



## *Appendix 1*

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# **Citizens Advice LeicesterShire City Advice Services Contract Performance 2015-16**

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## 1. Background

Leicester City council has commissioned social welfare law advice for the city and Citizens Advice LeicesterShire was awarded the contract in April 2013 who work with Age UK Leicestershire and Shelter Housing Aid and Research Project (SHARP).

## 2. Headlines Summary

- **30,500** enquires
- Volunteer delivered service
- **98%** clients would recommend service
- **£265,032** of unclaimed income identified
- **£1,292,528** of debt managed
- **£922,389** Other savings including energy savings, consumer, holiday complaints/compensation etc
- **38%** of service users disabled
- **58%** of service users of working age
- Continuing 10 outreach sites across the city and new service out of York House
- **58** Volunteers moved into paid work as a result of our training

## 3. Provision

The target levels set for this contact are 30,000 contacts per annum.

**30,584** enquiries were dealt with during the last year (2015/2016) exceeding the contract target by **2%**. The target and numbers achieved are shown below:

Contract Targets and numbers achieved - 2015/16			
Tier	Providing	Target	No. of enquiries
1	Information and signposting	19,600	19,674
2	Generalist advice	9,800	10,240
3	Specialist advice	600	670
<b>Total</b>		<b>30,000</b>	<b>30,584</b>

A full definition of the advice offered for Tier 1, 2 and 3 can be found in *Appendix A*.

## 4. Outcomes

Citizens Advice LeicesterShire completes an annual client survey. For 2015 98% of the clients surveyed advised that they would recommend the service. (Appendix B)

**58** candidates that have volunteered have completed training and gained experience enabling them to move from unemployed into paid employment and the annual staff/volunteer survey scored a 78% satisfaction rate with working in the organisation. (appendix C)

**£265,032** of unclaimed income identified, **£1,292,528** of debt managed and **£922,389** other savings including energy savings, consumer, holiday complaints etc

We provided assistance with energy supplier comparisons and switching suppliers, obtaining refunds from water suppliers including a day with BBC Radio Leicester that assisted more than 70 people move to a cheaper tariff.

The case studies below give examples of the types of issues dealt with and outcomes achieved:

### **Case Study 1: Asylum Support**

Client was a Sri Lankan national, who had applied for asylum based on grounds of humanitarian protection meaning that she had no rights to public funds. The client presented with limited language skills and required a translator which was sourced immediately through Clear Voice. The client was experiencing large amounts of debt due to costs of accommodation and client was unsure of National Asylum Support Services (NASS) she was receiving, and the stage of her application for asylum.

The Adviser was able to contact NASS to confirm the support, and to contact the Home Office for an update on the stage of her asylum application. The client was linked with asylum based projects in the city, and hot food provision across the city networks.

Due to the client's immigration status, there are limited options for access to public funds, however we provided a primary access point for the client to access their support network and ensured that any action to recover the rent arrears was placed on hold whilst the client's situation was resolved.

### **Case Study 2: Personal Budgeting Support Referral**

Client was referred from Leicester City Council for Personal Budgeting Support (a mandatory referral for clients who have requested Alternative Payment Arrangements after applications for Universal Credit). Client had debts in gas and electricity, water, and council tax. An Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rained Money Adviser was able to provide a holistic approach to budgeting advice; the client was supported in applying to Big Difference Fund Scheme, resulting in a refund of over 90% of the clients water arrears and prevented enforcement action regards to the clients other debt. The adviser also supported the client in accessing furniture and white via the Local Authority Community Support Grant Scheme.

### **Case Study 3: Benefit Cap**

Client was a single mother of three children. The youngest child had just become of school age. The mother was moved from Income Support to Job Seekers Allowance. The client had moved out of the family home which was owned and in the name of her husband into rented accommodation. The client was then divorced, and as part of the settlement she was awarded possession of the family home, which she could not sustain on her sole income. As the client's current residence is in a private tenancy, and she was reliant on housing benefit to pay this rent. A Discretionary Housing Payment was not possible as she was maintaining housing benefit. We provided support to enable the client to identify her options with regards to the asset of the house. The client was then informed by the local authority that she could be affected by the benefit cap. CITAL were able to assist the client by providing 'what if' benefit calculations, supporting her in looking at viable options to be able to support herself and her young family through tax credits.

