



Evaluation Report of the Citizens Advice Bureau Service within the Batley Sure Start Children's Centre

Client: Batley Sure Start
Children's Centre

Date: August 2006



	Page
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	6
Background and Rationale	7

Evaluation Methodology	11
Evaluation Findings – Documentary Analysis/Cost Effectiveness	13
Evaluation Findings – Interview Analysis	14
Parents’ Perspective	15
CAB worker Perspective	24
Sure Start staff Perspective	29
Conclusions	39
Recommendations	41
Glossary of terms	43

Executive Summary

Rationale and Background

A full time, dedicated, CAB worker is currently being employed at the Batley Sure Start to provide information to parents who seek advice either via referral or self referral. The need for this CAB worker is in response to the need to address issues of income maximisation in the Batley area. The link between income and health has long been established with incidences of poor health occurring to a greater extent in areas of low income, such as the Batley area. The CAB service can also provide advice around debt management, a factor that can contribute to stress.

Difficulty accessing the service has been shown to be the main reason why those considering using a bureau across Great Britain in 2003/2004 chose not to do so². The Batley model of CAB service delivery provides information to parents who seek advice either via self referral or referral via professionals working within the Batley area. The model actively targets parents who need advice, even if the individuals do not recognise they have a problem. It also works in partnership with other organisations to help parents engage with CAB and take action on the advice, for example using Parent Support workers from the Sure Start.

Project objective

The overall objective of the Batley approach was to improve the take up of CAB services, by considering the number of clients seen amongst parents with children under 5 compared to under the existing method

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The purpose and scope of the evaluation is limited to identifying the extent to which the approach leads to an increase in the take up of the advice services. It is not about establishing whether advice increases income and hence improves health, as that link has already been established.

Evaluation questions

In order to remain within the scope set out for the evaluation we have focussed on the project objective in order to develop a set of questions that the evaluation seeks to address to see if this objective has been met.

To what extent has the link between Batley Sure Start and the CAB model facilitated better access to the CAB service?

What value has this link been in both accessing the CAB service and implementing the advice?

What value has attendance to the CAB service had on parents?

² Unmet Demand for Citizens Advice Bureaux, Research study conducted for Citizens Advice (2003/2004), MORI Social Research Institute

Specific evaluation objectives can be set in relation to the three groups of people whose behaviour the model is aiming to have an impact on.

Evaluation methodology

This included documentary analysis of the management information in order to provide background statistics to the types of advice, any outcome measures and possible financial gains. Qualitative research was conducted with Sure Start parents, Sure Start staff and the CAB worker.

Evaluation findings

Overall the CAB service has a positive impact on many groups of individuals, both directly on the parents and indirectly to Sure Start staff and other professionals. During and after parents have attended the advice sessions, there are a number of conditions which impact on the uptake and implementation of the advice.

These conditions are discussed in full in the report but covering issues relating to:

- Promotion of the CAB services
- Relationships with professionals and the CAB worker
- Appropriateness of referrals
- Ease of accessing the CAB service
- Satisfaction with the CAB service
- Benefits of the CAB service
- Comparison with other advice services
- Suggestions for the future
- Cost effectiveness

Conclusions

Promotion of the CAB service is essential both to parents and to professionals. Parents can become aware of the service via more than one route. It is important for the CAB worker to form close links with professionals in order to maximise effective referrals and to help parents with the uptake of advice. The Batley CAB model works well because of the trusting relationships parents form with the professionals, this helps parents both access the service and implement the advice. This trust is also important for both the parents and professionals when dealing with the CAB worker and the CAB service overall.

Sure Start staff all appear to have a good basic understanding of the CAB service, this understanding has been established via a range of interactions with the CAB worker.

Once parents have contacted the CAB worker for an initial appointment, the majority of parties are happy that this appointment is arranged at a convenient time and place.

The advice received by the parents can have huge positive impacts both emotionally, practically and financially. The advice also helps Sure Start staff in their job roles, by removing some of their workload and helping them better support families.

The CAB worker is seen by both staff and parents as a great asset, with many positive qualities, all necessary in order for the Batley CAB model to work effectively.

When considering the benefits of the CAB service running via the Batley Sure Start it is important to offset these benefits against the costs.

Suggestions for the future include financial literacy courses, to help parents help themselves.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the CAB worker continues to work on building relationships both with professionals and parents, through active promotion of the CAB service. All professionals should be involved in promoting the CAB service.

Training for all professionals is imperative regarding the appropriateness and prioritisation of referrals to the CAB worker, in order to make most effective use of the CAB worker's time. Referral routes should be refined in order to avoid duplication of the parents being referred to the service and to consider issues of confidentiality and data protection. Also the referral process needs to ensure parents do not 'slip through the net'.

An initial assessment should be made regarding how necessary it is for Sure Start staff to accompany parents to sessions.

The idea of running financial literacy courses is a good one; however, the resources needed to run these courses should be assessed, together with the overall role of the CAB worker, be that in case work, outreach or financial literacy.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to set out the findings of an evaluation of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) within the Batley Sure Start Children's Centre. This is a stand alone evaluation of the model used with the Batley area, however it will be compared to other Sure Start Children's Centre models within Kirklees in a future report.

The report begins by setting out the background to the project and the extent of the need for the service in the Batley area. The objectives and nature of the approach undertaken to address the problem are described and the evidence for the approach is also considered.

The scope and focus of the evaluation is limited to understanding the value of the CAB service within the Batley Sure Start Children's Centre setting. In particular we have been interested to consider the operational aspects of a project that works across stakeholders to achieve a common goal. For this reason the evaluation concentrated on gaining insight about the workings of the project from three groups, Sure Start parents, Sure Start staff, and CAB worker. The methodology section sets out how this was done.

The costs of running the project have been considered in relation to the potential savings to the Batley area based on estimated monetary gains.

Finally conclusions are drawn as to the value of the project and recommendations made as to where improvements can be made at both the operational and the more strategic level.

Background and Rationale

The purpose and need for CAB

In 1935 the government considered the need for an information service linked to the fledgling social welfare service. Since then the service has grown and developed. Now in 2005 there are 475 member Citizens Advice Bureaux (hereafter referred to as CAB) across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Each one is an independent registered charity helping people to resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free advice and influencing policy makers. The network still relies on over 21,000 trained volunteers to keep the service running and provides free advice from nearly 3,400 locations, (in bureaux and at community outreach venues) as well as by phone, in people's homes and on the internet³.

Research demonstrates that the CAB advice services provide benefits for individuals and the community as a whole in the following ways⁴:

- Increasing income and maximising income
- Community regeneration
- Improving physical and mental health
- Savings in health professionals' time
- Improvement in the skills of health professionals

Within the Sure Start areas, there is a need to address issues related to income maximisation through the increased uptake of welfare entitlements. The link between income and health has long been established with incidences of poor health occurring to a greater extent in areas of low income. Such areas also tend to be characterised by poor housing, low levels of educational attainment and high levels of debt, factors that may all contribute to ill health. Lower income groups have a high propensity to spend any marginal increase in income on food. There is an established link between quality of diet and ill health.

In addition, there are a number of refugees and asylum seeking families in the Sure Start areas, particularly in Batley, who may be less able to access welfare and benefit services and would benefit from advice.

There are increasing numbers of specialist services. In North Kirklees alone, and disregarding statutory bodies, CHAS provide housing advice; KBAS benefits advice; PERS employment advice; KNH money advice; KREC immigration advice; Consumer Direct provide consumer help; the IMWS and PKWA offer help to ethnic minority groups.

As outlined earlier, the CAB can help maximise the incomes of poorer groups through enabling people to increase their take up of welfare benefits. It can also provide advice around debt management, a factor that can contribute to stress.

³ <http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

⁴ Unmet Demand for Citizens Advice Bureaux, Research study conducted for Citizens Advice (2003/2004), MORI Social Research Institute

It is important to recognise that most non-medical client problems are not single-issue problems and even when they are, it can be difficult to diagnose the issue. Without using a multiple-competency organisation like the CAB, health professionals will require considerable training to accurately refer patients to the relevant organisation.

One possible pitfall to rapprochement between health and advice services is a loss of independence - clients not being given the choice of going for advice or otherwise. Clients could come to see all interventions as intrusive and negative. The CAB benefits from a reputation for independence and a respectful attitude towards clients, which can hopefully minimise such risks.

