range of skills and experience
- Gain valuable insights from different perspectives of individual volunteers – understanding the needs of local people and how they can support them
- Chance to explore new ways to deliver services

Benefits for the community

- Support those members of the community in most need of help

- Make a difference to the lives of other people
- Bringing the community together socially
- Putting a smile back on people's faces – something everyone could use in difficult times like this
- Helping local organisations to continue delivering vital services

People of all ages and from a variety of different backgrounds, volunteer for the Citizens Advice network in Scotland. There are thousands of volunteer roles in Scotland, helping at events, advising, fundraising. These are offered in a variety of settings the length and breadth of Scotland. You can even volunteer from home. What turns that individual donation into social investment is that you and your community get back far more than you give in community benefits directly and indirectly from participating in the volunteer-led Citizens Advice Network in Scotland.

Volunteers across the Citizens Advice network in Scotland are worth millions of pounds, our research found that over 1,900 volunteers contributed more than 622,000 hours of their time in 2020-21. The monetary value of this contribution was found to amount to over £9.4million. Each Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) is an independent local charity, organised to best suit local needs. There are 59 CABs across Scotland and last year the network helped over 171,000 people, unlocking around £147m for clients through things like social security payments and employment entitlements. Volunteering for a CAB also opens up opportunities for people. Around a third of our volunteers go on to further education or employment, and this number will be artificially low given a number of our volunteers are past retirement age and just looking to give something back to their community.

[Volunteers have helped save millions for struggling Scots - TFN](#)