

# CAB volunteering – how everyone benefits

**The value of CAB  
volunteering to individuals,  
communities and society**





## Get involved – volunteer with CAB

Make a difference in your community and volunteer in your local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

We're the UK's largest advice charity and volunteers can enjoy a range of roles from giving advice to fundraising, administration, campaigning and trusteeship.

Find out more:  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/join-us](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/join-us)

I had a fulfilling career in engineering, and used my experience gained with CAB to make a life-changing decision to pursue a career in social care and welfare rights in a local authority.

I'm so grateful for the opportunity to be part of a wonderful organisation that sets the benchmark to enable change. CAB removes the boundaries so you can do as much or as little as you want to achieve, whatever goals you set yourself.

Working at the sharp end within CAB, brought respect and knowledge that enabled me to influence working practices and service delivery within the local authority. Without the skills gained with CAB, this would have been impossible.

**Bernard, CAB volunteer**

97%

would recommend volunteering at CAB\*



9 in 10 consider their bureau to be a constructive environment to develop themselves and their skills\*

# Foreword from Gillian Guy Chief Executive

**Bernard's story is a fantastic example of how beneficial volunteering for the Citizens Advice service can be for the individual, for the service itself and for society. It is just one of thousands of examples – we've been around for 75 years after all.**

Based on evidence from almost 1,500 CAB volunteers, this report aims to tell the full story of the value of volunteering with the Citizens Advice service: for us as a service, for our volunteers, and our impact on communities and society as a result.

In 2012/13 we helped 2.1 million people to solve 6.6 million problems. To do so our 22,000 volunteers donated nearly 7 million hours to our service – that amounts to a contribution of £109 million worth of volunteering hours. Without this we would simply not be able to help as many people as we currently do.

But the value to society of CAB volunteering is even greater than this.

Our continual investment in our volunteers' development ensures our clients receive quality advice and support. It also has tangible benefits for volunteers and society, through happier, healthier and more productive citizens. These benefits are wide-ranging and interlinked, but we have explored four key broad areas in this report. They are skill development and employability; soft skills and resilience; health and wellbeing; and community cohesion and engagement.



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This is the first in a series of reports that will explain the additional benefit provided to society through the way we deliver our services. There is no better place to start doing this than by reflecting on the impact of our volunteers, the individuals who give so much to make our service great.

As we look to the future to develop our services in order to be able to reach more people, our volunteers will remain an essential part of everything we do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gillian Guy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

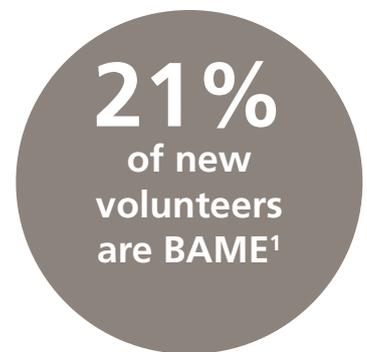
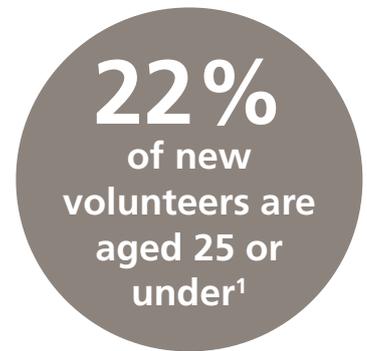
**Gillian Guy**