**5. Client Profile**

5.1.1 Clients Reasons for contacting us

The top three requests for advice in the city are related to:

<b>1</b>	<b>Welfare benefits</b> Predominately for vulnerable clients with literacy, language and other barriers preventing them from accessing services independently. For help with benefit applications (increasingly online), handling the new appeal process (reconsiderations are now mandatory prior to appeal), and coping with the impacts of sanctions or disputing the decision to apply a sanction. Appointments for financial capability and debt advice.
<b>2</b>	<b>Debt</b> Our largest area of debt advice has been providing support with the impact of benefit changes. Clients presenting with benefit problems that have created financial difficulties are not included in this category
<b>3</b>	<b>Employment</b> Problems linked to tax credits, employment support allowance – submitting mandatory reconsideration (challenging award decisions) due to suspension of benefits

Leicester’s top three reasons for contact reflect those of Citizens Advice’s national advice service. However for the UK’s national picture the highest contact reason is debt advice, predominately council tax recovery.

We believe that the reason for the difference is due in part, to the strong partnership working between Citizens Advice and the local authority. We feel this has minimised the effects of council tax debts advice given within the locality due to our work with the Council and operating outreach sessions at the main Leicester City Council’s Customer Services Centre three times a week to establish contact with those who may need assistance.

There continues to be an increase in the proportion of clients seeking help with family law since the changes to civil legal aid in April 2013. We are seeing more people unable to access and receive legal aid help for court action in relation to divorce or child custody/access issues. This is not one of the areas in which we are able to provide Tier 3 help. There is family law advice provision in the city however this advice is chargeable. We have awareness of which organisations offer a free initial consultation and provide this information to clients so they can make an independent choice of provider.

We support with Discretionary Housing Payments for clients in arrears with their rent, and are able to support with these applications online. One of the areas of growth is the increase in the number of these clients that are referred for food parcels and hot meals; 32% more than this period last year. We are pleased to be one of the partner organisations chosen by the Council’s Community Support Grant Team to be able to directly refer clients to the main city food bank. We also provide additional support for clients who have been referred to the food bank by the city council and need ongoing assistance.

### 5.1.2 Client demographics

**Disability - 38% of our clients (11,641) identify as having a disability or long term health problem.** Nationally about 17% of UK residents describe themselves as disabled, which suggests people with disabilities have a disproportionate need for our service. This is to be expected given the ongoing changes to sickness and disability benefits.

**Age – 58% (17,841) of our clients are of working age, with around 4% (1692) being over 65.** Given that Leicester is a young city, we need to do more to market the service towards young adults. We are expanding our social media and online presence, offering to appeal to this age group.

**Ethnicity – White British is our biggest single group of clients.** The next largest groups identify as:

- Asian or British Asian and
- Indian and Black – African

We have clients recorded from **55 different nationalities** during this period. This reflects the wide variety of cultures and ethnicities within Leicester city.

We are still seeing an increase with European Economic Area (EEA) nationals, due to the recent government policy changes relating to right to reside for benefit purposes.

We have produced a leaflet that provides clear instruction to clients with limited language skills. This leaflet is available on the Social Welfare Vision page of Leicester City Council's website and also available via the three advice agencies that created the project (Citizens Advice, Community Advice and Law Service and Welfare Rights).

Our volunteers reflect the cultural diversity of the city, and we are able to assist most clients in their primary language. However where we are unable to do this we utilise a telephone translation services, which is accessible immediately but incurs a cost.

## 6. Client Contact methods

Clients have the option to self-help through Citizens Advice LeicesterShire's website. Online advice is provided through a search facility providing up to date legal and practical advice.

In addition to self-help clients have **4** methods of contact options available to them where they are provided with an initial assessment to obtain a full diagnosis of the issue(s) the client has presented.

- Telephone** – calls taken by the Contact Centre Monday to Friday between the hours of 9.00am and 4.00pm. Operated by 14 volunteers supervised by a paid member of staff
- Email** – contact can be made by our website [www.citizensadviceleicestershire.org](http://www.citizensadviceleicestershire.org) through the 'contact us' page at any time with an expected response time of 48 hours

- c) **Drop-in** – at 60 Charles Street between the hours of 9.00am and 4.00pm Monday to Thursday and 9.00am to 3.30pm Friday. Clients are greeted by reception and details taken to check eligibility to access the service. At this stage clients have data protection explained to them and client profile details are obtained. Clients are given details of when they will be seen. The drop-in operates on a first come first served basis with the exception of clients presenting as emergency cases (for example a pregnant homeless person) who are prioritised.

