A CALL FOR
ADVICE

An evaluation of two rural advice experiments in Scotland

Report prepared by
GRAHAM ATHERTON
Research Officer,
Scottish Consumer Council

ISBN 0 907067 14 X

Scottish Consumer Council, 4 Somerset Place, Glasgow G3 7JT  (Tel: 041–332 8888)
1983
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ISBN 0 907067 14 X
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February, 1983.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Scottish Consumer Council is very grateful to the following individuals and organisations for their valuable assistance in the setting up and promotion of the SCC's advice experiments.

Adviceline experiment

*Mr David Martin
Chairman, SCC Adviceline Advisory Committee, and Development Officer, North of Scotland area Scottish Council of Social Service (succeeded as secretary of reconstituted Advice-line Committee, April 1981).

*Mr Ian Anderson
Secretary (up to end of 1980), Skye and Lochalsh Council of Social Service.

*Mr Bruce Bevans
Organiser, Inverness and District Citizens' Advice Bureau.

Councillor Mrs Jardine
Sutherland District Council (from April 1981).

*Mr Norman MacAskill
Secretary, North and West Sutherland Council of Social Service (succeeded as Chairman of reconstituted Advice-line Committee, April 1981).

Councillor J. MacDonald
Highland Regional Council (from April 1981).

Councillor Mrs F. MacLeod
Skye and Lochalsh District Council (from April 1981).

*Mr Peter Peacock
Advisory Officer, North of Scotland area Scottish Association of Citizens' Bureau.

*Mr J. Pert
Depute Director, Consumer Protection Department, Highland Regional Council.

*Mr G. Turnbull
Director, Consumer Protection Department, Highland Regional Council.

Mr R. Wilson
Secretary, Skye and Lochalsh Council of Social Service (from April 1981).
* Denotes membership of SCC Adviseline Advisory Committee, 1979-1981; the other representatives joined the reconstituted Adviseline committee set up in April 1981.

The SCC owes very special thanks to the volunteer workers at Inverness Citizens' Advice Bureau for their participation in the Adviseline experiment.

**Information Link experiment**

*Mr James Woodward-Nutt*  
Chairman, SCC Advisory Committee and a member of the Scottish Consumer Council.

*Mrs Chris Aldred*  
Tutor Organiser, North of Scotland District, Workers' Educational Association.

Mr Kenneth Beaumont  
Director, Consumer Protection Department, Grampian Regional Council (observer on SCC advisory committee).

*Mrs Gillian Dalley*  
St. Katherine's Centre, Aberdeen.

*Mrs Dorothy Gelly*  

*Mrs Susan Gray*  
Secretary, Gordon Federation of Community Halls and Associations.

*Mr Nigel Lindsay*  
Shelter, Aberdeen.

*Mrs Anne Mallet*  
Member of the Scottish Consumer Council.

*Mrs Anne Ward*  
Organiser, Aberdeen Citizens' Advice Bureau.

*Mrs Maureen Watts*  
Co-ordinator, SCC Information Link Scheme, 1980-81, and Information Officer, Huntly Area Peoples' Information Centre.

* Denotes membership of SCC Information Link Advisory Committee, 1978-81.
The SCC owes very special thanks to the following individuals who volunteered their services as information links in the course of the SCC scheme:

Mrs M.C. Ashby; Mrs J. Bird; Mrs J.L. Bryden; Mrs E.D.C. Cook; Mr N. Dey; Mrs M.R. Deverall; Mrs C. O'Dochartaigh; Mrs B. Mason; Mrs M. Macgregor; Mrs A.L. Paterson; Lady Alison Peck; Mrs M. Reid; Mr W. Rattray; Mrs M. Rough; Mrs P. Russell; Mrs M. Wairman; Mrs J.E. Watt; Mrs M. Watts.

The SCC is also very grateful to the management committee and volunteers attached to Castle Douglas Citizens' Advice Bureau, Kirkcudbrightshire, and to the bureau organiser, Mrs Yvonne Osman, for their co-operation and assistance in the SCC's monitoring of their Village Link Scheme.

