

the charity for
your community



advice allowance benefits cancer changes citizens claim
client community credit debt education employment families
financial future gain health help improve lives money number
people policy problems report rights rutland
service social specialist support system tax training volunteers welfare work

Rutland Citizens Advice Bureau Annual Report 2012/13



Aims and Principles

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

The service aims:

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

Rutland Context

Rutland is regarded as affluent with few problems. But if you are in low paid employment, unemployed, disabled, sick or retired, suffering from fuel and/or child poverty, having difficulty in accessing services, paying at least a contribution to one of the highest council tax in the country or facing welfare reform, the image does not fit the reality. Our emphasis on an initial triage interview and various methods of access from telephone to home visits enables us to continue to help those in greatest need.

This year has been dominated by welfare reform. Problems with benefits are always some of the most common problems brought to the bureau but this year the number is higher than ever. Every day the bureau has seen people who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads or put food on the table as wage squeezes, price rises and benefit cuts wreak havoc on household budgets. In addition a problem leading to the non payment of a benefit, often at no fault of the client, can be devastating.

The following is a real case study from a client who has given permission to use her information to illustrate the realities of the welfare reforms. Mary Rutty (not her real name) is a widow aged 32 who lives with her two children in a 3-bedroomed housing association property in a Rutland village. Rhetoric concerning those who have to seek support from the welfare state indicates that there are 'strivers' and 'shirkers' but Mary is not a 'shirker', working as many hours as she can in a low paid job; in fact the majority of families facing child poverty are in employment. Mary is eligible for a range of top-up benefits and tax credits; previously her weekly income was £413.55 but the full affects of welfare reform will cut her weekly income to £381.32. This will be Mary's financial statement; it does not include elements such as saving for Christmas, birthdays, household insurance or appliance replacement.

Weekly Income	
Wages	£122.63
Universal Credit	£224.13
Child Benefit	£ 33.70
Council Tax Reduction	£ 0.86
WEEKLY INCOME TOTAL	£381.32
Weekly Expenditure	
Rent	£ 90.00
Council Tax	£ 21.84
Gas	£ 24.00
Electricity	£ 16.00
Anglian Water	£ 7.50
Severn Trent	£ 4.00
Housekeeping	£100.00
Miscellaneous	£ 25.00
School activities/leisure	£ 15.00
Clothes	£ 20.00
Telephone/Internet/Mobile	£ 15.00
Car Tax, Ins, MOT, servicing	£ 18.00

Petrol	£ 35.00
TV Licence	£ 3.00
WEEKLY EXPENDITURE TOTAL	£394.34
WEEKLY CASHFLOW SUMMARY	
Total weekly income	£381.32
Total Weekly outgoings	£394.34
WEEKLY CASH SHORTFALL	£ -13.02