Clients contacting through these methods are asked questions to extract detail of the issues they are faced with and provided with information relating to their issue(s). In many case the initial detail provided is adequate for the issues to be resolved. For those clients that require further advice and support signposting or referrals are made to the appropriate Citizens Advice specialist service or external organisation.

The main method of contact for clients during 2015/16 has been through drop-in at our contact centre located at 60 Charles Street. This drop in has seen over **19,000** over the year.

#### d) **Outreach Delivery**

The outreach sessions are offered in 10 wards across the city. These comprise 10 half day sessions per week, one in each ward. In Braunstone & Rowley Fields, Humberstone & Hamilton and Spinney Hills the outreach takes place at alternating venues to cover the ward area.

Locations, times and venues for the outreach sessions across the city - 2015/16		
Braunstone/Rowley Fields	Brite Centre	Alternative Mondays 9.30am - 12.30pm
	Oak Centre	Alternative Mondays 9.30am - 12.30pm
Spinney Hills	Wesley Hall	Alternative Tuesdays 9.30am - 12.30pm
	St Matthews TARA	Alternative Tuesdays 9.30am - 12.30pm
New parks	New Parks Library	Wednesdays 2.00pm – 5.00pm
Beaumont Leys	Beaumont Leys library	Tuesdays 2.00am – 5.00pm
Abbey	Tudor Centre	Tuesdays 9.30am - 12.30pm
Stoneygate	Open Hands	Thurs 9.30 - 12.30
Humberstone and Hamilton	Netherhall Community Centre	Alternative Fridays 10.00am – 1.00pm
	Hamilton Library	Alternative Fridays 10.00am – 1.00pm
Charnwood and Coleman	St Barnabas Library	Tuesdays 2.00am - 5.00pm
Eyres Monsell	Southfields Library	Wednesdays 2.00pm – 5.00pm
Rushey Mead	Woodbridge Sure Start Centre	Thursdays 2.00pm – 5.00pm
Leicester City Council Customer Service	91 Granby Street, Leicester	Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays 10.00am - 12.00pm

The outreach is delivered by 2 advisors supplied by our partners AgeUK. Their workers see anyone, of any age.

We are currently encouraging people to book appointments for outreach by contacting the city centre office, through councillor referral or by using our contact centre phone or email as this has proven to be the most effective way to achieve maximum use of their sessions, but there remains some facility for drop in. Clients can choose whether they wish to be seen at their local Outreach or at the City office, whichever is more convenient or accessible for them.

We have been providing an outreach service at York House since April 2015, on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning. So far we have seen 1864 clients at this location. This is proving to be very successful, with clients both dropping in and being booked in for appointments. As we are located within the council offices, we primarily see clients presenting with local authority issues such as council tax. However we are seeing clients for a multitude of different reasons there including debt to employment issues. We have seen several vulnerable clients there that may not have engaged with our service through our usual channel of service at 60 Charles Street from domestic violence and substance misuse. The holistic service we are able to offer these clients enables them to access both generalist and specialist support from us, and partner agencies.

**e) Appointments**

In more complex cases the client is referred for an appointment for further advice at Tier 2 for support:

- Writing letters
- Form filling for benefit applications, local authority online forms, immigration form filling at OCSI Level 1
- Phone calls to relevant companies/organisations and government departments
- Use of the Citizens Advice AdviserNet database

and for Tier 3 Specialist advice for:

- Benefits
- Employment
- Debt

Support at Tier 3 includes casework and where appropriate and representation at tribunals for these specialist areas

<b>Advice &amp; Support contact routes 2015/16</b>					
<b>Tier</b>	<b>Face to face at Charles Street</b>	<b>Telephone, Email &amp; Webchat via contact centre</b>	<b>Outreach &amp; Home Visits</b>	<b>Age UK Outreach</b>	<b>SHARP &amp; Employment referrals</b>
1	11,149	8025	500	n/a	n/a
2	8596	n/a	2044	2,044	n/a
3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	670

**f) Surgeries provided by third parties**

- We have a pro bono solicitor, Josiah Hincks, who attends once a month to provide a free half hour in family law. They see 6 clients per session
- Community Advice and Law Service (CALs) also provides 2 sessions per week to provide debt case work up to bankruptcy and Debt Relief Order level. They see 3 clients per session.

In 2015/16 these two organisations have assisted clients in the numbers given below. The numbers reflect both the number of sessions provided and the number of clients able to be seen in the session which is influenced by the complexity of the work:

- Josiah Hincks - **68 clients**
- Community Advice and Law Services – **288 clients**

The table below clarifies which third party organisation dealt with what subject area and the numbers involved with in 2015/16. These are in addition to the above figures:

Subject Area	Organisation	No. of clients
Debt	CALS	122
Family Law	Josiah Hincks	72
Total	<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>

CLS also provided a service during the year. Whilst the service was initially beneficial due to administrative issues this was not continued.