Access to bureau services is a problem for many respondents. Difficulty accessing the service was the main reason why those who considered using a bureau across Great Britain in 2003/2004 chose not to do so⁵ (MORI study). People from ethnic minority backgrounds are significantly less likely to approach an organization for help or advice with a problem than people overall (54% versus 61%). According to the 2001 Census, in the Batley Sure Start area, 64% of the population are people from ethnic minority backgrounds. The key reasons people from ethnic minority backgrounds did not use their local Citizens Advice Bureau appear to be due to awareness. If they are aware (i.e. they have considered going) then they choose not to go because of access issues such as waiting time, location or opening hours.

The Batley Sure Start (CABx) model

A full time, dedicated, CAB Sure Start Worker has been employed at the Batley Sure Start to provide information to parents who seek advice either via referral or self referral. This model, known as CABx, aims to actively target people who need advice, even if the individuals do not recognise they have a problem. It also works in partnership with other organisations to help parents take action on the advice, for example using Parent Involvement workers from the Sure Start. Throughout the report the CABx model will be referred to as CAB, the mainstream CAB service will be referred to as the general CAB service.

Referrals can be made by various professionals who come into contact with the parents. Key professionals in this referral process are health workers, midwives and headteachers. Referrals are made by Sure Start staff members who work with families in the Batley Sure Start area. Appointments are made for families to discuss their problems with the CAB worker at a time and/or place convenient to the family. This could include their own home.

This is a different model of access to simply providing a drop in. It means that staff coming into contact with a family who may have a problem the CAB could address, can have an appointment arranged for them with an CAB advice worker. This means that staff can get on with their primary role, whilst other issues that are preventing the family from moving on are being addressed.

First-time clients come to CABx because someone they trust has recommended it. Health professionals have a very high penetration into almost all sections of the community, and are

⁵ Unmet Demand for Citizens Advice Bureaux, Research study conducted for Citizens Advice (2003/2004), MORI Social Research Institute

generally trusted. Thus they have the potential to bring a lot of first-time clients to CABx. “One [advice] service in primary care reports that two out of three of its users would not have sought help in High Street services”⁶.

There are two (related) criteria for this to translate into successful partnership.

- The health professional must have the knowledge to make appropriate referrals. This requires basic understanding of what the CAB does and how it does it.
- They must also trust the CAB. A major barrier to making referrals is being unsure what will happen when they send a client to the CAB.

Co-location of services will deal with some of these issues.

More important still is that health professionals know the person they are sending clients to. This needs to be addressed systematically in any project.

Reading et al concluded “the commitment to and understanding of the study varied widely among the health visitors, with the result that rate of recruitment varied widely”⁷.

The evidence for the approach is based on what does not work, for example, putting health and advice services in the same place is not enough on its own. Health professionals have access to many more hard to reach groups in the community. Given that many of the problems people face are very private and worrying, trust is needed between the health professional and the client being referred to CAB. If health professionals are to be confident in making referrals, they need to trust the CAB worker they are referring to otherwise recruitment rates can vary considerably⁸

Project objective

The overall objective of the Batley approach was to improve the take up of CAB services, by considering the number of clients seen amongst parents with children under 5 compared to under the existing method.

Project Delivery

CAB is a registered charity, they rely on the support and generosity of companies, grant-making trusts and members of the public to provide services. The Batley Sure Start is funding the additional worker who will be providing this CAB service.

⁶ Abbott,S. (2002) ‘Prescribing welfare benefits advice in primary care: is it a health intervention, and if so, what sort?’ *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, vol 24, no 4, p309

⁷ R Reading, S Steel and S Reynolds (2002) ‘Citizens advice in primary care for families with young children.’ *Child: Care, Health & Development* vol 28, p44

⁸ R Hoskins and D Carter (2000) ‘Welfare benefits screening and referral: a new direction for community nurses?’ *Health and Social Care in the Community*, vol 8

Related projects running in the area.

In addition to the Batley CABx model in place in the Batley area, other CAB models are being used in the Huddersfield North and Huddersfield South localities. The Batley model will be compared to the other models in a future evaluation report.

Scope of the evaluation - content and target group

The scope of the evaluation is limited to identifying the extent to which each approach leads to an increase in the take up of the advice services. It is not about establishing whether advice increases income and hence improves health, as that link has already been established.

Evaluation questions

In order to remain within the scope set out for the evaluation we have focussed on the project objective in order to develop a set of questions that the evaluation seeks to address to see if this objective has been met.

Project objective

To improve the take up of CAB services, by considering the number of clients seen amongst parents with children under 5 compared to under the existing method.

To what extent has the link between Batley Sure Start and the CAB model facilitated better access to the CAB service?

What value has this link been in both accessing the CAB service and implementing the advice?

What value has attendance to the CAB service had on parents?

In order to address these questions, we needed to develop a set of evaluation objectives or a set of information we need to gather to answer these questions. We also needed to identify who we needed to obtain this information from. This is set out in the evaluation objectives section in the methodology section.

Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation questions

To what extent has the link between Batley Sure Start and the CAB model facilitated better access to the CAB service?

What value has this link been in both accessing the CAB service and implementing the advice?

What value has attendance to the CAB service had on parents?

In order to answer the overall evaluation questions, there is a need to identify the information required to answer them and who this may be obtained from.

Evaluation objectives

Specific evaluation objectives can be set in relation to the three groups of people whose behaviour the model is aiming to have an impact on:

Target group 1 – Sure Start staff

To explore their understanding of the referral process and the role of the CAB worker

To understand how confident they are in making referrals and the relationship with the CAB worker

To understand how this compares with how they may have referred clients to CAB before

To understand the effect that advice has had on families referred.

Target group 2 – CAB worker

To explore the referral process and the extent to which referrals are appropriate

To explore the different levels of support provided and how this may be different to the regular CAB service

To identify if there are any situations referred that were inappropriate/ could not be helped and what is the process for dealing with these cases.

To explore the relationship between the CAB worker and other staff in the Sure Start (communication channels, information sharing, trust)

Target group 3 – Sure Start families

To understand the circumstances surrounding the need for advice

To understand how they came to use the CAB service

To understand what the value of the CAB advice was- what did they do with it

How important was it to access the service in this way compared to the office in town.

Stages in the methodology

1. Documentary analysis

Analysis of management information will be conducted in order to provide background statistics to the types of advice being sort and any outcome measures. In terms of benefits, the amount of income gains will be explored. In addition any previous research and evaluation studies will be examined.

2. In depth interviews

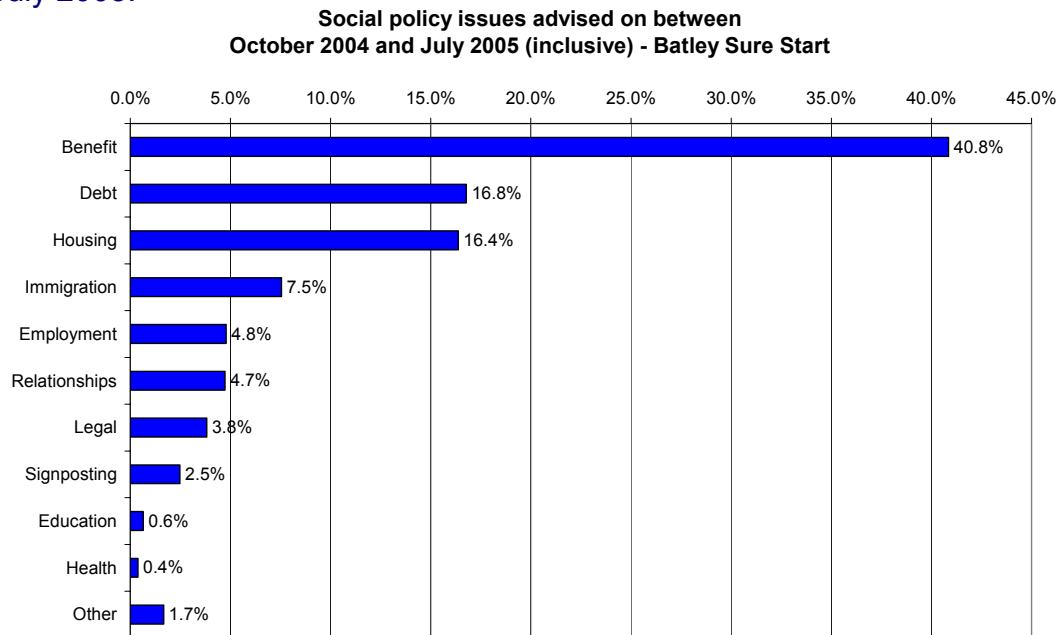
Depth interviews will be conducted using discussion guides covering topics based on the target group objectives. 4 interviews were conducted with Sure Start staff, the CAB worker was interviewed and 8 Sure Start families participated in depth interviews. A cross section of families were drawn using the attendance records kept by the CAB worker.