# Volunteering in a Citizens Advice Bureau

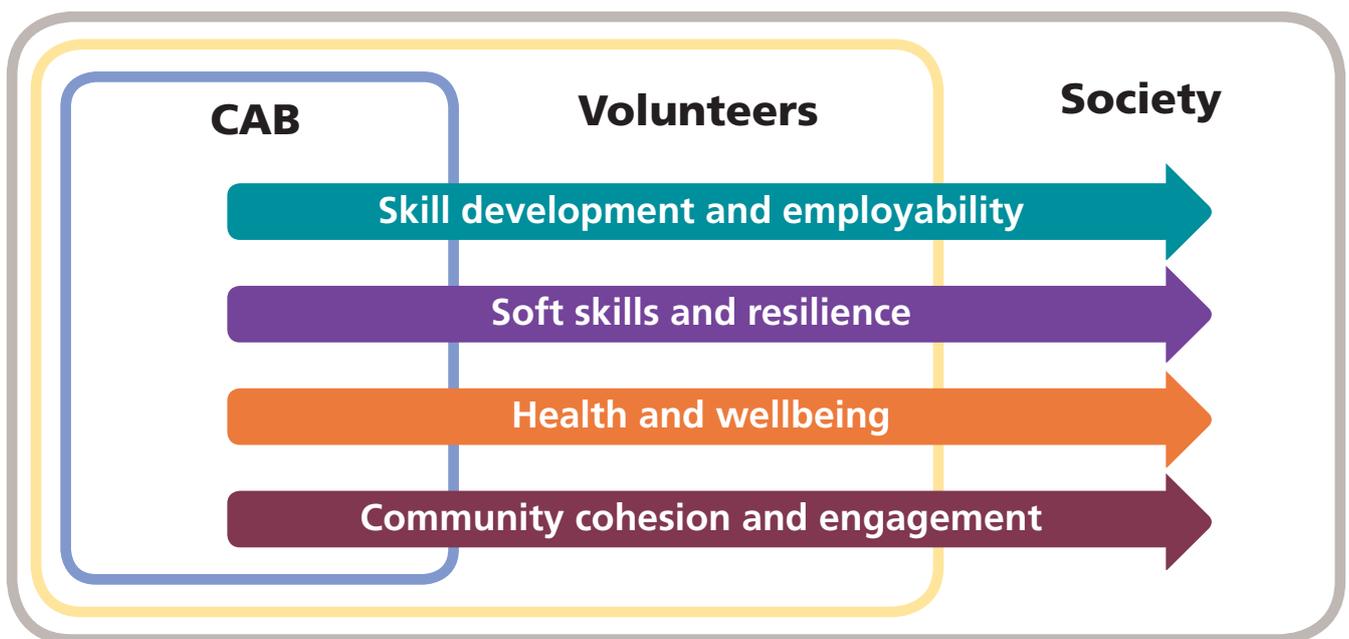
Our volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds, including young people, professionals who want to broaden their horizons and retired people who want to give something back – and we offer a range of support services to meet the needs of our disabled volunteers. Our commitment to value diversity and promote equality means we can encourage individuals who might not otherwise volunteer.

Volunteers are vital to the way we deliver our service, allowing us to reach many more people than if we were purely staff-run.<sup>2</sup> They take on a range of roles from assessing and providing advice, supporting the running of bureaux, campaigning in the community and acting as trustees.

Each volunteer receives training and ongoing support specific to their role, including 2,800 volunteers undertaking CAB adviser training last year. The average initial cost of training and recruiting a volunteer is £2,800 with an ongoing annual cost of £1,700.<sup>3</sup> This investment of time and resources ensures that each volunteer is fully prepared for their role, and that our clients receive quality advice and support.



## Investing in volunteer development has additional benefits for:



1. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) volunteers. Citizens Advice Bureaux Characteristic Survey, 2012/13.
2. To provide a staff-run service for the equivalent provided last year would amount to £109 million worth of delivery hours, as well as the overhead costs applied as the ongoing cost of enabling volunteers.
3. The amount of time to train and invest in a volunteer's development depends on their role within bureaux. These averages are based on the investment in client-facing roles within bureaux, such as adviser, gateway assessor and support/administrative roles.

# Value of skill development and employability



Playing an active contribution to the day-to-day running of a CAB can develop volunteers' practical skills, such as problem solving, communication and team work, as well as boost their confidence and belief in their abilities. This improves employability, presents career development opportunities, and can help those currently unemployed to move into work.

## What does this mean for individuals, communities and society?

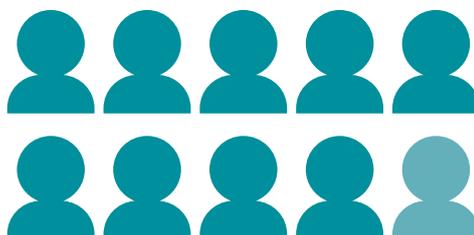
CAB volunteering provides individuals with an opportunity they might not otherwise have had to develop their personal skills and abilities. For those in work, these skills are transferrable, increasing their employability and career options – 54 per cent of our employed volunteers state that they are using it to change or evaluate their career.\*

For those out of work, volunteering keeps them active and motivated, potentially countering negative impacts of unemployment on mental wellbeing – one in five jobseeker's allowance claimants experience a mental health disorder.<sup>4</sup>

Volunteering enables people to realise their potential, supporting priorities around increasing social mobility – 29 per cent of volunteers that left the CAB service did so for paid employment, education or training.<sup>5</sup> It also enables individuals to make an economic contribution to society, one which may be factored into future national Gross Domestic Product and productivity calculations.<sup>6</sup>

4. Department of Work and Pensions (2012), *Mental health in context: the national study of work-search and wellbeing*.
5. Citizens Advice Bureau Characteristic Survey, 2012/13
6. Department of Work and Pensions and Cabinet Office (2013), *Wellbeing and Civil Society: Estimating the value of volunteering using subjective wellbeing data*.