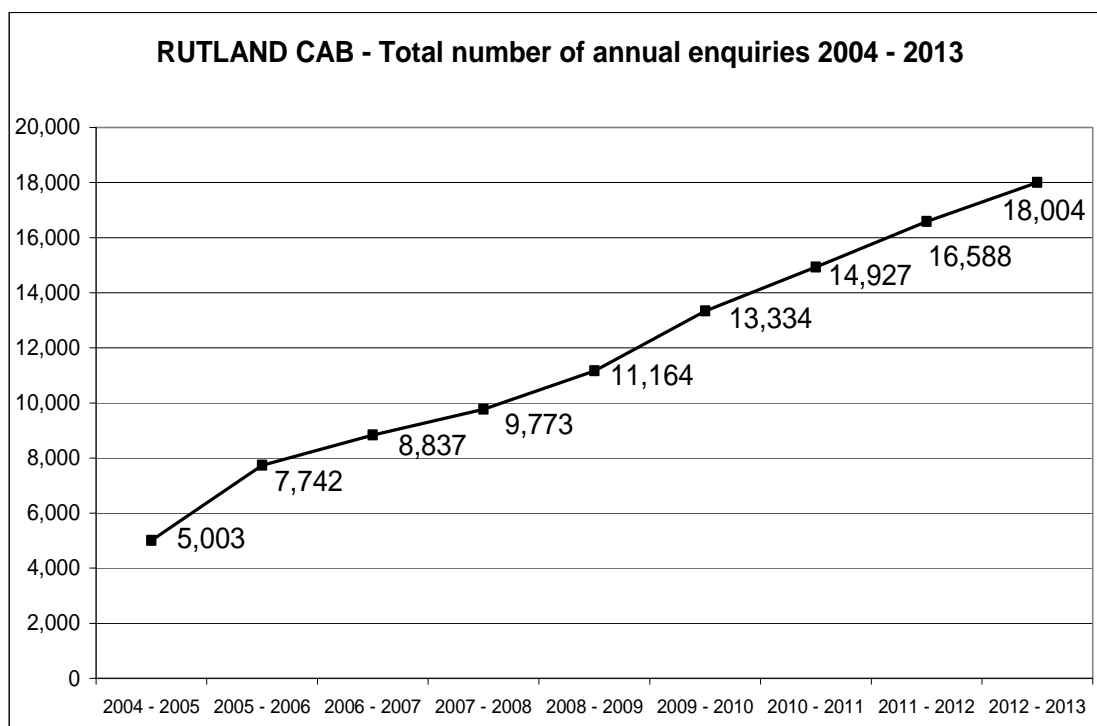
What is CAB?

As a charity the Citizens Advice service aims to help solve people's problems by providing advice and by responsibly influencing policy makers on the development of social policies and services. It follows the principles of providing a free, confidential, impartial and independent service.

This report will highlight the types of problems, quality and quantity of advice. As a practical example of social policy output in the last year, evidence from an 'Impact of Advice' report compiled by the bureau will be used to illustrate the outcomes to clients and community of direct advice throughout the various problem categories.

Solving Problems

In 2012/13 we dealt with over 18,000 client problems in comparison to the 8,000 in 2007.



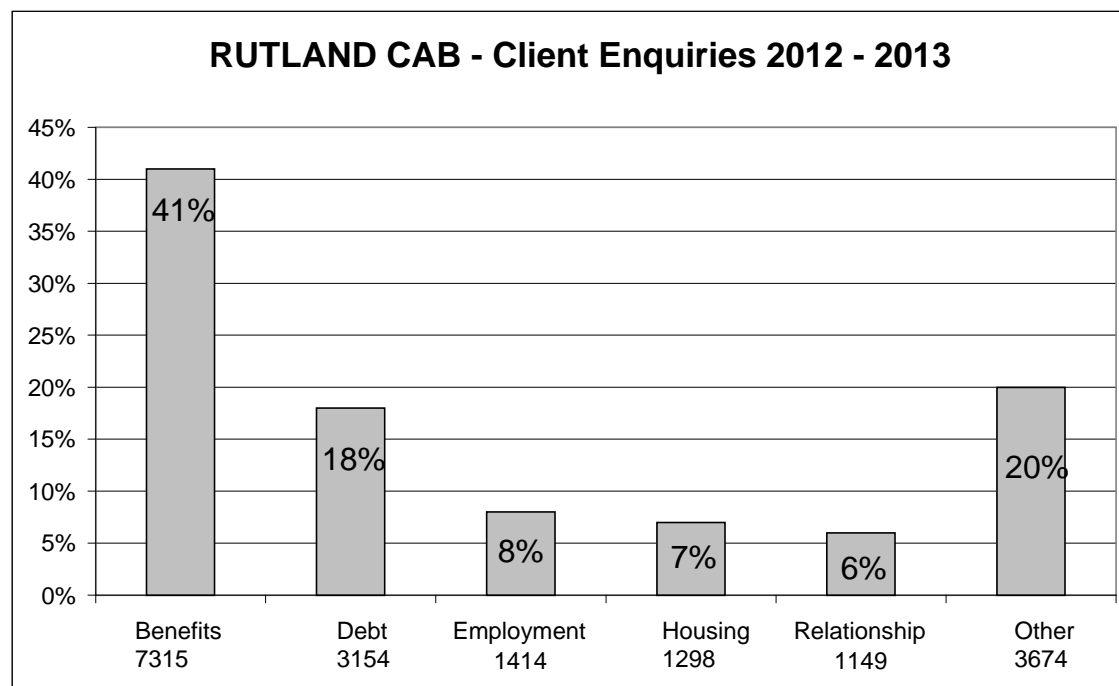
The most important aspect of our work is the positive impact it has on our clients' lives. One way to measure this is in the financial benefit to clients in terms of income maximisation – overall financial gains we secure for our clients average £1,191,000 per year with, 44% of clients benefiting financially. Those gains feed back into the local economy, bringing added benefit for Rutland communities.