**7. Quality Assurance**

Citizens Advice LeicesterShire are the lead for the contract and hold ‘The Advice Quality Standard’, It is a requirement for this standard to demonstrate that our services are easily accessible, effectively managed and ensuring that staff and volunteers have the necessary skills to provide a quality service to the residents of Leicester City.

Quality Assurance monitoring is completed daily by the Service Leader and scoring is against the national Citizens Advice quality requirements. Scores are marked as poor, weak and met.

For work that has been marked as week or poor feedback is provided to the volunteer/worker on the expected level of work and how it can be achieved. Additional mentoring and training is provided where appropriate.

During 2015/16 we invited a peer from another branch of Citizens Advice to visit and review our work. From the checks made 86% of the criteria had been met.

As a member of national Citizens Advice we are audited in depth and must meet their requirements. We have chosen to become part of the national Citizens Advice pilot for case checking to further improve standards.



## **8. Volunteers contribution to the service**

Volunteers provide the core workforce for our advice services. To ensure volunteers have the necessary skills and knowledge we have in place robust and effective mandatory training plans. This includes use of training mentors, continuous and rigorous supervision with ongoing case checking and quality checks to ensure all work done meets the National Citizens Advice and the AQS standard.

Our volunteers include those who are retired, those who supplement study with practical experience and those seeking to get back into the employment market. We help these volunteers tackle any barriers to work they may have, such as improving their literacy, language and computer skills as well as giving them experience in a workplace environment with support through the recognised reputation of the Citizens Advice network. This is compounded by an in-depth continual training programme, mitigating any risks factors involved in a client lead service whilst ensuring service delivery is unaffected.

A large number of the Contact Centre volunteers are the long term unemployed. Through a DWP scheme and the training and the work experience we provide gives them valuable skills and knowledge during an eight week placement. During their time with us we provide additional support to help them understand recruitment application processes and prepare for interviews. In 2015/16 we have seen over **58** candidates that have participated in this scheme move from unemployed into paid employment.

We continue to encourage law students to volunteer and work in both the contact and face to face service and have a high take up for this from both Leicester and De Montfort Universities; the students join us with good skills and they find the practical situation of providing advice at face to face invaluable for experience to enable them to progress their studies.

## **9. Partnership working**

Although not funded by LCC, we are working in partnership with Leicester Ageing Together to provide advice, income maximisation and guidance to isolated older people in the following wards, Thurncourt, Wycliffe, Evington and Spinney Hills. There are 16 partners within the project, which is funded by The Big Lottery and managed by Vista. We have a Project Worker in post and have established several successful outreach venues within these wards. For example, one outreach at Belgrave library is booked up for the next 3 weeks due to the success of the project. We are also providing 'problem noticer' training to the partners and volunteers within the project. A problem noticer is a volunteer or employee based in libraries, foodbanks, and surgeries who spot individuals that may need support.

We contributed to the Fairer Finance Leicestershire consultation on financial pressures and risks in the city in March 2016 and the Gambling Community Impact Task Group to give witness testimony on the impact of gambling on vulnerable communities.

Leicester City Citizens Advice continues to work with the Advice Leicestershire Partnership (ALP) group.

We also contribute to the Homelessness Reference Group and Emergency Food Partnership within the city and attend these meetings. These meetings offer a great opportunity to create and strengthen partnership working within the city.

We participate in the forum Social Welfare Advice Partnership (SWAP) for organisations that offer advice in Leicester. SWAP allows us to regularly communicate with other advice providers and to discuss information, issues, and future changes affecting services at operational and strategic levels.

## 10. Social Policy Work

Citizens Advice LeicesterShire has been very active in undertaking research and campaigning in Leicester City.

During 2015/16 we took appropriate campaigns action for 1 in 9 clients seen that had a Social Policy Issue(s) raised regarding their case.