The SCC would also like to thank the following individuals for their comments and/or assistance during the preparation of this report:

Mrs Rita Belok (Community Council of Shropshire); Mrs Helene Curtis (National Consumer Council); Mr Andrew Currie and Mr Derek Johnston (Scottish Association of CABs); Mr James Shaw-Grant and Mrs Laura Grimond (SCC Consumer in Remote Areas Committee); Mr John Seargeant (National Association of CABs); Mr Tony Mackay, PEIDA (Planning and Economic Consultants, Edinburgh); Mr Frank Webster (British Telecom, Scotland).

Finally the SCC and the author of this report would like to thank Mrs Patricia Hassan for her clerical assistance in the coding of questionnaire returns and the preparation of this report, undertaken with great skill, patience and good humour.
"The Scottish Consumer Council (a committee of the National Consumer Council) was established by Government in 1975 to identify and represent the interests of Scottish consumers and particularly the disadvantaged. The SCC keeps a watching brief on the goods and services provided by central and local government, and other public bodies as well as by commercial firms and the professions. Research is carried out into areas of consumer concern, and the SCC then presses for whatever changes are required in the law and in the provision of services to meet the needs of consumers."
PREFA

The Scottish Consumer Council has always believed that people cannot exercise their rights as consumers of goods and services in an effective way unless they have proper access to impartial sources of advice and information. In this respect, Scottish consumers have come to rely upon a large network of Citizens' Advice Bureaux and other advice and information centres built up over the years.

A while back, in its report Let the People Know, the Scottish Consumer Council drew attention to the dearth of advice and information services in many parts of rural Scotland and the consequence that people living in the outlying areas have to travel long distances to their nearest advice centres in the larger towns and cities. This is likely to put help beyond the reach of many, particularly if they are without proper transport or cannot well afford the cost of expensive telephone calls. Yet there is every reason to believe that, not only are consumers in rural areas in as much need of advice and information as their counterparts in the towns and cities, but because of the more limited provision of official sources such as post offices and Department of Health and Social Security area offices, they are indeed in greater need.

In Let the People Know the Scottish Consumer Council recommended that alternative forms of advice and information provision for people in rural areas should be studied and led the way by initiating two experiments of its own. In one, a "freephone" advice service was set up for people living in a part of the sparsely populated northwest Highland area, linking them to their nearest Citizens' Advice Bureau more than sixty miles away. The other experiment consisted of the recruitment and training of local volunteers to serve as "information links" for various rural localities in the Grampian Region, assisting people there with advice and information about a wide range of problems. The results of these two experiments and related activities elsewhere are the subject of this report and we also make recommendations for developing and improving rural advice services.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to all the volunteers and professional staff involved in the running of the two experiments, neither of which could have been undertaken without their generous assistance and support. We are also very grateful to those local representatives who served on the advisory committees set up by the SCC for their ready help and particularly for doing so much to promote their local scheme. It is largely due to their efforts - and the welcome financial contribution of the local authorities concerned -
that the freephone advice service was able to continue beyond the funding period allotted by the SCC.

I very much hope that this report will be widely read by all those involved in wanting to see more adequate information and advice services for people living in rural areas: regional, islands and district councillors and officials, workers with existing advice and information services, members of community organisations.

As well as presenting general recommendations about future development, the report contains detailed information about likely running costs, the level of take-up and kinds of enquiries received, the impact of publicity, the day-to-day handling of enquiries and the amount of public support that might be expected. We believe that these findings will be of great use to organisations considering setting up similar schemes of their own and to organisations already involved in similar provision, and thereby will be of immediate practical value to consumers.

Esme Walker,  
Chairman, Scottish Consumer Council.  

June, 1982.
1

ADVICE SERVICES IN RURAL SCOTLAND

1.1 The need for advice services in rural Scotland

Well over a third of a million enquiries from the public are handled by generalist advice centres in Scotland in the course of a year. This is more than five times the number handled ten years ago and stems not only from a steady increase in the number of advice centres but also for a greater readiness in the public to come forward with enquiries. The National Consumer Council in its review of local advice services, The Fourth Right of Citizenship, (1977), suggested that one of the main factors responsible for this growth in provision and usage was a political and social recognition that the concept of citizenship includes not only a right to civil liberty, a vote, and a decent standard of living but also a right to advice and information. Such a right has become all the more self-evident with the increased complexities of legislation and welfare services and the whole range of problems the citizen is now having to cope with as, say, a consumer of goods and services, as a claimant of welfare benefits, as a council or private tenant, or as a member of a family, and so on.