It is more difficult to calculate the ongoing benefits to client households from reduced stress, changes in client behaviour and increased confidence, although our social policy impact report details the research into this area. People who are less stressed enjoy better health. Their dependency on support services is reduced. For those in work and their employers, better health and wellbeing means more productivity with less time lost through absence and a better chance of staying in employment. Our client outcomes survey indicates that 97% of clients had greater confidence after advice with 79% having an improvement in their health and wellbeing, 100% had an improved ability to help themselves and 92% estimated that it would help to prevent problems in the future.

74% of the problems brought to the bureau are those associated with the most vulnerable in society namely welfare rights, debt, employment and housing. The remaining 26% relate to a very wide range of problems from age discrimination to youth offending.

One Stop Shop

Most people need help with more than one problem and no other agency locally is able to provide a one stop shop service which ensures a joined up approach.



Welfare Rights

Financial problems generate anxiety and stress for individuals and families. Long term deprivation leads to deteriorating mental and physical health, strained household relationships and poorer prospects for children to reach their potential. For older people or those living with illness and disability, getting the right benefits can mean being able to continue living independently in their own homes. For people dealing with a change in circumstances, getting benefits paid as quickly as possible can be the difference between eating and going hungry, or between staying warm and being cold. Clients may initially come to us for help with a particular benefit application or in responding to a notice from HMRC or the local authority. Our advisers carry out a thorough assessment to check that the client is getting the correct benefits for their circumstances, and what other assistance they might be eligible for.

Benefits cases can be complex. If a client is not confident in completing an application, we will help them through it. If a claim is refused, or entitlement is miscalculated, our specialist caseworkers can launch an appeal, or even attend a tribunal hearing with the client. If incorrect payments have been received (often for some time), we can help a client to manage what could be significant consequences for future household finances. Each year since 2008 we have dealt with an average increase of 1000 new benefit enquiries growing annually from 3000 to over 7000 in 2012/13. Changes to the benefits system bring worry and confusion. We help people to get what they are entitled to and getting the right payments without delay can be crucial to meeting basic needs.

Debt

All sorts of people can get into debt. Even well-informed people who manage their money carefully can be overwhelmed if their income is unexpectedly cut while their outgoings stay the same or increase. We can provide them with the right information and tools to manage their own problems if they are capable of doing so. Otherwise, our specialist caseworkers can help clients to deal with their credits and, if it is the best option for the client, to apply for a debt relief order or bankruptcy.

Timely debt advice helps people to sustain their homes, stay healthy, stay in work and avoid family breakdown

In 2012/13 we dealt with £2,926,295 of new client debt and 209 debt relief orders or bankruptcies. The average debt was £17,213 per client. Whilst working with the clients on existing debt, we will help them move forward by planning and managing their budgets. This empowers people to take control of their finances and better manage the money they have. We can check eligibility for benefits or that a client has received all their dues if their employment has been terminated, in the case of bereavement, or if their relationship has broken down.

The link between debt and mental health is a vicious spiral. In the UK, consumers with mental health problems are 3 times more likely to be in debt than others. In turn being in debt increases the risk of mental illness. We will continue to support a client until they no longer need us.

