

Consultation

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- General intro about our organisation and what we do
- I am not Ed Mayo
- Why consult
- Examples of involving CABx in policy and service design
- Some points on consulting

The Citizens Advice service helps people resolve their legal, money, consumer and other problems by providing information and advice and by influencing policymakers.

About the service

- Citizens Advice Bureaux are independent charities
- 462 member bureaux
- 16000 volunteers
- 95% of the public has heard of us (Mori 2001)
- 52% of the public have used us or has friends or family that have
- 5.5 million new problems
- Advice face-to-face, on the phone, in community venues, by email and www.adviceguide.org.uk - 7 million users
- Advice is available from nearly 3,400 locations – one-third of these in health settings

Problems we help people with?

- 1.7m debt problems
- 1.6 m welfare benefit and tax credit
- 500k employment
- 400k housing

Also:

- legal problems
- relationships
- consumer and utilities
- immigration/asylum
- tax (significant use of online information)

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People we reach

- Bureau face to face users most likely to be within C2DE social classes, have a long term illness or disability, or live in social housing:
 - 15% of all people in groups DE used a CAB last year
 - 19% of all disabled people also did so
 - 70% of our debt clients are tenants
 - CAB debt clients have half the average income

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Improving lives

- Financially better off as a result of using a CAB [average financial gains total £3271]
- Problems were resolved as a direct result of using a CAB
- Felt less anxious, stressed or had fewer health problems after using a CAB

37%

64%

46%

Citizens Advice/Mori 2005

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I am not Ed Mayo

- NCC involved in key principles and deliberative methods
- Own experience
 - As consultee
 - Consulting members
 - Involving the public in campaigns

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Why consult?

- Need to know what to change to improve people's experiences
- Different people have different experiences and expectations
- strong policy drivers coming from government on this
- a progression on initiatives dating back to the Citizens Charter
- some differences - increasing choice for service users, introduction of personal budgets
- clear[er] information on service quality
- a focus on improving access
- use of user satisfaction as key measures of success
- a focus on giving users a real say over the services – including control of budgets
- different methods today – internet feedback and polling – to generate more engagement
- a bigger role for the voluntary sector to deliver – contesting with private and public sector providers – but also to contribute to service design with service users evidence
- Opportunities to rethink – users are satisfied so why change?

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How can CABx help you?

- Close to the public and helping them to access and use local and national public services on a daily basis
- Able to provide evidence on problems locally – and get new evidence
- And undertake monitoring and surveys – data on clients, profiles, localities
- Surveys sometimes linked to national initiatives
- Highly trusted and regarded
- Solutions

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Some examples of CAB involvement

- **Newport Isle of Wight** met with their local authority before the implementation of local housing allowance to try and prevent problems before they arise. The bureau has been able to raise issues of concern about the definition of “vulnerability” and particular problems arising for people leaving prison. The bureau has made arrangements for a reciprocal referral system with the local authority initially with the CAB Debt Unit, but to encompass all bureau services. The Debt Unit has established a venue at the Revenue Services offices and has set up systems for direct referrals in.

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Some examples of CAB involvement

- **Chester le Street District** organised a joint training day with the local authority housing department and some of our volunteers. It was run by the Specialist Support Unit and focussed on an overview of benefits. The course was well received and the general consensus was that it was a success. Some of the housing team were going to go back to their department and make sure that others understood the backdating rules for example. They reported it was useful to put faces to names and the housing team felt that they would be able to refer clients to CAB for help now that they understood more about how we could help.
- **Wolverhampton CAB** told us that a city-wide **interpreting/translation contract** still in place 2 years on from creation, CAB had chaired the commissioning panel, every player locally involved except police & JCP (gives good critical mass to contracted supplier to perform well)

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CAB involvement

- Selby and District local Housing and Council Tax benefit department
- 'Whilst it would be true to say they don't always agree with everything we ask they are willing to consider and re consider in the light of extra information that the client appears willing to give us but not the council (or maybe in the past they did not have a way to recognize it) we also consult on paperwork, claim forms leaflets and policies.
- This change has been made over around 10 years from a department who rarely spoke to anyone (and a CAB who assumed they were usually wrong) to a good working relationship without prejudicing clients right to appeal or challenge if this is needed.
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- I am aware that the council have felt that the involvement may not be seen in the bigger picture (it strikes me that some of the Government targets are best achieved if you totally ignore local advice agencies) we have developed a good working relationship which I consider to be a beacon in the area. This wouldn't have been possible without strong commitment on both sides.
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- I am aware a lot of what is done is considered statutory but I think the local department do it with a willingness not just to tick a box on the requirements.'

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Getting consultation right?

- is it someone's job to consult and involve stakeholders?
- do you know who they are – do you keep a database ?
- think about when to ask people and when not to – if its already decided whats the point of pretending you are consulting? Be honest.
- use mix of methods to reach people
- plan for feedback to them
- train staff to consult and be consultative
- enable staff to be responsive and consultative

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