The interviews will last approximately 30 minutes, depending on the target group and will be held at the Sure Start offices. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes. Letters introducing the survey and asking willingness to participate will be sent to Sure Start families in order to recruit them for the interviews.

Evaluation Findings - Documentary Analysis/Cost Effectiveness

Batley Sure Start model

The following chart shows the breakdown of social policy issues advised on between October 2004 and July 2005.



Over 50% of advice provided was in relation to benefit or debt management. Between October 2004 and October 2005, 165 clients were advised and gains total £36,016 in one-off sums and £213,420 in ongoing household income were made for clients living in the Batley Sure Start areas.

These monetary gains were calculated using the Citizens Advice debt and gains recording scheme. It is mandatory for CABx to use this scheme so that figures can be compared like for like across the country.

Evaluation Findings - Interview Analysis

The findings from the evaluation have been set out in three sections, according to the perspectives of three stakeholder groups, parents, Sure Start staff and CAB Worker. The following sections explore the findings from these three groups.

At each stage in the process different issues can be considered during the evaluation. These issues will form the framework to be used when analysis the CAB project from the three stakeholder perspectives, these will be outlined at the beginning of each set of perspectives.

Parents' Perspective

Eight interviews were held with parents, recruited through a random stratified sample using attendance records kept by CAB service. All interviews were held in English. Interviews were held between March and May 2006.

The results presented here show the key findings from across the eight interviews and are set out as follows:

- Accessing the CAB service
- Difficulties in accessing/using the service
- Other means of access to the CAB service
- Circumstances surrounding the need for advice
- The CAB service
- Other advice services
- Satisfaction with other advice services
- Difficulties with other advice services
- Comparison of CAB service with other advice services
- Consistency of contact

Accessing the CAB service

All parents were asked how they found out about the CAB service and how they came to use the CAB service. The responses suggested parents found out about the service through different ways and came to use the service from different professionals:

"Sure Start worker put me in touch with CAB worker"

"Through my mum really"

"They came into my daughter's school advertising"

"I just phoned, made an appointment, and went down to see them"

"...through Sure Start that it all got arranged"

One parent found out initially via a TV programme, then went the along to a health centre and he was referred to the service

Those parents who said they had been referred to the CAB service by Sure Start staff were asked how useful this was. Parents enthusiastically mentioned this had been an immense aid.

"It was fantastic to tell you the truth, it put a lot of things into perspective and took a lot of stress out of things"

"Yes because I wouldn't have known what to do otherwise or how to do the forms"

“At the time it were very useful because if not I wouldn’t have known where to go or what to do in the situation that I were in, and the problems were already over my head at the time, so I wouldn’t have got there then, to be honest, I think the problems would have got worse, so it helped with everything”

Some parents mentioned by been referred through a Sure Start staff as a consequence they got more out of the service.

“...because I needed it urgently and luckily through Sure Start I got to get seen straight away”

“I knew I could go there but I’d been there before and through having appointments, it’s not quite the same. The service seemed different, it was friendlier, you know, you didn’t have to go on your own because you had the support from Sure Start as well”

“I felt I got more help through coming to Sure Start than if I’d have just gone to CAB”

“Because I’d already seen the Sure Start worker that had gone with me, she knew what I was going through, so because she was there she could pick up if I’d forgot things..”

Difficulties in accessing / using the service

Parents were asked if they had encountered any difficulties in accessing or using the CAB service. The majority of the parents were keen to mention the service was easily accessible.

“They were no problems”

“It’s very approachable and flexible as well”

However, one parent was unimpressed that the CAB worker did not return their call after they left a message; the parent was so annoyed they would not use the service in future.

“...I didn’t hear nothing from them. One guy I left him my number.....and he hasn’t still rung be back since.....I don’t even want to go there.....I wouldn’t use their service any more”

On the other hand, another parents praised the response they had:

“..I mean sometimes I had to leave a message but they got back to me as soon as they could. They’ve never not got back to me, you know, they always got back to me and always followed it through”

Other means of access to the CAB service

Parents were asked how else they could have potentially found out about the CAB service other than the way they did and what it could do for them. The majority of the parents mentioned they would have found out through friends.

“...word of mouth, some of my friends had used it and recommended it”

“...There’s one down at Dewsbury but I prefer to come to Batley because I’ve always said that Batley were better than what Dewsbury was. Although they are the same company like or whatever it’s called, but I heard that Batley were better so I went to Batley”

Some parents mentioned other sources such as:

“...you’ve got your newsletters (Sure Start) that come out every month.....and also other activities that I go on”

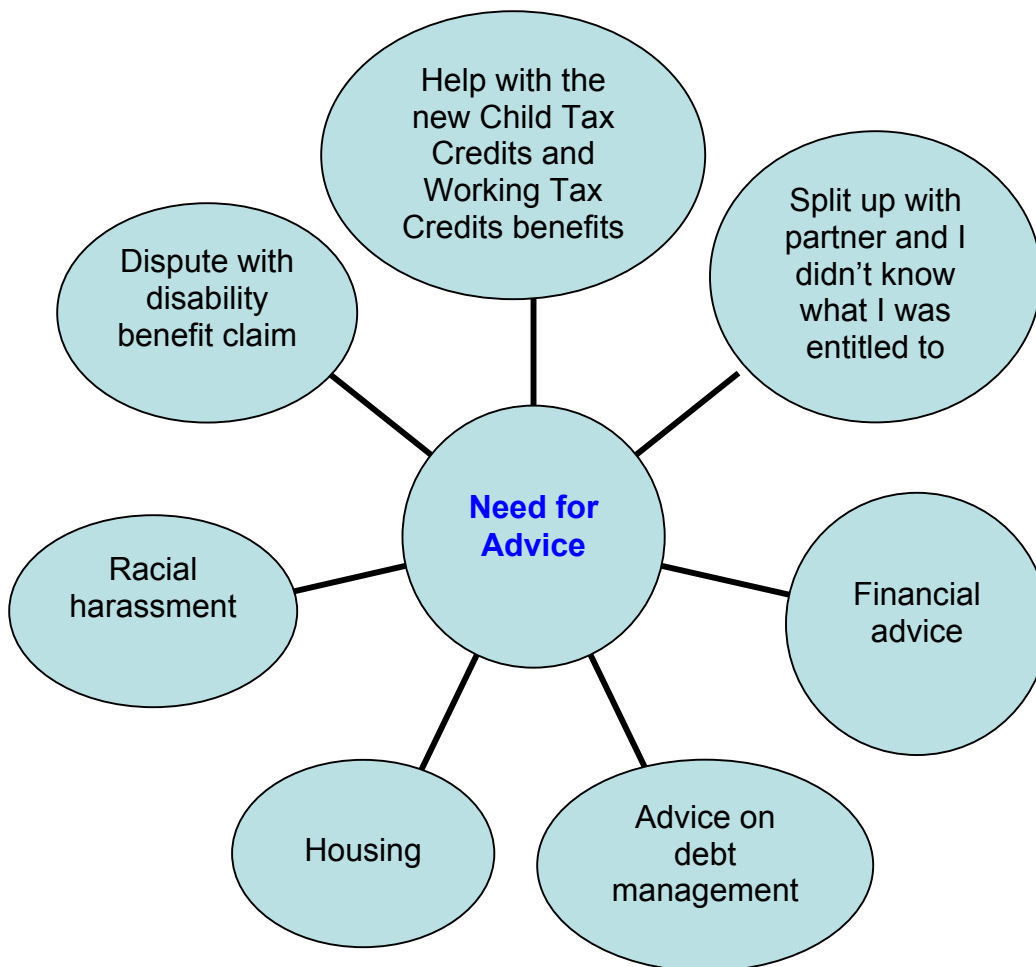
“Well you just look round Batley don’t you really, see what the signs are about and everything”

Some parents were uncertain:

“I don’t know. There isn’t a lot of signs up to tell you, you know, about it. I wouldn’t have known about it if it weren’t for Sure Start”

Circumstances surrounding the need for advice

The chart below shows the different need of advice and the pressures or complexity parents had with their issues.



