



Doncaster
Borough



Doncaster **North**
Primary Care Network

TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES TOGETHER

PILOT REPORT
2023



A Citizens Advice we're constantly thinking about areas where we can make a positive impact for society, making a real difference to people's lives.

Health is one of those areas. The issues that we advise people on - debt and welfare, housing and discrimination - are widely recognised as the determinants of health. By acting early and helping people to find their way forward, we not only improve health outcomes but also ease the burden on health services; enhancing the quality of life and saving public money.

We can do this in part because Citizens Advice is an anchor institution in towns and cities across the country, enriching the social fabric of local communities. Through the delivery of our services we gain rich and valuable insights into those communities and the people who come to us for help, who are often on the verge of accessing other services.

With the renewed focus on levelling up, and the formation of Integrated Care Systems there is an opportunity to amplify this impact; helping more people and ensuring that we move from being a hidden health service to part of a truly integrated health offer nationally, and in local communities.



James Woods
CEO
Citizens Advice Doncaster Borough

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'Patients who are seen in clinical settings may well have problems in their everyday lives that may be causing or exacerbating their mental and physical ill health or may be getting in the way of their recovery. If we do not tackle these everyday “practical health” issues then we are fighting the clinical fight with one hand tied behind our back.'

SIR MICHAEL MARMOT, DIRECTOR OF THE UCL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH EQUITY

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OUR APPROACH

At the core of our pilot study is a methodology designed to maximize impact at a local level. We understand that addressing health inequalities requires a comprehensive approach that combines accessibility, data-driven insights, and tailored support.

Three-Month Advisor Presence: Placing advisors in doctors' surgeries for an extended period allowed us to establish rapport, build trust, and ensure a consistent presence for those seeking advice. This approach also facilitated a deeper understanding of individual needs.

Measuring Wellbeing with S-WEMWBS: To gauge the transformative power of our intervention, we employed the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (S-WEMWBS). This scientifically validated tool allowed us to quantify changes in clients' mental wellbeing, providing a tangible measure of progress.

Hypothesis of Impact: Our methodology was built upon the hypothesis that early intervention advice serves as a contributory factor to improved wellbeing. Through close analysis and rigorous evaluation, we sought to uncover the link between our advice services and the positive changes observed in wellbeing scores.

It is worth acknowledging that this project has been crafted in collaboration with esteemed individuals. We extend gratitude to Katie Dowson, NHS Director of Digital – Doncaster, Doncaster North PCN partners, and Cheryl Gowland's team, who provided us with an accessible location to conduct the pilot.



How Citizens Advice gives people the knowledge and confidence to find a way forward

This is *Anne.

Anne has a consultation to discuss her respiratory condition, which has been getting worse in recent cold weather.



- 1 While discussing her health problem with her GP, Anne mentions she's been using the heating less as it's so expensive to run. She seems anxious and stressed about her financial situation.

Advice sessions are held within the GP surgery at regular times each week.

- 2 The GP recommends Anne makes an appointment with the Citizens Advice in the surgery.

Health professionals identify that a patient has a 'non-clinical' issue and refer then to the advice service held within the GP surgery.

- 5 Ben finds Anne is not claiming all of her benefit entitlements, so helps her complete the paperwork to correct this.

Often clients need support with more than the presenting issue. Advisers are able to unpick the underlying issues and work with the client to resolve them.

- 4 Anne discusses her situation with the adviser, *Ben. They discuss ways to reduce spending on energy bills and maximise Anne's income.

Advisers have specialist training to support people with a whole range of practical issues which could be a barrier to better health.

- 3 Anne speaks with the receptionist to arrange this.

Patients can also 'self-refer' by booking advice appointments through the surgery.



- 6 Ben also helps Anne compare energy tariffs to look for the best deal, and checks if she is eligible for additional discounts from her energy supplier because of her condition.

Advisers also connect people to other specialist services offered by Citizens Advice i.e specialist debt advice.

Following advice...

Anne is less stressed and focussing on her health feels more manageable.

She has some additional income and reduced her energy bills, meaning she can use the heating more often and keep her home warmer.

She is keeping up with her treatment and her respiratory condition is improving, meaning fewer GP appointments.