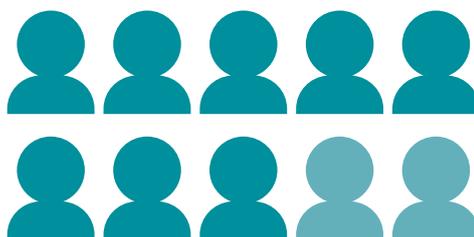
## All our volunteers gain a 'practical skill' through volunteering\*



9 in 10 gain more than one 'practical skill' through volunteering\*



4 in 5 working volunteers believe their employability has increased\*



8 in 10 of our unemployed volunteers believe they are overcoming barriers to gaining employment\*

\* Citizens Advice Impact team report (2014), *The value of volunteering with the Citizens Advice service*.

## Value of soft skills and resilience

### CAB

Empowered and purposeful volunteers

### Volunteers

Greater confidence, self-esteem and resilience

### Society

Resilient individuals with better wellbeing

CAB volunteering can also develop an individual's softer skills, resilience and other personal attributes. This can have a positive impact on how people feel about themselves, how they respond to others and their capacity to manage life's challenges.

### What does this mean for individuals, communities and society?

CAB volunteering has a positive impact on an individual's sense of self and how they feel about their life, ultimately improving their wellbeing. The benefits of this are hard to articulate, but have significant value – calculated by the Cabinet Office as worth £13,500 per year.<sup>7</sup> An individual's wellbeing and resilience are closely linked<sup>8</sup> and volunteering positively impacts on both, likely improving an individual's quality of life both now and in the future. The wider benefits include happier, fulfilled and empowered individuals, who can contribute to society, and may potentially require less state support.

For retired individuals, CAB volunteering offers new opportunities, provides structure and a sense of purpose, helping them feel involved in society, all highlighted as vital to personal wellbeing.<sup>9</sup> Ensuring that retired people are mentally and physically active also has wider reaching benefits to society, including reducing the NHS provision needed to cope with an aging population.<sup>10</sup>

7. Department of Work and Pensions and Cabinet Office (2013), *Wellbeing and Civil Society: Estimating the value of volunteering using subjective wellbeing data*.

8. Young Foundation (2012), *The Wellbeing and Resilience Paradox*.

9. Royal Voluntary Service (2012), *The impact of volunteering on wellbeing in later life*.

10. Young Foundation (2012), *One Hundred and Not Out: Resilience and Active Aging*.



4 in 5 gained confidence through volunteering\*



9 in 10 have increased sense of purpose and self-esteem\*

These benefits are particularly crucial for retired individuals:

All of our retired volunteers believe it keeps them mentally active\*

Over half say that they feel less at risk of social isolation\*

\* Citizens Advice Impact team report (2014), *The value of volunteering with the Citizens Advice service*.

## Value of health and wellbeing



Improving individuals' wellbeing and quality of life can in turn positively affect their health. This is true both for those with underlying health conditions, and those without. Our findings show that CAB volunteers experience tangible benefits, such as reduction in stress. This demonstrates the link between volunteering and health, which previous external studies have concluded.<sup>11</sup>

### What does this mean for individuals, communities and society?

Improved health and wellbeing has a significant impact on volunteers' lives. Being regularly overstressed can lead to serious mental and physical health issues, therefore reducing stress levels is beneficial for both the individual and society.

Ensuring that disabled people have the opportunity to volunteer can help to remove barriers to employment, by providing the chance to gain new skills and play an active role in the community.

In the UK, one in four people have a mental health condition, including anxiety and depression.<sup>12</sup> Volunteering positively impacts on how people feel about themselves and their confidence in their capabilities, including managing their condition. Improving self-sufficiency and wellbeing makes people more productive – one in two feel able to work more effectively\* – and also reduces the need for NHS provision.<sup>13</sup>



**3 in 5 say volunteering has made them feel less stressed\***



**3 in 4 who identified as having a mental health condition felt better able to manage their condition\***



**4 in 5 believe volunteering had a positive effect on their physical or mental health\***

\* Citizens Advice Impact team report (2014), *The value of volunteering with the Citizens Advice service.*