The responses in the chart may represent the type of parent who was attracted to CAB service.

“It was helping us out with new child tax credit and working tax credit system, because obviously we didn’t understand it when it first came out”

“I have (housing) application for four years and the council not give me anything, they say you are on the waiting list. Where I live is all English people there, no Asian people on the estate, they broke my window, they hate me here”

“I wasn’t happy with the decision that I was given for my daughter with regard to claiming (disability) benefits”

Parents with low confidence:

"It came about that I split up with my partner and he was the supporter of the family so I didn't really know what to do, I didn't know what I were entitled to,.....the problems were already over my head at the time.....my partner took away all my confidence"

The CAB service

Parents were asked if the CAB advice was helpful or not and the value of this advice. The majority of the parents were positive with their responses and were keen to mention the helpful impact of this advice.

Parents reported help with income maximisation:

"I now get disability money for my daughter. That's all been sorted out, he did the forms and sent all the forms off and said that if I had any problems then to get straight back to him"

"There were issues of debt and I didn't know which way to turn, and through going there everything got sorted out"

"...It's helped me with regard to filling in forms,....going through all the way,....not just backing out halfway, going all the way through until we get a definite answer for what we've applied for"

"I went down to see them about was over some problems...with...housing office...led to me going on about my son and it were them that told me of certain things that I could actually claim for my son"

The CAB worker assisted with housing needs:

"I have an application for months, when CAB worker make a letter to council in two months they are going to give me proper accommodation, I am very happy"

Parents stated how this had impacted on their wellbeing:

"I suppose really the only advantage to it was there wasn't a delay with benefits...well we'd have had financial difficulties and things like that, so I suppose really they've prevented us from going through that"

"...I'm on my own with two children, I mean I do work but it's only part-time so I can fit it around my son as well as, because I care for my mum as well, so the extra income that I receive which is for my son helps provide the things that on my own I couldn't afford to buy, so it's there for my son"

CAB helped with debt management:

“..CAB worker showed us how to manage our money...it's worked out that we can actually go and do things together, (example going to Blackpool etc.) so it's improved our family in that way. And also in bringing our debts down as well”

“..There were issues of debt and I didn't know which way to turn, and through going there everything got sorted out”

Parents gained more financial power:

“Having that extra money can buy her stuff. Like when I'm and out about like she sees toys and stuff she'll say, 'Oh I want that,' so I'll get her it so that it stops her from getting stressed out and itching and then making herself bleed, so it occupies her mind”

Parents commented on how their confidence has improved:

“Well I think through Sure Start and the CAB I gained confidence that my partner had took away from me....because at one point I didn't so much as come into town on my own and I only live five minutes away and I'm sat in this room now with you, a complete stranger, you know, so it has helped me a lot”

Parents had better living conditions:

“It's very good, it's a nice area, council house, the rent is not too much”

This in contrast to their previous private accommodation which was:

“...The window is broken eight months...this landlord did not fix, and I called out CAB worker.....he came to my house my door is broken, the glass is broken, the shower, the kitchen, CAB worker said,...this is no good for your child, it's very cold. You and your wife are not secure because this area is no good”

However, where CAB had failed to return a telephone call, parents have not been helped by the service and in fact have been discouraged to use the service in future.

“I wouldn't use their service any more”

Other advice services

To understand parents' experiences with using other advice services, parents were asked if they had used other advice services. Parents struggled to mention the other advice services they had used. This was because they had not used many other advice services as the need was not there.

‘I haven't really come across anything else that we've needed any services for really’

Some parents mentioned they accessed services which they believed were most able to help:

“No I don’t know what services around here. I just go to the easiest one what’s going to help me and what’s not too hard to sort things out”

Some parents were content with CAB and did not feel they had to use other services,

“...I’ve been happy with the help and the advice from CAB. I don’t think I’ve had any need to go looking elsewhere”

Some parents had used Social Services, Job Centre, Work Link and Solicitors.

Satisfaction with other advice services,

Parents were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with these services. The responses were limited as majority of the parents had not used many other advice services but those who had used these services were reasonably happy.

“I were happy with their services, they’re alright”

Some parents relied on these services quite heavily,

“Well from my crisis an’ stuff like that she’s been there, and when, like I suffer from depression an’ that lot, she’s been there, she’s been through little things like that”

Some parents expressed mixed opinions about these services,

“Sometimes it depends on what day you go doesn’t it and who you see, but like the Job Centre, they’re good, they do a good job, but sometimes they’re not clear enough and they don’t get across what needs to”

“They’re seeing that many people in one day that they can’t always take into account everybody’s issues”

Difficulties with other advice services

Parents were asked if they had any difficulties being able to get to use any of these services the responses were limited and it’s difficult to gauge a view on this but when probed parents may have not used other advice services because they don’t have knowledge about other advice services available.

“No, I don’t know what services around here”

Comparison of CAB service with other advice services

Parents were asked how the CAB service compared to other advice services. Some parents appreciated the CAB service because it was adaptable to their needs.

“...CAB...got everything sorted out...other places seemed to not listen, but then you’ve got to consider that they’re not working on a one to one, whereas I felt I had a proper one to one”

"I did visit at the office and I needed a home visit, which was great for me because it means not dragging the little one out, she wouldn't sit that long while I was trying to get stuff sorted"

Some parents connected the CAB service with a high reputation compared to other advice services simply because what other people had said to them.

"I've heard of other people using other services and they've said that they haven't helped them or my friend she used another service and her daughter has got a disability and she didn't get nowhere. She didn't get no disability money or carer's allowance or anything, which I did"

Some parents appreciated the help they received through CAB but felt appointment times were restricted.

"Is very helpful....however it is based on an appointment system and time's limited, so there are times when people are waiting and some other people may want advice which is very important to them may not get seen on that same day because of the time limits"

When probed some parents viewed the role played by the CAB worker as a merit.

"They're really good at explaining things, I mean sometimes I can be a bit slow on the aspect of when they come out with these big words so they'll break it down, and they're very patient, and they do take their time, you know, at like explaining things, which makes easier for me"

As a result of their positive experiences with the CAB service some parents have recommended the services to other parents.

"I just think it's a really useful service and I've passed a lot of people on to it"

"I think too many people do word of mouth through bad experiences with shops or whatever, so I think when you find something good you should pass that on as well"

However, some parents had a very different experience as a result of no one returning their telephone call from the CAB service and didn't compare the service very positively

"They're crap"

Consistency of contact

The majority of parents felt it was important to see the same person for each contact. They feel this is important because it removes repeat explanations, there is less confusion and better interaction.

"It's really important to me because you go to like banks or companies and stuff like that and you're trying to sort this out, you get passed from one to the other. And even your doctor....So I always really just deal with CAB worker because he knows what's going on and I never have to keep explaining it over and over"

“If I saw someone different then I’d feel confused”

“Well it’s pretty important because then they get to know you as a person and not just a number...”

CAB worker Perspective

The analysis of the CAB worker interview is set out as follows:

- Purpose the CAB service
- Appropriate referrals
- Promotion of the CAB service
- Ease of access - building trust and relationships
- Ease of access – speed of initial appointment & location
- Quality of CAB service
- Suggestions for the future

Purpose of the CAB service

The CAB worker was asked to explain what the main purpose of the service is:

“...I'd say it's to help parents in difficult situations and I think it also helps them to look after their children better, which I think it does, it does reduce stress, it builds confidence for the parents, increases income, which again...Obviously its involved around their children really but I'd say it does improve the way they look after their children really.”

The CAB worker works full time, funded by Batley Sure Start. They are based at the CAB office located opposite the Batley Sure Start office.

They see still being still located within the general CAB office as a plus. All the resources are to hand their and they can discuss issues with colleagues, in cases where the CAB workers knowledge is lacking. It helps to follow the CAB set procedures in order to provide the best advice to clients.

Appropriate referrals

The CAB worker explained that parents are able to access the service in a variety of ways. Parents can self-refer or be referred via professionals, for example Sure Start staff, Midwives or Health Visitors.

In terms of referrals from Sure Start staff; the CAB worker normally receives these by phone, email or face to face:

“...we have got a set referral form but the time that it takes an because we're so close and know each other so well, it's a case of just passing numbers, you know this guy got so and so problems, can you just give him a ring.”