OUR IMPACT - 1ST APRIL 2023 - 26 SEPTEMBER 2023



£103,584

In income gains for clients



37

Clients advised and supported via this project



81%

of clients seen reported having a disability or long term health condition

AVERAGE INCOME GAIN OF **£2,799 PER CLIENT** SEEN ON THE PROJECT

116

ISSUES DEAL WITH AS ART OF THIS PROJECT

71%

of people who said they weren't confident about solving their problem before they used this service

Over half of clients said we helped to improve at least one aspect of their lives

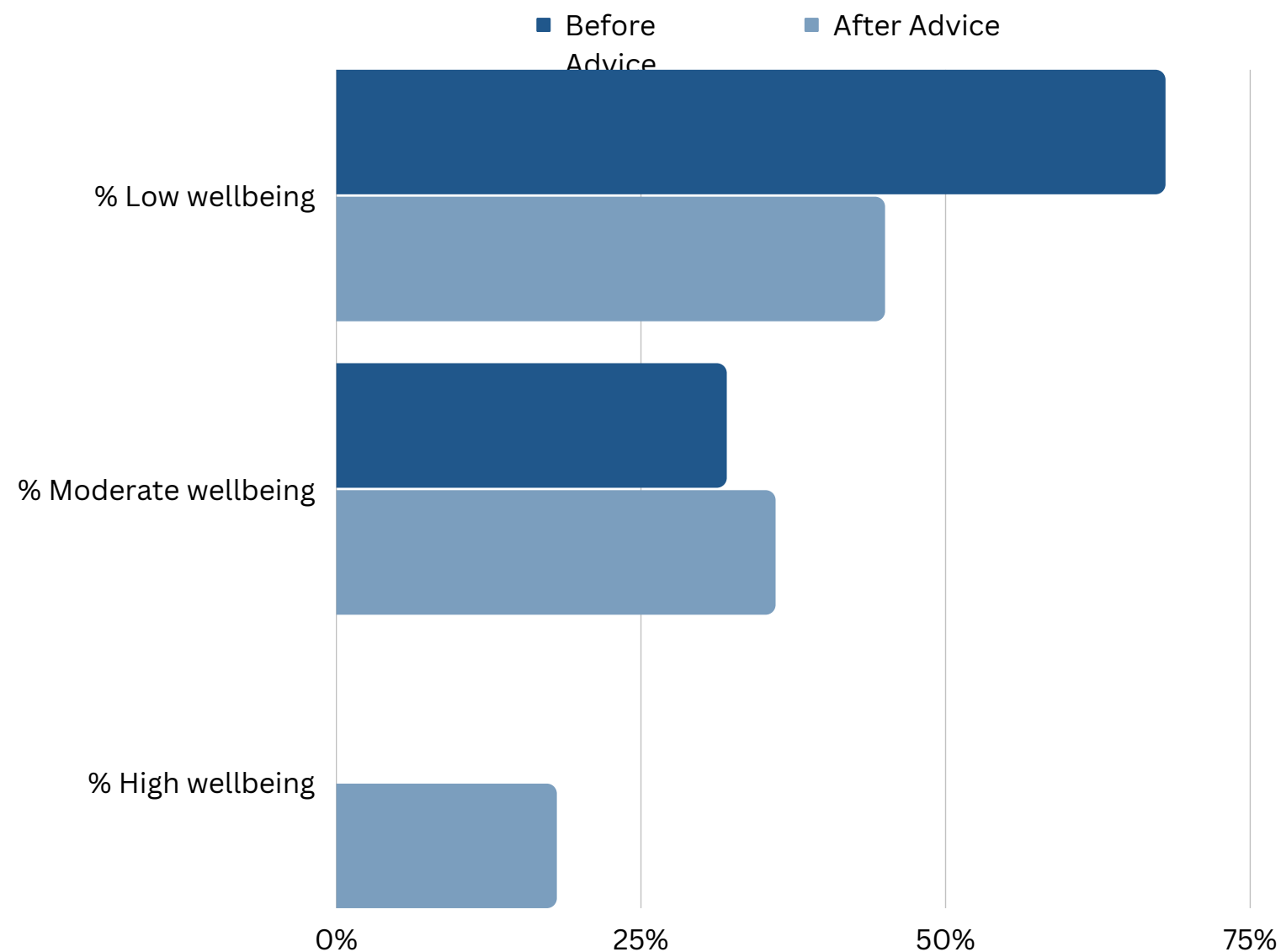
60%

of clients said it was easier to get on with their day to day life after coming to us for help.

The Graph on the right highlights using the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (S) WEMWBS for measuring the wellbeing scores of clients and the improvements they felt after our advice and intervention occurred.