Housing – Homelessness Prevention

Taking into account the impact of a failed tenancy, local authority temporary accommodation, support and health services and lost economic output, the cost to the community for every homeless person has been calculated at between £24,000 and £83,000 depending on the individual case.

The number of housing problems we deal with at Rutland CAB remains steady at around 7% of all problems. Through Housing, Welfare Rights and Money Advice work, we help many more clients to financially sustain their homes and avoid crisis.

At times of crisis, we help Rutland residents to get the right support

PROJECT DETAILS

During 2012/13 a range of projects and services were delivered in addition to our core subjects; Domestic Violence awareness, Macmillan Cancer support, Parent Partnership Service, Financial Literacy, Army Outreach and continued support of the retired RAF population.

Financial Literacy

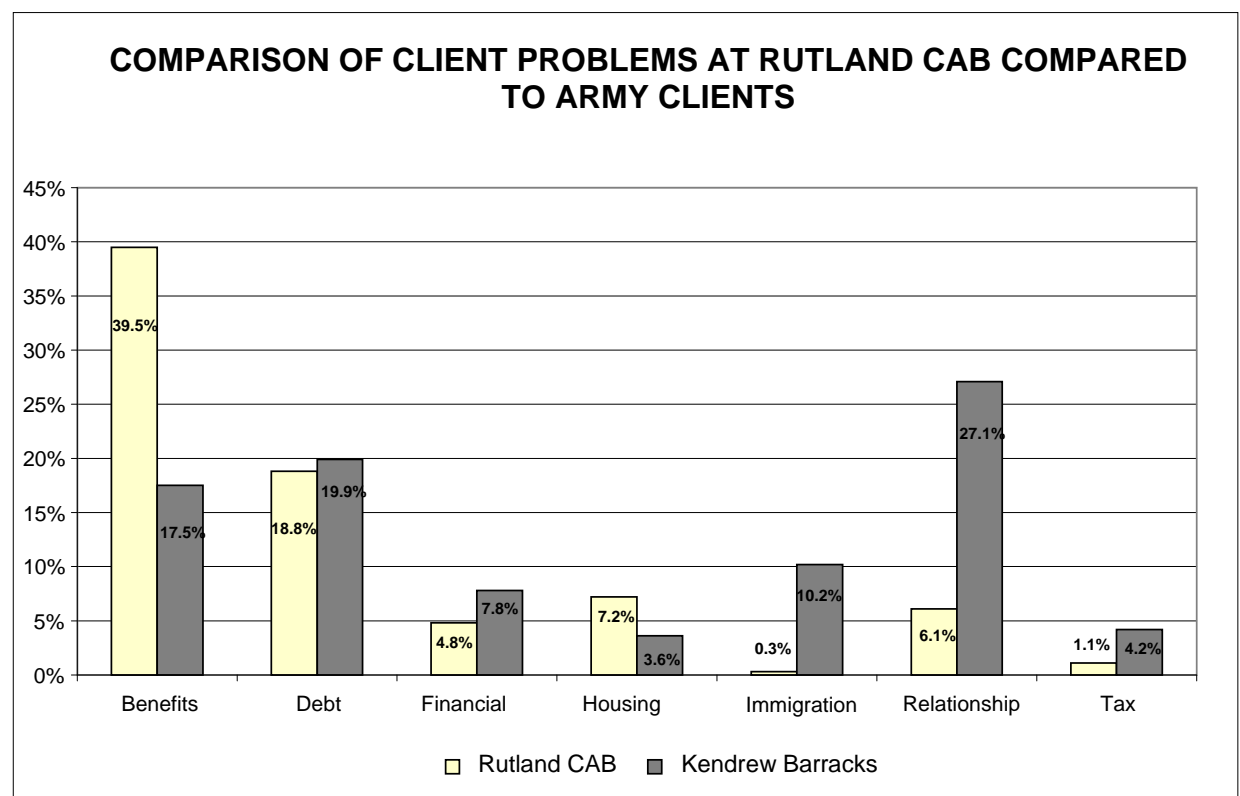
This project provided specialist training to help people manage their money effectively and avoid falling into debt. Topics covered included banking, credit ratings, saving, budgeting, borrowing and buying decisions. With widespread promotion of payday loans and weekly payment options at punitive interest rates as well as tempting offers for service contracts, it is more important than ever that people are educated to make informed choices.