The CAB worker has told the Sure Start staff what type of problems to look out for, so they should be aware of which parents may need additional support from the CAB service.

The CAB worker had not received any inappropriate referrals as such from the Sure Start staff. However, he did deal with parents who he was unable to offer advice to. In these cases, the parents get referred on to the general CAB service or other advice services.

Another problem that the CAB worker highlighted was when more than one professional referred the same parent:

“...a Midwife referred her, a Health Visitor referred her and then Sure Start referred her the following week. So that was three people so maybe there was no communication, that would be difficult to put into place though to tell everyone, with confidentiality and things.”

The CAB worker was asked if he was coping with his workload at the moment. He stated that it was definitely to maximum. In an extreme case he has to refer parents to the general CAB service.

“I’ve had two referrals that I couldn’t take, two internal referrals which we had to be put into general, because I just couldn’t see them for up to two weeks at that time but this was when there was a lot going on and I’d had a period of sickness at that time. But also at the moment I’m trying to put together these financial literacy courses which we’re hoping to start in about four week, which is gonna take a day, you know so that’s two appointments down. It’s difficult to do what you want to do when you are on your own.”

He states that they always prioritise appointments:

“There’s always appointments available for the next day for Sure Start. Or any emergencies that come up, we always have appointments the day after and then we just work backwards prioritizing what the problems are.”

He classifies the more urgent cases as ones where the parents could potentially be evicted, court action, or similar immediate issues, for example getting the electric cut off, homelessness, racial harassment.

Promotion of the CAB service

The CAB worker sees himself as:

“...a case worker and a financial literacy advisor, working in the community, trying to attract the clients that are not aware of the service or maybe not aware of how successful it can be you know with us being there, trying to promote referrals from other professionals and maybe doing a little more than they might get in the general service, you know for them, only because we have got the time.”

He deemed it essential that people know his role and the role of the CAB service. The promotion work that the CAB worker does includes, outreach sessions, advice sessions away from the bureau premises, such as a health centre, a school, a community centre. It also includes promoting the CAB service to Sure Start staff, Health Visitors, Midwives, schools, and the lone parent advisory jobcentre plus.

The outreach sessions run as drop ins:

“I mean it’s only run for an hour, but if we can get people and then get them appointments at the bureau then we’ve made contact then you see.... I’d say it’s very crucial because the

people that you pick up just generally wouldn't have come, so without us being there you know the problems could have just got worse. We might not have prevented other problems from happening."

The links with Health Visitors, Midwives and Sure Start were set up at the beginning of the service. However the CAB worker explains that these links need to be maintained.

"...people have to be confident in you, they need to be confident in who they are referring to, so you know that's a worry all the time you need to make sure you are always keeping in mind confidentiality, but letting people know that things are getting results."

He explains that he sees the Health Visitors in the Health Centre every Friday, he has regular contact with the Sure Start staff. However, he acknowledges that it is slightly difficult to keep in contact with the Midwives because they are very busy and they travel out of the Batley area.

He tends to do information sessions to staff:

"maybe an hour long, talk...to the staff, just to let them know what we're about, what we can do, how to refer, and sometimes what we can't do cause that's a problem with X and we cant do that."

The CAB worker thinks it is a good idea to form links with Social Services, however he recognizes there could potentially be problems with this interaction:

"But it's hard as well with them problems with Social Services that kind of problem you usually prioritise over everything else. That's what I've noticed so I think it's hard to get things moving.."

The CAB worker recognises limitations with increasing the promotion of referrals:

"I think the demand (for CAB services) is massive, I don't think one person is near enough and I mean I'm always maxed out, but the clients that I could see could be trebled easily... I'm opening another outreach next week. If three people come to that I'm going to struggle, you know to see everybody and follow through, so that's gonna be annoying because the need is there in that area, and you know its going to mean having to drop something."

Ease of access – building trust and relationships

The CAB worker recognized the value in the Sure Start staff having relationships with the parents. Both in terms of gaining the initial referral and during the advice sessions when they attend with parents. In addition, the Sure Start staff help if the CAB worker gets in contact with parents if he is struggling to do so.

There help with the initial referral is mainly around building trust with parents, handholding and convincing parents that it is important for them to attend the advice sessions. They do this by giving examples of positive outcomes for other parents.

An example, of such support:

“...there’s one in particular and she just doesn’t trust me I know she doesn’t so I’ve gone back to the Parent Support worker to say look she just doesn’t trust me, she has big problems that are going to get out of hand. I’ve tried to speak to her and now she’s speaking to her and saying I’ll come with you and that will get her in I’m sure.”

The CAB worker realized it takes time to build links with people and appreciates the impact of the Sure Start staff’s role in promoting referrals:

“It’s good that they can refer when people might not think they’ve got a problem and that’s what’s really good about it. I’ve had referrals where I didn’t think they had a problem but now that we’ve gone through it all I can see the problem. You know it’s brilliant that.”

The CAB worker said it is important to build up a relationship with the parents to get them to trust him. However he recognized that there could potentially be problems with dependency and need to work with the parents for them to gain independence:

“People getting dependent. If you’ve got a really good relationship with someone there may see that as a too friendly a relationship and its hard then when they ring you up friendly “Alright how you doing” that sort of thing, that’s been.”

He said that he dealt with these cases by acting professionally, asking:

“...what’s the problem, right we can deal with that, you know still being friendly, friendly, but it just sets the tone really.”

As well as parents being able to trust the CAB worker, the CAB worker expressed the need for professionals to have trust in the CAB worker:

“...they might have a really good relationship with a parent, refer them to us and if they don’t get a good service it could affect... that’s what they’re thinking.”

Ease of access – speed of initial appointment & location

The CAB worker noted differences with the speed of obtain appointments compared to the general CAB service:

“You know if a Sure Start mum of someone that’s been referred by the Health Visitor wants an appointment they will usually get one the day after. You know they can ring me straight up and speak to me on the phone if its urgent, straight away, so that’s what’s good about it.”

He said that the parents have always got access to a phone number where they can ring the CAB worker direct, or he can see parents at the CAB office or on home visits.

Quality of CAB service

The CAB worker compared the CAB service to the general CAB service. He saw benefits in having continuity of contact with the parents. He explained that in terms of the general CAB service:

“But if someone comes in it’s an hour interview, they’ll get told what their advice is and how to act upon it. You know so they get given the advice and they’ll have to act on that advice and we don’t know if they do or they don’t. Whereas if it’s a case that this is the advice and I can follow up and see if that’s worked out, I can do it for them and inform them and let them know of the result.”

The general CAB service deal with all the same issues but only to a certain level.

Whereas the CAB worker is able to be more proactive in helping implement the advice, he gave examples:

“I’ll write letters, I’ll represent for people, you know we don’t do any representation but I do... I had a client who was homeless, through domestic violence, a recovering heroin addict and the council wouldn’t give her any property and they wouldn’t house her temporary. So we went down with her and I represented her, she was offered a property that day then.”

The CAB worker stated that all the parents who come through the service are very positive and try to refer friends. As well as having tangible benefits to the parents. The CAB service has benefits for other stakeholders.

The CAB worker discussed referring parents back to the Sure Start staff after they had received advice from him, to resolve other problems out of his remit. He thinks it is really handy to be able to do this.

Suggestions for the future

The CAB worker explained how he is in the process of putting together financial literacy courses. Hopefully these will be run in local centres or in the library. This course will include information about managing their money, paying bills, prioritizing debts. The idea of the course is to try and prevent further problems. Childcare arrangements can be discussed and support from Parent Support Workers.

The CAB worker said that at the moment he’s a bit a ‘jack of all trades’ and that it would be good if there could be more CAB workers to make a really professional service accessible to all.

He suggested perhaps having different staff taking on different roles:

“Yes a Financial literacy worker, a Case worker, an Outreach worker, if we had them three workers that would be it. You could have five outreaches over five days. You could have a full time caseworker not having to go do outreaches. So the outreach worker could refer to the caseworker and the financial literacy could concentrate on prevention. It’d be just fantastic. That’s what I would love to see.”

Sure Start staff Perspective

Sure Start staff with varying family support roles were interviewed as part of the evaluation, these roles ranged from Health Starter workers, Speech and Language Therapists to the Deputy Programme Manager.