There has been a

- **23% reduction in feelings of low wellbeing**
- **18% increase in people reporting feeling a higher level of wellbeing** after speaking to our advisers.



FINANCIAL OUTCOMES CASE STUDY

If a single client is eligible for Attendance Allowance (high rate) they would receive **£92.40p/w**

They will also receive (if meeting the eligibility criteria) additional benefits of:

- Pension Credit - **£182.60p/w**
- Severe disability premium **£69.40p/w**
- Council Tax Reduction (band E) **£2,214.23p/a**
- Housing benefit - **£86.30 p/w**
- Free TV Licence - **£159.00 p/a**
- Free prescriptions - **£9.35 per item** (usually have 8- 10 items per month.
- Blue Badge - £1.60 per hour often have multiple appointments and are going for long times - approx **£500 pa** value to client.
- Free Dentistry of which average costs are **£23.80 £65.20 or £282.80.**
- Free Opticians of which average costs are **£30** eye test, glasses **£30-£89**
- On the priority register for energy so supply will not be cut off

This is an average income uprating of **£24,888.03 per year** after using this service.

OUR VALUE TO SOCIETY

We use an established model to calculate the financial value of our advice and the positive outcomes it contributes to individuals lives and the wider society. It's impossible to put a value on everything we do, so this is likely to be a conservative estimate. For more detail on these savings and a full explanation of our model, please see our financial modelling.

We help bring money, services and opportunities into neighbourhoods.

We added wider economic and social value to communities improving clients' well being (emotional well being, family relationships and positive functioning).

Overall value (advice and volunteering)

Fiscal value total (Gov & Public Services) - **£3,302,941**

Public value total (wider economic and social benefits) - **£24,544,927**

Value to the people we help total - **£15,099,909**

For every £1 invested:

For every £1, £x in fiscal value **£3.09**

For every £1, £x in public value **£22.93**

For every £1, £x in value to the people we help **£14.10**

Our value to the NHS - by reducing use of mental health and GP services, and keeping people in work

Reducing use of health services - **£492,709**

Keeping people in work - **£64,068**

**Total saving to NHS
£556,777**



BENEFITS OF COLLABORATING

Benefits of collaborating to deliver integrated advice within health services:

1. **Cost savings** - helps patients to overcome issues especially ones which cause delayed discharge
2. **Building patient resilience** - patient's physical and mental health improves by dealing with all the presenting issues early
3. **Collaboration** - encourages good communication between the various teams
4. **Improves knowledge sharing** - between clinicians and advice workers. Clinicians become better at spotting social welfare need.
5. **Alleviates the pressure on medical appointments** - frees up the practice to deal with medical care instead of socioeconomic issues.

Using our data as part of population health management allows:

A better understanding of need and local, regional and national trends - sharing data across a whole system can provide a more robust understanding of need and help all services, including the NHS respond in a more timely and effective manner

More effective planning - the number of people attending NHS services, and in what way, is influenced by people's lives, personal choices, support frameworks and access to and use of other services

Robust impact measurement - having one well-managed data capture system can be hugely beneficial, not just in facilitating a better understanding of an individual's needs and progress, but also in being able to aggregate wider impact. This in turn facilitates future planning.

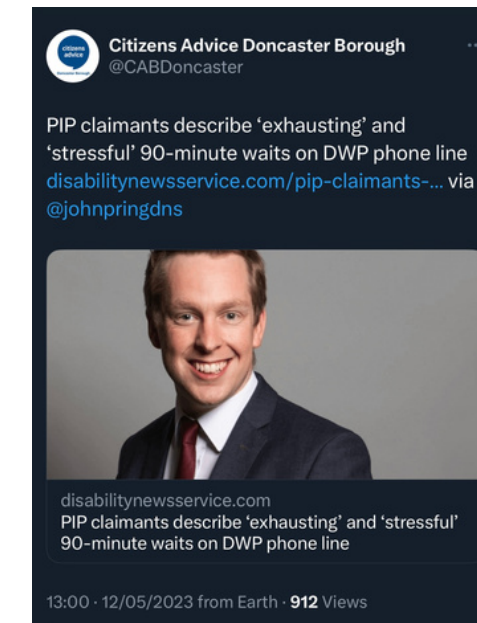
THE WIDER IMPACT OF OUR ADVICE

We know giving people advice and helping solve their problems can impact their wider lives in positive ways and make them more resilient and prepared for similar problems in the future.