Despite this growth and public awareness of advice services, however, many gaps in provision remain, and the most notable of these occur in many of the rural or sparsely populated areas of Scotland which are without an advice centre within easy reach at all. It is true that on a crude population basis there are as many advice and information centres (full and part time) in rural Scotland as for the rest of Scotland (about one centre for every 50,000 inhabitants). But as inspection of Table 1.1 shows, over half (12) of the 23 centres serving rural or semi-rural areas in 1981-82 were found in the southern parts of Scotland (Borders and Dumfries and Galloway), whereas the northern regions, islands and districts (not counting Aberdeen) had only eight advice centres for a population over twice as high as in southern Scotland. Here the only advice centres are at Inverness, Alness, and Lochaber in Highland region (with part-time extension bureaux at Dingwall and Tain), and at Kinloss (Moray-shire), Huntly (Gordon) and Fraserburgh (Banff and Buchan) in Grampian Region. The opening of the new citizens' advice bureaux at Thurso (Caithness) and Peterhead (Banff and Buchan) will bring the north of Scotland total up to 10 advice centres at the end of 1982-83; but other centres of population such as Elgin (pop. 16,499), Oban (pop. 6,418) and Wick (pop. 7,482) will continue to be without their own bureau in the foreseeable future (this may be contrasted with the situation in certain parts of north Wales, where bureaux are
Table 1.1
Advice and information centres in rural Scotland, 1981-82 (*denotes CAB scheduled for 1982-83)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population (persons, 1981)</th>
<th>Extension CABx</th>
<th>Other Centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BORDERS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berwickshire</td>
<td>18,092</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ettrick &amp; Lauderdale</td>
<td>31,594</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxburgh</td>
<td>35,180</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweeddale</td>
<td>14,832</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUMFRIES &amp; GALLOWAY</td>
<td>145,078</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annandale &amp; Eskdale</td>
<td>35,338</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nithsdale</td>
<td>56,493</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewartry</td>
<td>23,138</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wigtown</td>
<td>30,109</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIFE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.E. Fife</td>
<td>62,387</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAMPIAN</td>
<td>266,984</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banff &amp; Buchan</td>
<td>81,446</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon</td>
<td>62,157</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kincardine &amp; Deeside</td>
<td>42,112</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moray</td>
<td>81,269</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGHLAND</td>
<td>200,032</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badenoch &amp; Strathspey</td>
<td>12,355</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caithness</td>
<td>27,383</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td>56,557</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lochaber</td>
<td>20,539</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairn</td>
<td>10,139</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross &amp; Cromarty</td>
<td>47,307</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skye &amp; Lochalsh</td>
<td>11,327</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutherland</td>
<td>14,425</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRATHCLYDE</td>
<td>126,147</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyll &amp; Bute</td>
<td>68,768</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanark</td>
<td>57,361</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAYSIDE</td>
<td>211,465</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angus</td>
<td>92,841</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth &amp; Kinross</td>
<td>118,624</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISLANDS</td>
<td>77,388</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orkney</td>
<td>18,906</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shetland</td>
<td>26,716</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Isles</td>
<td>31,766</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL RURAL SCOTLAND</td>
<td>1,189,107</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SCOTLAND</td>
<td>5,117,146</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: The districts and regions in this table are based on those selected for the Rural Indicators Study, published by the Central Research Unit of the Scottish Office, HMSO, Edinburgh, 1978.
found in a few small towns with populations of 5,000 or less). \(^2\) At the present time there are no generalist advice centres for the islands of Scotland (Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles) at all, although the Orkney Islands now has its own freephone advice service. Even where the provision exists, the majority of enquiries come from the immediate catchment area of the advice or information centre, with only a small uptake from outlying rural areas. Particularly handicapped in this respect are most of the sparsely populated areas of western and northern Scotland, where communities are too small to support an advice centre of their own but which may be 50 to 100 miles away from larger population centres with advice and information services.