11. Institute for Volunteering Research (2011), *Volunteering and health: evidence of impact and implications for policy and practice.*
12. Mental Health Foundation, accessed February 2014: [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-statistics](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-statistics)
13. Greater London Authority (2014), *London Mental Health: the invisible costs of mental ill health.*

# Value of community cohesion and engagement



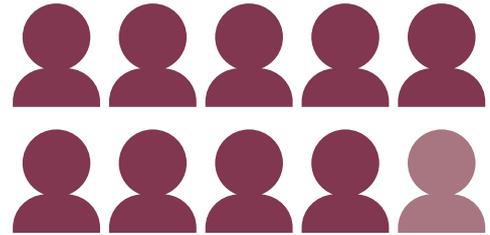
CAB volunteering does not just have an impact on individuals, it benefits their communities too. Our volunteers are local people, and through volunteering, they increase their knowledge about community issues and build relationships with their locality. This creates stronger communities, with engaged and active members, and more social action.

## What does this mean for individuals, communities and society?

CAB volunteers feel more engaged with their community since volunteering. This supports the findings in the government-run Citizenship Survey<sup>14</sup> of the positive role that volunteering plays in bringing individuals closer to their local area, ultimately creating stronger, more inclusive communities.

Through improved local knowledge, CAB volunteers have a greater awareness of the issues affecting their community and how to tackle them. There is a wider impact too: some volunteers may go on to volunteer with other organisations, using their CAB experience and training for further good use. We also know that many volunteers help family and friends deal with their issues, and this type of informal advice-giving is particularly important in less affluent areas.<sup>15</sup>

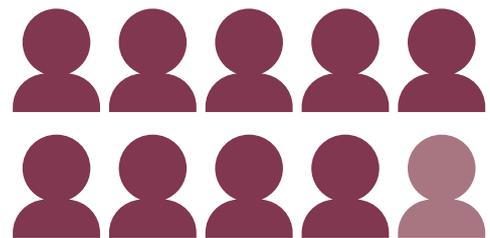
CAB volunteers also report that they are better informed about national issues\*, creating a more politically and socially-aware population. All of these benefits reflect the Government's commitment to promoting community participation and social action, and building united communities.<sup>16</sup>



**9 in 10 volunteers gained knowledge of local issues and felt more engaged with their community\***



**4 in 5 feel better equipped to volunteer in other capacities within their communities\***



**9 in 10 feel better equipped and empowered to deal with issues in their lives – with 4 in 5 also helping friends and families\***

\* Citizens Advice Impact team report (2014), *The value of volunteering with the Citizens Advice service.*

## Value of trusteeship



Trustees have overall legal responsibility for a charity, ensuring that it is doing the job that it was established to do. There are 3,000 volunteer trustees across the service, who draw on their skills and experience to provide overall strategic direction. The experience of being a CAB trustee may therefore provide distinct benefits to volunteers. This includes the chance to take on new responsibilities, develop their skills and play an active role in their community.

### What does this mean for individuals, communities and society?

Through trusteeship, volunteers can learn new skills, and get the chance to develop and use existing ones in new ways. They can gain hands-on experience in how an organisation works, and take on a position that requires leadership and responsibility. This can boost employability and provide opportunities for career advancement, as well as the chance to give something back to their community.

Trustees bring their expertise – from operational management and networks to relationship building and financial accounts – to lead the direction of each charity. They ensure that every CAB is acting on the right issues within their community, and that CAB services are actively supporting local people, all of which is beneficial to society.



**3 in 4 have improved strategic management / decision-making abilities\***



**4 in 5 report feeling more confident in their own abilities because of their volunteer position\***



**7 in 10 have more experience representing an organisation and networking\***

\* Citizens Advice Impact team report (2014), *The value of volunteering with the Citizens Advice service.*

14. Citizenship Survey, accessed March 2014: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/www.communities.gov.uk/communities/research/citizenshipsurvey>
15. Legal Services Research Centre research, including LSRC (2010), *Knowledge, capability and the experience of rights problems, outlines the importance of individuals' social sphere when asking for advice.*
16. Department of Communities and Local Government priorities for community and society include 'promoting social action: encouraging and empowering people to play a more active part in society' and 'bring people together in strong, united communities'. Accessed February 2014: [www.gov.uk/government/policies?topics%5B%5D=community-and-society](http://www.gov.uk/government/policies?topics%5B%5D=community-and-society)

# CAB social value

The positive impact of volunteering is one aspect of the additional value provided to society through the way we deliver CAB services. This is our social value. It also covers our support for local communities and how we benefit society.