We have a strong commitment to social policy research and campaigns throughout our work, this allows us to act as a catalyst for change in public policy and services, enabling local people to have a say about local issues and services which affect their lives, one such example was our campaign to local MP's to uprate benefits in line with inflation, we campaigned on this issues and the campaign was successful.

As a result of our campaigning uprating benefits by inflation has happened in April this was a vital first step in helping households weather the cost of living storm. Raising housing support in line with rents and additional government interventions will further close this gap.

Our Research & Campaigns work in Askern has focused on health inequalities, we have been collecting the voice and lived experiences of our clients to champion for change as well as promoting key welfare benefits which regularly go unclaimed.



Doncaster Borough



CASE STUDIES

Client is a 59 year old female who lives in her own property which is owned outright with her husband. she lives with her non dependant son and her husband. The marriage has broken down and the client has started divorce proceedings. She attended Askern White Wings centre for support with understanding and checking her entitlement to any benefits as she will be leaving her home .she is currently working between 10 and 16 hours per week. During these conversations the client disclosed a Domestic Abuse situation, the client was very distressed and emotional.

The advisor completed a benefit check based on her potential circumstances when she leaves the home and receives divorce settlement payment, they also discussed PIP eligibility and potential awards.

- Referral made that day to Doncaster Domestic Abuse Hub who contacted the client immediately
- Discussed Help to claim service for UC - client wishes to do this herself once she is able to claim and divorce / finances agreed
- Client has contacted PIP to make a new claim and a further appointment has been arranged with the advisor to support with the application

The advisor ensured the client was in a private, safe and comfortable environment to discuss such personal issues, ensuring the client had time to speak and to build a rapport in order to gain the confidence to access help and make a referral to DA Hub. The advisor stayed behind and extended the advice session to ensure the client had sufficient time and didn't feel rushed as this was the first time client had spoken about such issues

I feel like a weight has been lifted, feels so much better, and can see a bright future, I know what I need to do and have direction in life.

£9,656.12

INCREASE IN UNCLAIMED BENEFITS VIA PIP AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT



CASE STUDIES

Client is a 54 year old male who lives in private rented accommodation with a dependant child. He is on low income is self employed but is struggling to work due to personal circumstances and break down of marriage, He does not claim any benefits.

Client has recently separated and required a benefits check, He also had no food provisions or funds to buy food.

The advisor completed a benefit check based on the information provided this showed he would be eligible to claim £1109.99 per month in Universal Credit including housing element. He would also be eligible to claim Child benefit of £96 per month.

- The advisor issued a Food voucher which the client could collect the following day from St James Foodbank
- Discussed Help to claim service for UC - client wanted to do this himself
- Provided information on how to claim Child benefit

The advisor ensured the client was in a private, safe and comfortable environment to discuss such personal and financial issues, In particular his recent marriage breakdown

The client attended ST James foodbank - 09.06.23

Completed a claim to Child Benefit

Completed a claim to UC

The client left the appointment with a better understanding of his financial situation and how to make the claims to new benefits. He was able to obtain food the following day for himself and his dependent child. He was aware that until benefit claims were in place he could receive continued support via CADB and the food banks and that an adviser from Citizens Advice would be in Askern White wings centre on a weekly basis in case he needed further support

Client states he was blown away as "I didn't think I would be entitled to get any help"

£14,471.88

**PER YEAR INCREASE IN
UNCLAIMED UNIVERSAL
CREDIT & CHILD BENEFIT**



Endorsements

"We are passionate about coming together to develop a collaborative approach to reducing the consequences of social and digital isolation for people in Doncaster. We know the Cost of Living crisis will leave our most vulnerable people feeling further isolated and not having access to information that can help them or the level of support they so urgently need. If we take no action, this could have catastrophic consequences for people in Doncaster and will also add significant pressures to our services that are already feeling overwhelmed.

We are committed to combining the skills and resources of our Team Doncaster partners to try and provide proactive support to our population. With the rise in people in financial crisis we wanted to try to do something different and through our workstream identified an opportunity to place specialist advice from Citizens Advice Doncaster in a primary care setting to see if we could provide crucial information and support to people before they hit crisis point. Primary care locations are a safe and trusted environment for many, and we know there are high volumes of people attending on a daily basis.

We are also taking an opportunity for our primary care services to be more informed of the fantastic support delivered by Citizens Advice so that they can advocate and signpost individuals to the service."

Katie Dowson

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL - DONCASTER NHS
INTEGRATED CARE BOARD



Endorsements

It was a pleasure to be approached by CAB to take part in a pilot project providing a GP practice venue as part of their outreach work.