Examples of campaigns Action:

- **Big Switch** - We worked in partnership with BBC Radio Leicester to provide a day's worth of appointments at their site, providing assistance with energy supplier comparisons and switching supply if the clients required. We saved 70 clients over £27,500 during this single day period.
- **Scams Awareness** -Scam awareness month runs as a national campaign during July. Last year we worked with our partner agency AGEUK to deliver materials and engagements with clients to promote scam awareness.
- **Fortnight of Action Basic Bank Account Report** - CITAL took part in the national call for evidence, visiting 9 banks within Leicester City under their campaign Fortnight of Action. This involved Leicester City Research and Campaign Officers completing a series of pre-set questions within local banks enquiring about the services they are available to offer and collating this experience into a report.
- **Leicester Pride** -During the Leicester Pride event in August, Citizens Advice LeicesterShire was active in promoting our services during the event. We operated a stall at Victoria Park during the event to engage clients and promote equality and diversity.
- **Housing** - CITAL attended the Landlord Forum to engage with private landlords about the upcoming welfare reform and universal credit. We established what assistance CAL could give to landlords and their tenants, and gave a presentation about what impact these upcoming political changes would have on their housing responsibilities.
- **Zero Hours Contracts** - A long term investigation is continuing to investigate how zero-hours contract affect individuals. This research has shown that many people express severe financial hardship and debts as the result of not having fixed hours. It has been very difficult for clients to budget accordingly, with little idea of how many hours they can expect to have worked.
- **Europeans Economic Area migrants** - We are continuing to research the effects of welfare reforms on European Migrants in the city. New regulations on welfare entitlement have meant we have seen increased European migrants expressing financial hardship.

## 11. Initiatives

### **Communication and information**

The media team have been very busy towards the end of 2015/16 raising the profile of our service with Leicester residents and highlighting the campaigning work we undertake. Recent press coverage through radio and TV has included pieces on payday loans, rogue landlords, consumer queries, Employment Support Allowance appeals and the summer budget. We are also increasing our social media presence through Facebook and Twitter, and provide regularly updated information through a television set located in our city office waiting room, providing step by step guidance on subjects such as, form filling and enforcement agents which we hope that waiting clients find informative.

We have been and continue to work on our communication methods to ensure staff and volunteers are kept up to date of changes and new developments. We have introduced a monthly newsletter to highlight the work done both across the City and County circulated to all staff and volunteers, and we update our intranet regularly with information that staff and volunteers would find useful in their work.

### **Work with Young People**

During the year, separate to this contact, Citizens Advice LeicesterShire has completed work with colleges to provide training for diversity and confidence building to students. We feel this work will benefit the advice service by making young people aware of Citizens Advice LeicesterShire and other services available to them.

### **Work with landlords**

This continues to be an area of work that wish to develop. We have already We have formed a relationship with the Landlord forum to promote services available to them and to their tenants.

### **Zero hours contracts**

This work continues with continued monitoring of numbers of enquiries in relation to zero hours contracts and providing financial support.

### **Information Management System**

Working with Citizens Advice to introduce a data management system that improves data captured and assists workers to better identify issues associated with the main identifying problem. For example the system would prompt the worker to consider if a client presenting with a housing issue has debt related problems and others that are common to the main issue.

Work is taking place to break ethnicity categories down further to enable a clearer picture to be gained of the number of East European clients other ethnic groups presenting to the service that have been historically grouped under a less descriptive heading.

**Appendix A:**

**TIER 1: Information & Signposting**

An information service involves giving clients the information they need, for them to know and do more about their situation. It can include information about rights, policies and practices; and about national and local services and agencies. Responsibility for taking any further action rests with the client.

**TIER 2: Generalist Advice**

A generalist unaccredited advice service includes a diagnosis of the client's enquiry and their financial circumstances, giving information and explaining options, and identifying further action the client can take. Some assistance is provided, for example contacting third parties on the client's behalf, form completion and drawing up a budget or action plan.

This level of service may be provided either by self-contained interviews following which the customer takes responsibility for further action, or ongoing casework support including all of the above and taking action on behalf other client, with the advice provider taking responsibility for follow-up work.

**TIER 3: Specialist Advice**

A specialist service accredited by the Financial Services Authority undertakes advice and casework at a level where detailed knowledge of the law is required. This would involve intensive one-on-one support and casework up to litigation and advice on Court hearings, including bankruptcy, insolvency, Debt Relief Orders and appropriate financial products.