The analysis of the interviews is set out as follows:

- Purpose and awareness of the CAB service
- Appropriate referrals
- Promotion of the CAB service
- Ease of access - building trust and relationships
- Ease of access – speed of initial appointment
- Ease of access – location
- Quality of CAB service
- On-going feedback
- The CAB worker
- Suggestions for the future

Purpose and awareness of the CAB service

All staff were initially asked what their understanding of the purpose CAB service was. The responses from staff were fairly consistent, stating that the CAB services was there to:

“provide advice on different situations like benefits mainly around this area, for people who need that extra support..... That seems to be the main thing that we work around, benefits, debt, homelessness and form filing.”

“Well I guess they’re a place you go when you in need, you know your general benefits advice, housing advice, financial advice. They’re the people with ‘the know’ really aren’t they, who have all the knowledge that you might need that people on a day to day basis just don’t know and often don’t know where to find out as well. So that would be my general understanding of citizens advice, ranging from financial to legal, covering a very wide spectrum from what I gather really.”

“Providing advice for all areas, from like benefits, housing, immigration any sort of like entitlements, what entitlements you are able to get. A lot of our families get a lot of help with even filling in forms and things like that from CAB, which has been really good.”

Staff explained that CAB have been...”very much more upfront about (what they can do), we can do this about housing, but we can’t do that...”

Staff appeared to have a good basic understanding of the service, they have learnt what the CAB service can offer in a variety of ways, including team meetings, one to one feedback, and as a result of events:

“..we had a full team meeting and they introduced themselves. Told us what sort of like packages they can offer as well, what sort of things they can help with”

“..he’s (the CAB worker) around to tell you and he’s done stuff in our meetings where he’s come and said that you know this is what I do and I can help on this, this and this. I guess quite a bit of it you think you know and then you realize ‘oh actually I didn’t know I could refer that to you’ so he’s pretty what’s the word, proactive in his like I can do this, he’s got questionnaires for us to hand out to people, you know about wanting financial help and stuff so we’re pretty well...when I first started I was pretty well briefed on what the CAB worker can help with.”

However they emphasized the need for regular training:

“...things change so quickly you know. It would be really good to find out the basics around it like these are the benefits that people can claim, you know if they’ve got this much or if they work this much, this is what they’re entitled to, this is a possibility and things like that.”

And the need to be made aware of any changes:

“..cause you think, I filled this form in a couple of weeks ago and it was new, and why’s it like this colour now..”

Staff explained how some staff are intending on attending training courses which are run for parents.

Appropriate referrals

Although staff seemed to have a good basic understanding about what the CAB service could offer parents, staff did not seem to be able to define an exact referral criteria. This is potentially due to the nature of the service being able to offer advice regarding a wide range of issues. However staff with a more managerial role within the Sure Start were under the impression that they have:

‘...got a better criteria now than we had when the service first started. Staff seemed to have slightly different ideas regarding who actually needed to use the CAB service. I think when the service first started any mention of financial problems, housing difficulties, we’ll get CAB involved, but I think people do have a much better understanding of what CAB can actually have an influence on, than they had, so it isn’t immediately someone will get a referral.’

This opinion differs slightly to more operational staff:

“Most of the parents are in need, no he’s not given us any criteria as such, most of the parents in this area don’t know what benefits they are entitled to and everything that they could claim. A lot of them have got housing issues, a lot of them have got disabilities and are claiming DLA, so we automatically just refer them to the CAB worker, anyone who mentions benefits, its like oh we’ll refer you to the CAB worker, just straight away, we pass it on to him because obviously he’s got that experience.”

“..those obviously who’ve not got the knowledge, if they’re like first time mums and it’s their first child. Then if they’re no knowledge of benefits and things like that.”

“I refer everyone, I refer anyone who I am not sure I can answer their query about and I don’t have a criteria that you have to be in this situation at all because to be quite honest I will say to them I can have a chat with our CAB guy about that and then I will phone him even if it’s the littlest daftest thing and he might go ‘err no, its nothing to do with me’. I guess I feel comfy enough to refer anything to be quite honest and then obviously I’ll get back to the person and...”

When asked if any of the parents they had referred to the CAB worker, were inappropriate for the service, staff, gave a couple of examples when the CAB service was not relevant for a parent. However, this seemed to be unusual.

The examples of referrals which had come back to staff were as follows:

- Parent gave false telephone number, they were re-contacted and they gave another false telephone number
- Parent not eligible for any benefits
- Parent was referred to law centre – second tier service advice

Staff explained that during team meetings, the CAB worker updated them on the referral criteria:

“Yes, we’ve just had one (a team meeting) a couple of weeks ago and the CAB worker came to one and said like they were receiving sort of like gave us a breakdown of the areas where for which they were receiving referrals for what areas he was working well with and referrals for which he was a bit short in numbers for that area.”

However they also explained that they become better at targeting parents for the CAB service over time, with the more experience they gain through feedback from the CAB worker regarding inappropriate referrals.

..I think the experience they’ve had of knowing, ‘well that was too soon to refer to the CAB worker, I ought to have got some more information myself or I ought to have got this information from CAB before I went to see the people’, so there is a bank of experience being built up as to the best why to work with service users for their best interest.”

How well established this bank of experience is, however, is unclear.

Promotion of the CAB service

Parents are made aware of the CAB service in other ways additional to the Sure Start staff. Even though staff were aware of the promotional work the CAB worker does to promote the CAB service. Staff explained that it is important that the CAB worker is well known in the community both to parents and other professionals:

“If we’re having a Sure Start event, it might be an information giving event say to schools or something, then we would invite the CAB worker to come along and be part of that event and just as we’ve developed things so that families will come and look at the things we have to offer...”

“And a lot of it is word of mouth, one service user. So its about being seen to be there, and being seen to be useful.”

“(CAB worker should be) a known figure in what is going on, not a mythical ‘I’ll contact CAB for you’ so the face to known and the name, that’s the main thing.”

“I know the CAB worker does the clinic on a Friday at Batley Health Centre as well and he’s there and he does put the display up and a few of the Health Visitors have commented like there’s lots of people accessing. The parents probably wouldn’t know who the CAB worker is anyway, you know they would probably just look at the display and think it could be anybody so just making himself that bit more known as well, you know ‘I’m here today’ sort of thing.”

Sure Start Staff express the need for the CAB worker to establish more links with the health professionals

“The most direct route to the person who can help is the best one and if the initial presented problem is you don’t know where you’re going to get the money from for next week’s rent or bus fares to school or something like that. So the Health Visitors can refer direct or the Midwives.”

Staff explained who they promote the CAB service via leaflets and flyers. They make sure the most up to date information is on their notice boards. However, they suggest the CAB service should be made more visible and more known in the town centre. Perhaps via open days, they explained how they thought these may have already happen, but we unsure how successful they were. They also suggested CAB getting involved in anything happening in the town centre like promotional days.

Staff mentioned that they’ve promoted the CAB service during Health Visitor meetings and Midwifery meetings and they believe they have taken the information on board.

Ease of access – building trust & relationships

Once parents are made aware of the service provided by CAB, staff explain that many of the parents do not have the confidence or trust to arrange or attend an initial advice session.

This link is deemed essential and has developed through the close relationships Sure Start staff form with the parents.

“Because we tell them about it (CAB), they feel...if they feel slightly confident with you, they feel a lot more confident going to another organization that you’re recommending. The fact that its like linked with Sure Start as well, you know if they come to trust an organization it helps them think ‘ah yes, that’s an idea, cause they’ll all go, I’ve heard of citizens advice, yeah’, but it doesn’t seem something that they’ll often of to just on their own free-will, yeah.”

In addition to trusting the Sure Start staff it is important that parents can trust the CAB worker. Staff explain that:

“..often people if they ring and the phone rings (out), they don’t try again, they’re put off easily if they’ve made a big step and then it doesn’t work, they’re put off so I think sometimes gaining their trust that this person (the CAB worker) will be able to help you because through Sure Start they will be able to help you, takes a little bit of...they don’t quite trust that he will phone them..”

Staff explain that they have encountered parents with negative impressions of the mainstream CAB service:

“I’ve had people when you first say CAB they go ‘ppphh’ because they think they won’t get an appointment.”

Parents as well as needing to trust the Sure Start staff, place some trust and respect with the Sure Start organization:

“A lot of people who have Social Service involvement see Sure Start as not quite that but it’s more a friendly place they trust, you know cause we don’t have the same limitations and things that Social Services have, so they then trust other organizations that are involved with that I guess.”