Groups worked with included school-leavers, prisoners, armed forces personnel, older people and young families. One-to-one sessions were also delivered for clients when a more personal focus was required.

The training we delivered empowers people to take control of their finances and better manage the money they have

Army Outreach

In 2012, 650 service personnel of the 2nd Royal Anglian Regiment together with their families arrived from Cyprus to their new base at Kendrew Barracks in Rutland. Up to 25 different nationalities were represented with some of the family members never having lived in UK. To ensure that the Army personnel and their families arriving in Rutland received the information, legal advice, education and on base access to services that would minimise the problems around relocation and improve the longer term integration and outcomes for both military and civilian communities, Rutland CAB provided a comprehensive outreach project giving advice and financial literacy education via a full time adviser and outreach offices at both Army bases in Rutland.



Army Financial Literacy Training

Attendees at the financial literacy training were both soldiers and wives. Topics covered were payday loans, budgeting and credit rating. For example, payday loans are easy to access with on-line applications and several loans can be obtained with little check on affordability. Together with interest rates of up to 5000% these factors can lead to a potentially catastrophic situation for the individual, and military debt clients have been presenting with up to nine of such loans. This training explained the dangers and how to avoid the situation.



Financial Literacy Training: "If only I'd had this training years ago"

Case Study - Eviction

A soldier sought advice when he received an eviction notice through the post on the privately rented property he shared with his wife and three children. He had no rent arrears but his landlord had failed to pay the mortgage and the lender had initiated repossession proceedings. The client and his family were shocked and distressed to find this warrant gave them only days to vacate their home. The situation was made worse by the fact that the client was due to leave shortly for a period of overseas training. The adviser reassured him that he could apply to the court to delay the eviction date. After downloading the paperwork, she assisted him to complete the forms and explained the procedures that would follow. After this intervention the application was granted and the eviction delayed. The soldier went overseas without worry while his wife successfully found and moved to another property.

Volunteers

Thank you to all Rutland CAB volunteers who undertake a wide range of roles from administration to strategic management; they give advice, produce social policy reports and manage finance.

The economic value of volunteering at Rutland CAB in 2012/13 was £177,962, which benefits the organisation, clients and community. But the internal volunteer survey showed that volunteers report the beneficial effects of advice-giving to themselves; the 240 hours of training advisers receive increases their knowledge base and improves skills, volunteering improves

self esteem and confidence leading to one in three volunteers going on to paid employment or further education.

Social Policy

As the joint aim of the organisation, social policy work is reflected throughout this report, particularly regarding the impact of advice report produced during 2012/13. Specifically the bureau produced and sent to Citizens Advice nationally 82 pieces of evidence of problems being caused by policies or services. 50 of these related to problems in the benefits system mostly concerning welfare reform, and the other 32 dealt with debt, housing, utility, consumer, tax, employment and immigration problems.

THE FUTURE

Welfare Reform

Further significant changes are coming under the next steps in welfare reform with the introduction of Universal Credit in 2014. Universal Credit will apply to a high proportion of our clients and a recent survey showed that many will need significant support in making the transition. 92% of clients will need support, 85% for multiple areas such as budgeting, banking, staying informed and getting on line. This will require significant resources and we are working closely with Rutland County Council to achieve the best value 'one stop shop' services. This will be with the backdrop of the first full commissioning of advice and information services in Rutland.