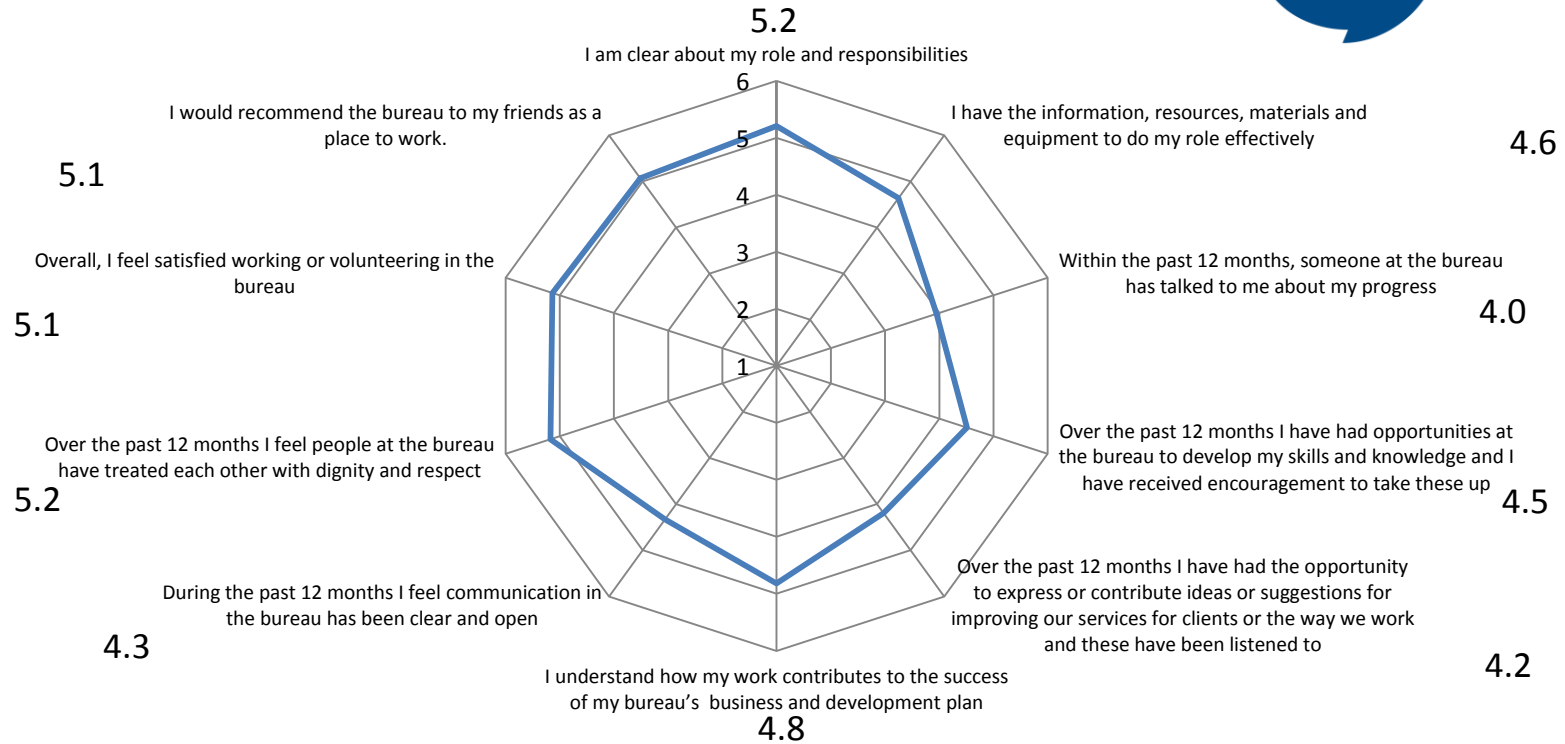
Existing '**Tier 3**' services include LCC Welfare Rights, Community Advice Legal Services (CALs), CA and two other **voluntary agencies**.

**Appendix B:****Citizens Advice LeicesterShire - Client Satisfaction Surveys 2015**

Questions	<u>OVERALL</u> (Total number of response s per question as above)	Total positive responses	% Positive responses	Total Negative Responses	% Negative Responses
1. How easy did you find it to access our service?	550	512	93.1%	38	7%
2. How happy are you about the times we're open?	546	511	93.6%	35	6%
3. How happy are you about how long you have to had to wait in total	546	499	91.4%	47	9%
4. How happy are you about the time you had to discuss your problem?	549	542	98.7%	7	1%
5. How happy are you with the information and advice you have received?	549	541	98.5%	8	1%
6. Overall, how happy are you with the service that you have received?	546	536	98.2%	10	2%
7. Would you use the CAB service again?	517	508	98.3%	9	2%
8. Would you recommend using the CAB service to others?	516	509	98.6%	7	1%

Appendix C:

## Staff and Volunteer Survey Summary 2015



Average score across the organisation of 4.7/6 (78%)