These considerations become all the more important when account is taken of the special disadvantages faced by many people in rural areas. The poor provision or lack of public transport and other services there (such as post offices, doctors' surgeries, shops and offices) suggests that rural inhabitants are having to contend with difficulties and problems from which the ordinary town dweller (who takes these services for granted) is spared. As shown in Table 1.2 a number of services in sparsely populated areas of Scotland have declined rapidly in the past 20 years. The lower average incomes of rural dwellers, the higher prices of many goods purchased locally and the general shortage of employment opportunities in rural areas each in their own way point to a need for confidential and reliable advice services for people of limited means in these areas. A substantial number of rural inhabitants are elderly people without transport of their own, resulting in minimal or non-usage of advice and information services beyond local reach. For further evidence of the disadvantaged circumstances of rural dwellers, the reader is referred to the special appendix (appendix 1) at the end of this report, which may be read in conjunction with an SCC parallel remote areas study, Problems of consumers in rural areas (1982) by G.A. Mackay and G. Iaing, formerly of the Institute for the Study of Sparsely Populated Areas, University of Aberdeen.

The inaccessibility, lack of or withdrawal of services in rural areas has a number of other implications that heighten the need for some form of generalist advice provision there.

1. Rural inhabitants have fewer and fewer local people to turn to for reliable information and confidential advice as key figures such as doctors, clergymen, school teachers, and village postmasters move away; incomers into a rural area, with few or no local contacts of their own, may be at an even greater disadvantage.

2. Rural dwellers are forced to travel further and
### Table 1.2

**Availability of services in remote areas of Scotland (354 parishes)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Service</th>
<th>Number of parishes containing service</th>
<th>Percentage change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-post office</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pub/Hotel</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** G.A. Mackay and G. Laing, *Consumer Problems in rural areas*, Scottish Consumer Council, 1982, Table 1.3
further afield or make more long distance telephone calls to secure the advice or information they need, which for less mobile and lower income groups (e.g. elderly, disabled, unemployed people) may mean doing without proper information or advice altogether.

3. People in rural areas without a reliable local source of information or advice may find themselves being directed more often to the wrong agency or individual dealing with their problem, irritating enough for people living in towns but costly and time consuming for people in country areas.

4. Even where more traditional sources of advice are available - through post offices, health visitors, churches, schools, etc. - the professional staff concerned are unlikely to be in a position to keep abreast of changes in legislation outside their own speciality or to have been trained in the specialist skills required for advice giving.

Even where official agencies are in a position to deal with enquiries from the general public through area offices or sub-offices, the situation is not satisfactory as far as rural dwellers are concerned. Such provisions are mainly in the fields of consumer protection, social work, housing, social security and employment, which relates to more than half the number of enquiries received by generalist advice centres. In Grampian region, for example, the consumer protection department maintains 9 area offices outwith the Aberdeen area and a further 13 "referral points" where enquiries can be attended to. Some of these offices or referral points are in small towns such as Aboyne, Banchory, Ellon, Keith and Turiff. The regional council has also extended its means of reaching out to remoter areas through the district council's mobile library service, including the provision of leaflets and posters. In the Highland region outwith Inverness the consumer protection department has offices at Dingwall (Ross and Cromarty), Fort William (Lochaber) and Wick (Caithness); there are also social security offices at Fort William, Thurso and Wick (the social security office at Thurso is part-time and is due to close completely). Here the regional social work department maintains a network of 12 divisional and area offices, plus a number of "community coin boxes" in remote areas of Caithness and Sutherland (at Bettyhill, Durness, Kinlochbervie and Rogart).

But while these official arrangements obviously form an essential and valuable component of advice and information provision for an area, various other considerations need to be borne in mind in assessing this type of provision:
1. People not knowing which agency or government department is equipped to deal with their enquiry or problem — or people finding that they have approached the "wrong" department. These are matters of critical importance to rural dwellers if they are to avoid "wasted" journeys and unnecessary expense in telephone calls, bus fares, etc.

2. People being able to turn to a generalist advice service with the assurance that the advice they receive will be related to their overall circumstances: a difficulty with turning to many official agencies in the first instance is that the advice or information they provide may be related only to the specialist services for which they are responsible. For example, what is notionally a "housing" problem may on closer examination reveal itself to be a problem about, say, income or family circumstances. Only advice workers trained to assess and deal with the client's need across a broad spectrum are likely to be the most appropriate people to turn to in the first instance (with possible referral to specialist agencies subsequently.)