Once trust has been gained, parents still may need additional support actually arranging and attending the advice sessions. Some parents say they will call the service and never actually get round to making that initial contact.

Staff say they are happy to make this initial contact to arrange an advice session. This booking of a session is normally done once they return to the office. However, one member of staff suggested that if they had work mobiles this contact could be much sooner. They do acknowledge that their could be potential problems with this way of contacting the CAB worker because it’s hard to talk on behalf of the client in front of the client to someone else. Confidential or awkward questions may be asked and it’s second hand information.

Once appointments have been made, Sure Start Staff sometimes attend the sessions with parents. This is because they haven't got the confidence to go on their own and also for more practical reasons, for example, childcare.

Staff mentioned:

"a link between ourselves and the advisor there and getting the family, you know some families might find it hard just to go into the building (CAB) and ask for help and things like that, but if we make them aware, you know this is the sort of advice they can get from there and even if we can't handhold them, we can sort of like initially handhold, at the first visit to let them know that they are there for this purpose and then it's up to them to access it as and when."

Staff stated that they always get parents' permission to attend the advice sessions with them. They say that the CAB worker is quite happy for them to attend and he always knows that they are going to be there.

"A lot of what they (parents) say is something that they have discussed with us before they have discussed it with the CAB worker, and we've made the referral for them so we are aware of what's going on, and they're quite happy for us to be there. As a parent support worker, working with that individual family, you become a friend as such, so they trust you, you know to keep all their problems to yourself and to support them. So they'd rather we went along with them than having to go on their own."

Another benefit for Sure Start attending the advice sessions can be that they can re-explain the advice to the parents after the session and help them to implement the advice.

Ease of access – speed of initial appointment

Staff explained how the referral process is fairly quick and simple. The longest wait for an appointment being a week and the shortest the same day.

"You know that if you email him (the CAB worker) he will get back to you the next day at the latest, unless he's off sick or something. And if you ring him, he will probably ring that person to arrange an appointment that day. He's very quick, the only thing that may let him down is that people don't answer their phone, which we have that problem too so it's not for want of trying."

Staff acknowledge that the speed of obtaining an appointment depends on the need. Staff believe parents are quite happy to work around the CAB worker actually as long as they're seen.

One Sure Start staff member explained that:

"...a lot of our work involves CAB, they're great. The CAB worker can get you an appointment within an hour or something. He can drop things to get you that appointment, he's fantastic in that respect, yeah. You know that your parents are going to get seen quite quickly..."

Ease of access – location

Staff have not encountered any difficulties helping families access the CAB service. This is due to the flexibility of CAB worker to adapt to parents preferred location. If parents come to the CAB office for advice it is in a central location. The CAB worker can arrange home visits or attend drop in sessions at various community venues.

Staff acknowledge that it is handy that the office is just across the road from the Sure Start office. However, say that the CAB office needs to be more visible as people don't realize it is there.

Staff explain that it is important for the parents to physically meet the CAB worker face to face:

“It's good for them (parents) to come and see another organization, it's good...often it's a really big step for them just to go to a citizens' advice and ask for help. It's a really big step in their emotional thing.”

Quality of the CAB service

Staff explain how a lot of their work involved CAB and the impact the service has had on their professional roles.

“The CAB worker has all the knowledge that we just don't have and knows all the organizations to contact and can do that, so I guess he's just our big back up on all that kind of staff really.”

Staff saw the CAB service as an advantage because it helps them build better relationships with families. They see the interactions between Sure Start and CAB as providing parents with 'the whole package'. They explain that parents can come presenting emotional problems for which Sure Start can provide support. CAB can provide more practical support. Sometimes parents come in presenting emotional problems and can also benefit from financial support, and vice versa. Staff realise that a lot of people find it hard to ask for help with emotional support, but the practical advice is easier to ask for, once they have visited the CAB service they can be signposted towards the Sure Start staff.

“And once they've gone through that initial crisis and reached the person who can deal with that crisis, there are often other things underlying. So it isn't just a one way street at all, the CAB worker might then say we've sorted all this out, but we've got a lot of other things to do.”

There are issues around confidentiality when disclosing information when signposting parents to other services, however staff deem they have never found the CAB confidentiality clause to be a problem.

All the staff talk about receiving positive feedback regarding the CAB service via parents. This is obviously beneficial to the parents, but in addition this will also help boost morale for Sure Start Staff, increasing job satisfaction.

“The only feedback that we’ve had has been really people being really ‘wow, thank god for that’. I’ve not had anybody not being able to get an appointment or stuff.”

The CAB service has also had a positive affect on staff’s workload by having specialist skills incorporated in the team:

“Absolutely, yeah absolutely, it means we’re not hanging on telephone lines just trying to get information, or travelling to some tribunal because we’ve got someone designated to do that.”

They compare the impact of having the service compared to before it was in place:

“..instead of like spending a couple of weeks just trying to get some information and things together, just so you can go back to the family, into the home setting and explain everything to them, I can just ring the CAB worker up...he explains it a lot better and he’s probably got the information there first hand..”

Also having a separate individual to contact for advice, is handy for practical reasons if the Sure Start staff were on annual leave as well as building parents confidence.

Through working with the CAB worker, staff feel that they are also on a ‘learning curve’ as well as the parents:

“...cause we’ve not known things and he’s like told us and it makes you aware and a bit more confident as well when you’re talking about things, you know when you are out there with parents. Just knowing the barriers, like ‘okay I can do this for you, but I can’t go any further you know’.”

On-going feedback

Staff talk about the good working relationship that have with the CAB worker. They say that he’s part of the team.

“We talk, within the office we all talk to the CAB worker on a daily basis. He keeps in close contact with us all and when he’s in Batley, cause he’s got two bases now, he pops into the office to see us so we’ve all very friendly with him and he comes in and discusses things with us individually and keeps us up to date with what’s going on..”

This is in terms of how things are progressing with families. If he’s been struggling to get hold of parents he asks for help getting in contact. Or if Sure Start staff come across any issues around parents who have been for advice and are struggling to implement it, they contact the CAB worker. Sometimes he can resolve their problems without them having to come out and see him.

One member of staff stated that the CAB worker:

“...he comes in and checks, just on a case that happened and he doesn’t need to do anything else with it, he just wants to know everything is alright, and you know he wants to help. He makes sure everything is okay and its happened, and that they’ve (parents) got what they

(wanted)..even though he's set it up for them to get that or whatever, you know to check that they've got that, following it through I guess and checking."

A lot of the contact that staff have with the CAB worker is face to face, this will may change in the future as the CAB worker has started to work outside the Batley area. Staff explain how it is go when:

"..he pops in, we can ask him questions, he can never walk in the office without someone saying his name, so it does work well that, we see him quite often."

Staff do currently contact the CAB worker via email and telephone, and explain that they normally receive a prompt response.

The CAB worker

Overall Sure Start staff have a good working relationship with the CAB worker. They describe him in the following ways:

"...not patronizing, he doesn't look down on them, he doesn't screw his face up when they say they are in bad debt..."

"...he's really honest with them (parents), if he doesn't think they'll get something he'll tell them there and then."

"...he has developed a kind of finesse working with families as opposed to working generically within CAB, because there is a specific skill at engaging."

"...he's really down to earth and he gets on very well..."

"...non threatening and non judgemental"

"He can really relate to the people he is dealing with, which makes a big difference, cause you can't always relate to everybody."

"I think he really enjoys his job, he knows a lot."

One staff member compares the CAB service to the mainstream service, which they have had negative experiences of. When people have never had the right paperwork, they have to be on a waiting list and when they get to see a CAB advisor, they are asked 'have you brought this, have you brought that? Oh no I haven't, well you'll have to come back'. They see the advantages of having a dedicated worker who is more likely to say 'oh when you get home ring me, and tell me what's on that...tell me the reference number on that bill, and another bill'. So it is not another journey, it just makes it easier and much quicker.

Suggestions for the future

When asked to give suggestions or alternatives that should be in place. Sure Start staff suggested a need for financial awareness courses, to help parents, to help themselves get out of debt. Also for them to be able to potentially go back to work and benefit financially. In addition this would move toward earlier intervention so it's preparation to help parents before things get too bad. Some members of staff suggested that there should be more CAB workers, like the existing CAB worker.

Conclusions

Overall the CAB service has a positive impact on many groups of individuals, both directly on the parents and indirectly to Sure Start staff and other professionals. During and after parents have attended the advice sessions, there are a number of conditions which impact on the uptake and implementation of the advice.