The North PCN are always keen to work with community partners to bring together services that might be supporting the same people – we call this #silosmashing – trying to avoid services working in isolation but instead working together for the benefit of residents and patients.

Over the weeks the specialist advisors have become embedded within our PCN Team. They have a room at the heart of the 2 practices where they are visible and accessible to provide advice and signposting. They also see residents by appointment within the venue. We have even had some members of our Team who have utilised the service!

We look forward to seeing the evaluation of the success of the project and hope that we can continue to support CAB and their outreach work over the coming months and at a time when many of our residents need the advice of specialists more than ever.

Cheryl Gowland

DIGITAL AND TRANSFORMATION LEAD,
NORTH PRIMARY CARE NETWORK



Local Feed back

This is great idea and welcoming to Askern village, knowing that I can direct my customers to a location when they are needing support or a quick query answering.

Local Shop Owner

Thank you to CADB and White wing centre to providing this free service to Askern.

Patient at the Surgery

Askern is an area starved of resources like this, I work as a support worker and people usually have to leave the village for this type of expert advice and support, we are very supportive and thankful of the services you offer.

Local Support worker

In a time where lots of people are worried its reassuring to know this service is available for those in need, its a much needed offer, I wish it was at my parents surgery too as they struggle with getting to places because of their health.

Patient at the Surgery

CONCLUSION

From a service user perspective

- **improved access to high quality advice and support** has allowed clients to receive **benefits they would have otherwise not claimed.**
- It has **empowered clients financially and improved financial resilience,**
- we have together improved the ability to make **informed choices** through onsite delivery of high quality advice and support.
- Flexibility of accessing **support face to face in their own community**
- More marginalised people and communities will **get their voices better heard** relieving their sense of exclusion and isolation.

From a community perspective

- The impact outcomes and the advice and support made significant in particular **income gains** for client which will feed back into local communities.
- We are continuing to work with Doncaster North PCN to create a **robust safety net** for those individuals most likely to need one, walking alongside individuals to help them make and sustain the positive changes to their wellbeing.
- It **improves on the local community infrastructure** creating a valuable resource local people are proud to have easily accessible

From a Partner perspective

- **Reduced pressure on NHS services** and breaking the cycle of the 'revolving door',
- **Improved outcomes for individuals** also benefit their families and wider networks,
- **Improved outcomes against the wider determinants of health,**
- Greater **access to harder to reach communities**

FUTURE PLANS AND EXPANSION

Overall the pilot project has been a resounding success but in order to sustain this impact and continue with the fantastic collaborative work we would make the following recommendations.

- **Build upon existing collaboration** between the Primary care network and Citizens Advice and use this as a platform for other third sector organisations to improve services on offer within the primary care setting working together to improve awareness and partnership working.
- **Funding** the pilot to continue to grow and develop the services it offers in Doncaster North, Use the data, partnership working and collaboration to extend to other PNCs across Doncaster, Ensure funding is over **sustainable** periods, this ensures long term strategic goals can be achieved and sustained, and strengthens their ability to lever in additional funding.
- Moving forward we would look to **encorporate digital inclusion** in our offer, the reason for this is most benefits forms, household bills and banking is now done so digitally. our aim would be to promote and raise awarness of programs to improve digial leteracy among our clients and the wider community. As an organisation we will look to support and encourage service users to access sercvices online, look to contribute to improveing digital literacy levels through programmes and volunteer oppertunites. We would look to offer or parnter with device and data gifting programs linking digital access to our advice offer to ensure financial hardship and poor health outcomes are not a result of digital exclusion.
- Review service design and delivery to ensure this is a responsive and proactive service for users in this environment and look to develop a **scalable model** which would be implemented across South Yorkshire.
- Take steps to **review and improve quality and range of advice on offer**. To achieve greater consistency of products across the city, to ensure people are speaking to the right individuals with the right levels of training and expertise. This avoids people falling further into poverty due to incorrect or poor quality provision.
- To **promote volunteering opportunities** as part of the project, a lot of our volunteers want to contribute and help their communities and we think offering flexible and varied volunteer opportunities to support the projects and the wider service, to those with long term health conditions can have significant positive health impacts on individuals.



**Doncaster
Borough**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to extend a thank you to the NHS and Doncaster North PCN who funded and supported this project, from inception to delivery, this impact we have been able to make to clients' lives and communities across the city is down to the confidence and support you have shown in us.



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