3. People having an advice service to fall back upon when use of official agencies has failed to bring about a satisfactory answer to their enquiry or solution to these problems. Coupled with this is a reluctance of people to seek official advice if they have reason to believe (rightly or wrongly) that their enquiry will not be handled as impartially or confidentially as they would like.

4. Even many of the area or divisional offices maintained by a local authority or government may not be within easy reach of people living outside the population centres in which they are located, a particular problem for people without the use of a car or telephone.

1.2 Rural advice services: research and development

Only a few studies have been carried out on rural advice services or, indeed, on advice services generally. A number of these relate to peoples' use of or perceptions of advice services in their area. Thus a Consumer Concerns survey (1979–80) carried out by the National Consumer Council, in both urban and rural areas, found that a majority of people had only a remote awareness of services available. While
all but 20 people out of 2,000 interviewed reported having a problem or complaint, fewer than 1 in 10 respondents had done anything about it by seeking advice, despite the fact that about one third of the problems mentioned were rated by interviewers as being serious ones. The reasons for reported use or non-use of advice services are not well enough understood to permit one to draw any firm conclusions, but several factors suggest themselves: the absence of advice services in an area, the cost and inconvenience of reaching advice centres, lack of publicity, and a general unawareness that advice centres can deal with or solve a particular problem. It is likely that all of these factors apply to an even greater degree to rural areas, where the distance-cost factor isolates many people most in need of advice from the agencies which can help them.

In a joint discussion paper The Right to Know: a review of advice services in rural areas (1978) the National Consumer Council and the National Council for Social Service, drawing upon survey data, noted four main factors which influenced country peoples' perceptions of the need for an advice centre in their area:

"Public transport its availability and cost; the voluntary services the community has established; the proximity of other services, such as the doctor, library and post office; and the existence of informal local services and formal services not too far away ....... where these resources were absent from a community there was a clearly expressed need for a service."

A survey conducted by the National Federation of Women's Institutes among 9,306 member institutes in England and Wales in 1977 indicated that in 29 out of 47 non-metropolitan counties between one quarter and one half of the institutes replying believed that there was an unmet need for rural advice provision in their area. A study carried out in the Upper Coquetdale area of rural Northumberland in 1976-77 revealed from interviews with 167 households, that 51% of respondents had been faced with some kind of problem in the previous few months; 53 per cent felt that there was lack of information services in their area, with 67 per cent welcoming some sort of information service. In a study of three villages in West Cumbria, where an experimental mobile advice service had been set up, Butcher and colleagues (1976) found that while the presence of local "resource people" (friends, neighbours, post-mistresses, village policemen, etc.) could be relied upon to reduce the demand for formally organised information services, when people were faced with a problem requiring more active kind of help they were prepared to turn to "professional" advice services.
Scotland no extensive work has been done on people's perception of advice services, but in its remote areas study, Problems of Consumers in Rural Areas (1982) the SCC found that there was only very limited contact with social workers and advice centres by people in the survey areas, with only a small handful of people in the interview sample commenting on the lack of these services in the area: it was not clear whether respondents considered these services not important enough to be worth mentioning or whether demand or support for them had been frustrated by the absence of suitable outlets. It could be argued, as the remote areas study and other research shows, that the demand for a particular service is influenced by the availability of that service, with "demand" increasing as "supply" of those services is stepped up (e.g. in the provision of more advice centres for rural areas).

The report A Right to Know, referred to above, identified the seven main criteria that should apply in the setting up and development of rural advice services (though clearly they are important for urban-based services as well):

1. Reliability of information
2. Accessibility
3. Adequate publicity
4. Confidentiality
5. Independence
6. Flexibility
7. Availability of training and back up.

Within this framework exist a variety of options for developing advice services in rural areas. Two of these options - a freephone advice service and an information/village "link" scheme - were chosen as the subjects of the SCC's rural advice experiments and are discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Other options include:

1. Extension bureaux, providing a rural offshoot of town-based bureaux and open for a few short sessions each week, perhaps using shared premises. A few of these already exist in Scotland. If too far away from the main bureaux, however, they may be difficult to administer and involve too much time of the bureau
organisers or volunteers' time in travel, and there may be difficulty in securing accommodation that can be used at suitable times of the day or offers enough privacy.