It is deemed essential to promote the services offered by the Citizens Advice Bureau, this is both to parents and professionals. Parents are able to refer themselves to the service and are referred to the service via professionals. Parents can become aware of the CAB service via more than one route. It is noticeable that sometimes this referral route for parents is indirect, i.e. parents are not initially aware they have a need but are signposted to the service via the professionals who had encountered them during other dealings with the families. This route to referral has been acknowledged positively by parents. The CAB worker has stated that forming better links with professionals is his top priority in order to promote referrals to the service. The CAB worker acknowledges the relationships and trust these professionals have built with parents and wishes to use these traits to draw parents into the service. Sure Start staff explained how the CAB service works well because of this trust building with parents in terms of relationships with the staff, Sure Start, the CAB worker and the CAB organisation. These close relationships helps both in enabling parents to attend the sessions and to implement the advice.

Good links appear to be established with key professionals in the Batley area, however Sure Start staff are not totally aware of all these links. Sure Staff staff expressed the need for the CAB worker to be a known figure in the community in order to maximise the uptake of the CAB service as parents start to trust the CAB worker and the CAB organisation. The CAB worker highlighted this need for the parents and professionals to be able to trust him and the service he provides. A suggestion was made by the CAB worker to form links with Social Services, however it was recognized that individuals who are likely to deal with this department are more likely to have more complex and potentially urgent issues to address.

Sure Start staff all appear to have a good basic understanding of the CAB service and what it can offer parents. This has been achieved via a variety of interactions with the CAB worker, during team meetings, one-to-one contact and during events. However, in terms of the appropriateness of referrals (both self and professional referrals), there appears to be slight blurring of the definition of the target group for the CAB service. Sure Start staff tended to refer most parents they have contact with. In one instance, three professionals referred the same parent to the CAB service. The CAB worker has highlighted that he is currently struggling to cope with his workload. However it should be noted that both the CAB worker and Sure Start staff do prioritise parents according to their need and whether they are a parent of a child under 5 years old.

Sure Start staff were happy with the level of feedback they currently receive from the CAB worker, but suggest receiving feedback regarding changes to the advice process and benefits system. Staff mentioned attending some of the courses the CAB worker is running for parents. They discussed one to one feedback they receive on an almost daily basis from the CAB worker mainly on a case by case basis. They also mentioned the CAB worker attending

team meeting to explain what the CAB service can offer. In addition they discussed how referral to the CAB service and watching what is offered helps them build up a 'bank of experience'.

Once parents have contacted the CAB worker for an initial appointment, the majority of parties are happy that this appointment is arranged a convenient time and place. Most initial appointments occur relatively soon after initial contact has been made. Some problems, however, were highlighted by parents being unable to access the service after making initial contact and having restrictions on the availability of same-day appointments. However as mentioned overleaf, the speed of initial appointment is prioritised by need. The locations of advice sessions are flexible to accommodate client need. Sure Start staff explained that it is sometimes advisable for them to accompany parent to advice sessions both to provide emotional support and for other more practical reasons, for example, childcare. This also has an added advantage after the advice sessions, when staff are able to re-explain the advice the CAB worker has given and help with the implementation of this advice where necessary. If sessions are held outside of the home setting with an independent person, Sure Start staff believe this can help build parents' confidence levels.

The advice received can have huge positive impacts on the parents both emotionally, practically and financially. The parents who could compare the CAB service to other advice services, spoke positively about how the CAB service was adapted to their needs and the advice was explained clearly and simply. Parents highlighted the need for consistency in contact as this removes the need for repeat explanations, this leads to less confusion, better interactions and ultimately final resolutions. The more satisfied parents are with the CAB service, the more likely they are to recommend the CAB service to family and friends.

The advice provide to parents via the CAB service helps Sure Start staff in their job roles, by removing some of their workload and helping them better support families.

The CAB worker is seen by both staff and parents as a great asset to the Sure Start. Sure Start staff highlighted the qualities that the CAB worker possesses. The CAB worker is not patronizing to parents, really honest in terms of what he can offer, trustworthy, reliable, non judgmental and relates well to people.

Suggestions from Sure Start staff and the CAB worker for future development of the CAB service include the need to put on financial awareness courses to be able to help parents help themselves and to act as preventative measures to try and stop parents getting into bad situations.

When considering the benefits of the CAB service running via the Batley Sure Start it is important to offset these benefits against the costs. These costs include the CAB worker and a percentage of the Parent Support workers time to support the model. Potential benefits can be seen in tangible benefits for parents, i.e. income maximisation, and savings in staff time. This time savings is related to staff trying to deal with problems that they are not qualified to deal with. Input from the CAB worker resolves problems more quickly allowing professional to better focus their time and skills on the problems they can resolve, and potentially reach more parents.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the CAB worker continues to work on building relationships both with professionals and parents, through active promotion of the CAB service. Sure Start staff should be informed of existing links and kept update as new links are formed. These staff together with other professionals should be involved in actively promoting the service both between agencies and to parents. Communication of best practice in terms of marketing strategies could be established.

It is suggested that Sure Start Staff receive additional training regarding the appropriateness of referrals to the CAB worker. It is acknowledged that this experience is established, the more cases the staff deal with. However, a more formal feedback of the results of advice sessions could be beneficial to staff both to help with their relationships with families and for them to gain skills regarding the outcomes and scope of the CAB advice the CAB worker can provide. It is acknowledged, however, that this feedback may need to be anonymised due to the CAB confidentiality policy. This would perhaps negate the ability for staff to use the information to help build family relations. Due to the positive nature of the staff's ability to support parents to be able to implement advice on an on-going basis this confidentiality policy could potentially be reviewed to allow this information sharing and therefore interaction with parents to occur.

If feasible this additional training regarding the appropriateness of referrals should be extended to all professionals who make referrals to the CAB service, however it is recognized that this may not be practically possible. However, all major groups who refer to the service should receive some basic training. It is suggested that professionals also be keep up to date with any changes that may occur to the advice process, this is important because the CAB worker's time is limited.

It is advised that staff do not attend advice courses set up for parents. It is more appropriate to run separate courses for staff and parents.

The one instance where an individual was referred by three separate professionals could be potentially avoided with better communication between professionals and across agencies. The openness of this communication can be constrained by data protection and confidentiality issues. Work on this multi-agency communication is currently being piloted in areas of Kirklees, in particular the role of the common assessment framework and child index which enables the sharing of information regarding individual families and may present opportunities to overcome these issues in the future.

It is also suggested that the referral process be refined in order to ensure that parents do not 'slip through the net'. One parent who participated in an interview complained that she made initial contact with the CAB service and did not receive a response from anyone.

Prioritisation of need is essential and it is recommended that this practice remains integral to the referral process. It is acknowledged that there is fine balance between over referring and under referring parents to the CAB service. In the past, staff have mentioned that they have been able to informally contact the CAB worker to check the appropriateness of a referral,

however as the currently CAB worker's role is extended out of the Batley area this may become less easy.

In terms of attendance at the advice sessions, it is recommended that if possible the CAB office become more visible so that parents can find the office easier and be more likely to attend sessions outside the home setting. However it acknowledged that there are limitations regarding the signposting that is allowed within the locality.

In terms of support by Sure Start staff for parents attending sessions, an initial assessment should be made regarding how necessary accompaniment to the sessions is. If the accompaniment is just for childcare reasons, alternative arrangements for childcare could be made.

The Sure Start staff suggestion of financial awareness courses directly addresses a need that has been identified. These courses will promote independence for parents and potentially even impact the local employment market, by providing parents with benefits information to get them back on the jobs ladder.

The qualities that the CAB worker possesses should not be underestimated. As the CAB worker more or less 'is the CAB service within the Batley Sure Start'. His impact has a huge bearing on the conditions for success. It should be recognized that the current capacity of the CAB worker is being stretched and either prioritization of his current role within the Sure Start is done, be that outreach, financial literacy or case work or alternatively he is provided with some additional support.

Glossary of terms

CAB

Citizens Advice Bureau

CHAS

Catholic Housing Aid Society

KBAS

Kirklees Benefit Advice Service

PERS

Pay and Employment Rights Service

KNH

Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing

KREC

Kirklees Race Equality Council

IMWS

Indian Muslim Welfare Society

PKWA

Pakistan and Kashmir Welfare Association