## Social value to volunteers

Through training and investment, our partnership with volunteers enables them to make a huge contribution to the CAB service. In turn, volunteers benefit from gaining new skills and personal development, better wellbeing and community engagement. These positive effects on individuals' lives have additional value for society, through the advantages and savings associated with happier, healthier and more productive members of the community.

## Social value to communities

Each CAB plays an integral role in supporting and strengthening its local community. We provide a service that meets local needs and reaches out to a diverse and broad client base. We support and strengthen other community-focused organisations, partnering with them to share our insight and best support local people. We also use our extensive knowledge to be an advocate for the local area, mobilising and connecting people with their community. We are a local service, working with local people, for the benefit of the community.

## Social value to society

By providing advice and improving policy and practice, we benefit society. Our advice has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our clients, reducing stress and anxiety, preventing relationship breakdown, promoting employment and empowering people to make wider positive changes to their lives. We make public services more

effective through referral relationships and by sharing our insight with local and national partners to solve joint problems. Our unique and extensive knowledge of the issues that affect our clients' lives, enable us to voice these at a local or national level. This benefits more than just our immediate client base by making society fairer. In addition to our campaigning, we empower individuals and communities to engage with society, and make a difference to the issues that matter.



These aspects of our social value overlap, benefiting and enabling each other, and are underpinned by the local and national structure of the Citizens Advice service. Our established brand makes us a household name; clients access a well-known and trusted service, local bureaux can contribute to and benefit from a national infrastructure, and stakeholders recognise our wealth of insight and expertise.

Citizens Advice is undertaking research to better understand and evidence our social value. Our research with volunteers is the first part of this, and we will be shortly looking into our value to communities and society in more detail.

# What our volunteers say

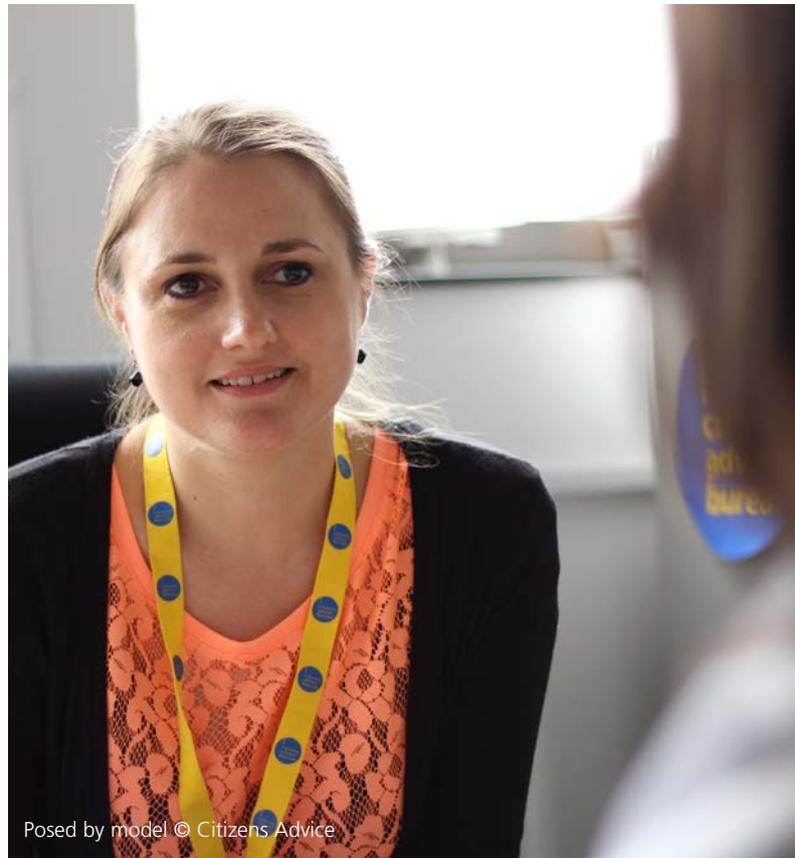
Volunteering for CAB has helped me develop skills that I didn't know I had, make some long lasting friendships, and satisfy a need to feel a useful member of society.

I can sincerely say that my work for CAB was an incredible experience, and it made me so very happy making others happy.

Client cases are endlessly interesting, and keep me mentally active.

As a bonus I feel that after a great life, I am able to put something back.

'It keeps me in touch with social issues that would have passed me by without the weekly face-to-face contact with people who need help.



Posed by model © Citizens Advice

## Our aims

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

## Our principles

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.



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