2. Mobile advice centres, involving the use of a vehicle journeying to several different sites at regular times for advice giving sessions. A mobile consumer advice service was provided by the Western Isles Council from July 1978 - March 1980, for example, to tour the islands of Lewis, Harris, Uist and Barra. Difficulties encountered in this sort of scheme have included low enquiry rates (in certain cases) the lack of privacy at advice giving sessions, absence of a telephone link and the selection of suitable sites. A major problem experienced in the Western Isles scheme was that consumers' problems rarely coincided with the two or three weeks when the advice centre was in their area. (For a fuller account of setting up a mobile advice service, see the report On the Road, by Elaine Kempson published by the Library Association, London).

3. Self-help community information schemes, in which teams of volunteers, community representatives, or personal service workers (e.g. social workers, post-mistresses) are issued with "fact banks" of information cards on a wide range of topics. The main advantage of these fact banks seems to be that they are highly adaptable for local use and can be modified or expanded in accordance with local circumstances, as well as encouraging community members to become their own information providers. A worker may be needed to train people to use the fact bank and keep it up to date.

4. Post offices and sub-post offices as primary information providers. Post offices already provide a lot of official information and leaflets and in rural areas post masters have traditionally been regarded as local information providers. An NOC report recommended that this role of the post office should be formally recognised and extended to cover a wider range of information services, including the signposting or referral of enquiries to appropriate agencies. The closure of small village sub-post offices in many rural areas and the pressure of work experienced by many sub-post masters (who usually combine their work with the running of a local shop) may limit the scope for a development of this kind in some areas, however.
5. **Local radio and phone-in programmes.** Although recent years have seen the rapid expansion of local radio stations, including special coverage in three of Scotland's island areas, broadcasting media remain an under-utilised source of advice provision. (Radio Nan Eilean, serving the Western Isles, already provides to its credit, a weekly consumer information programme of its own). This represents a very efficient and virtually cost-free form of communication with people dispersed over a very wide and sparsely populated area. The obvious disadvantages are lack of confidentiality at phone-in sessions (although this is surmountable) and general reticence among people to voice their problems over the air.

6. **Local information centres.** Although lacking generalist advice centres of their own, rural areas contain other facilities, such as schools and church and village halls that may be usable for advice or information giving sessions. There may be a role here for local councils of social service and community councils, as well as traditional advice giving agencies, in arranging for local teams of trained volunteers to conduct sessions from these centres. But premises may not always lend themselves to conducting sessions in privacy (although it may be possible for special adaptations to be built) and people may be reluctant to seek the services of volunteers who are known to them locally.

Various options also exist for the funding of rural advice services and these are considered in appendix 2 at the end of this report.

1.3 **The SCC investigation**

It was against the background described in the two previous sections that the Scottish Consumer Council came to mount a special investigation of its own involving the setting up, monitoring and evaluation of two advice experiments in the north of Scotland. One experiment consisted of a "freephone" advice service, linked to the citizens' advice bureau at Inverness, for people living in part of the sparsely populated north west highland area, stretching from Skye and Lochalsh to the extreme north west of Sutherland - a distance of some 120 miles (see map on page 22). The service, available to anyone dialling through any one of 55 telephone exchanges in the area, put callers into immediate
contact with the bureau, which was between 45 and 120 miles away, with-
out them having to pay for the cost of the call. The freephone
service was launched in October 1979 and after the SCC's funding
of the scheme ended in March 1981 it has continued to operate with
the financial support of the four local authorities for the area.
The experiment and its outcome is described in full in chapter 2.