Petra and Information Assurance

Our electronic case management system will be changed in the autumn of this year which will provide improved systems but will require considerable training at all levels. As part of our preparation for this system the bureau has drawn up an implementation plan which includes a comprehensive Information Assurance policy to ensure the security of our data. The bureau will be working towards full implementation of this policy during the coming year.

Army

The number of Army personnel in Rutland will increase with the arrival of a further four units during 2013/14 and a recent review indicated that by 2017 Rutland will accommodate up to 10,000 Army personnel and families, increasing the total county population by 26% since 2012. Clearly there will continue to be a significant demand for advice services and we will endeavour to obtain long term funding to allow us to meet the need.

Funding Acknowledgements

Rutland Citizens Advice would like to acknowledge the financial assistance given by our funders which enables us to provide our service to the Rutland community; in particular Rutland County Council, Oakham Town Council (£5,000), Uppingham Town Council (£1,500) Parish Councils (collectively £1,350), the RAF Benevolent Fund (£3,500) Macmillan, local charities, trust funds and our clients. We would also like to acknowledge the generous help given in kind from Barnsdale Lodge Hotel for our training and AGM facilities.

**RUTLAND CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU
SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2013**

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE		
	Year ended 31 March 2013 £	Year ended 31 March 2012 £
INCOME		
Charitable Activities: contracts and other	255,455	240,341
Voluntary Income	11,468	14,904
Premises Refurbishment grant		
Fundraising		
Bank Interest	<u>1,499</u>	<u>449</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>268,422</u>	<u>255,694</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Staff & Volunteers	229,924	193,237
Office costs	16,803	13,607
Premises costs	12,726	13,227
Governance & other	<u>7,624</u>	<u>5,585</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>267,077</u>	<u>225,656</u>
NET SURPLUS	<u>1,345</u>	<u>30,038</u>

BALANCE SHEET		
	At 31 March 2013 £	At 31 March 2012 £
Fixed Assets: fixtures & fittings		
Cost	5139	0
Depreciation	<u>280</u>	<u>0</u>
	<u>4859</u>	<u>0</u>
Current Assets:		
Debtors & Prepayments	1,523	1,555
Cash at Bank & In Hand	<u>84,737</u>	<u>97,503</u>
	<u>86,260</u>	<u>99,058</u>
Less: Creditors & Accruals	1,579	2,664
Deferred Income	<u>3,970</u>	<u>12,169</u>
	<u>5,549</u>	<u>14,833</u>
	<u>80,711</u>	<u>84,225</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>85,570</u>	<u>84,225</u>
Represented by:		
Unrestricted Funds		
General Funds ⁽¹⁾	83,308	78,992
Designated Funds ⁽²⁾	2,262	5,233
Restricted Funds	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>85,570</u>	<u>84,225</u>

This summary financial information is taken from the full accounts of Rutland Citizens Advice Bureau (a company limited by guarantee) for the year ended 31 March 2013.

Copies of the full statutory accounts, which include an independent examiner's report, are available from the Registered Office of the Company.

S.E. Bown

Finance Director

Notes:

⁽¹⁾ The Trustees have re-examined requirements for free reserves in the light of predominant risks to the organisation. In light of these factors, as set out in the statutory accounts, the current target for reserves has been assessed at £103,000

⁽²⁾ Reserves for IT replacements and Investors in People tri-annual audit.

RUTLAND CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

Registered Office:
56 High Street
Oakham
Rutland
LE15 6AL

Opening Times

Monday: 10.00am – 6.00pm
Tuesday-Friday: 10.00am – 4.00pm

Specialist Services by Appointment

Welfare Rights
Debt
Housing
Special Educational Needs – Parent Partnership Scheme
Family
Macmillan Cancer - Advice

Outreach Service at:

St. George's Barracks, North Luffenham
Kendrew Barracks, Cottesmore

Advice Line: 0845 1203705 + 24 hr information service
Office Line: 01572 757420
Fax: 01572 722568
Email advice: www.rutlandcab.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 1107907
Citizens Advice Membership No: 45/D12
Company Registration Number: 5287678