The other experiment involved the appointment of local volunteers
to serve as "information links" in various communities within rural
areas of Grampian region in north east Scotland. (See chart and
map on pages 59 & 60). The scheme, which initially covered sixteen
different communities of varying size and background, sought to
provide information and advice related to the range of topics
normally handled by a generalist information centre; this included
referrals to official and specialist agencies or individuals best
able to deal with a particular enquiry or problem. A co-ordinator
was appointed to service the volunteers, who worked mainly from
their homes, with information materials and leaflets, to deal with
volunteers' expense claims, and later on, to assist with the re-
cruitment and training of new links. The Scheme began as a pilot
project in June 1978 and after certain modifications were made in
the following year, when a new co-ordinator was also appointed, it
continued to run under SCC funding and sponsorship to March 1981.
A similar "village link" scheme run by the citizens' advice bureau
at Castle Douglas in Kirkcudbrightshire (Dumfries and Galloway) was
launched in April 1979, and the results of this scheme are also
described in the chapter dealing with the SCC's information link
experiment. The remainder of this section considers the sorts of
questions to which the SCC sought answers from its advice experiments.
The most basic question which guided the SCC investigation was the
number of enquiries each type of advice service could be expected
to attract over a given period, assuming that certain conditions
were met - most notably the provision of publicity. A minimum
period of 18 months was allowed for after the launch of each experi-
ment to give publicity and other factors enough time to take effect
and for a pattern of enquiries to emerge. A problem in the inter-
pretation of figures relating to rural advice services is that there
exists no absolute yardstick against which the service may be judged
as "successful" or not. A "low" enquiry rate, for example, may
simply mean that an advice service has not been well enough publicised
rather than it is not needed. Showing that rural advice services
attract fewer enquiries relative to the population of the area com-
pared with urban advice services may be equally misleading, since
different enquiry rates may have more to do with area differences in
the density and social composition of the population that affect
usage rather than the need for the service as such.

The SCC's advice experiments can claim to have made advice and inform-
ation services in their respective areas more accessible than they were previously, but the readiness of people to make use of advice services brought within their reach is likely to be influenced by several other factors which be outwith the strict control of the experiment. These factors include the socio-economic backgrounds of people living in the area, the age structure of the population, residential mobility rates, access to a car, telephone and other facilities - all of these to a greater or lesser degree would be expected to affect usage of an advice service. In many rural areas local traditions of self-help and independence may also affect peoples' willingness to make use of an advice service even when outside help is needed. Finally there is the important point that the level or type of advice service provision may itself influence the level of demand making it impossible to assess with any accuracy just what "ultimate demand" might exist, if say "urban type" advice centres were set up in small rural communities. All of these considerations suggest that any figures relating to rural advice services need to be viewed circumspectly.

Nonetheless, it has been thought appropriate to include in the analysis of results some sort of notional figure to permit comparisons between and within the two experiments. Here the figure used has been the ratio of enquiries to households in the area. A similar norm is already used in the prediction of enquiry rates in the setting up and development of citizens' advice bureaux. A bureau, to be viable, should receive each year at least one enquiry for every ten heads of population (in areas of social stress the rate can rise dramatically to one enquiry for every two or three persons). Bureaux normally set themselves a target of one enquiry for every 7 persons. The norm for setting up an independent CAB is that it must be able to attract an enquiry rate of at least 1,000 enquiries (below this level a bureau is not viable for organisational reasons e.g. insufficient business to keep staff motivated or to build up expertise). Bureaux receiving between 2,500 and 5,000 enquiries are held to justify a part-time paid organiser and those receiving over 5,000 enquiries a full-time organiser. Rural areas have some discretion over these upper rates where the need for e.g. extensions, may justify more organiser time. Subject to the important qualifications in the previous paragraph, these figures can provide a measure of the extent to which a rural area can support an advice centre of its own. However, the main aim in using enquiry rates in the analysis of the results of the two experiments was to assess relative take-up between the two types of experiment and the effects of different publicity methods.

A related question was whether rural advice services attracted a pattern of enquiries, according to subject category, that differed significantly from the pattern for town and urban dwellers, including enquiries handled by the base bureau in the conventional way. Here
the classification used by citizens' advice bureaux was adopted in the monitoring of enquiries handled in the two experiments. Of special interest, too, was whether or not disproportionate use would be made of either type of rural advice scheme by different socio-economic groups relative to their representation in the population, using their housing tenure as a "proxy" variable here.

A second set of considerations related to public awareness and perceptions of rural advice services, including the question as to what forms of publicity were most appropriate for particular types of service (leaflets, posters, press publicity, "word of mouth", etc.). What level of public awareness that a rural advice service exists could be reasonably expected over a given period of time after the initial publicity launch? How much renewed publicity would be necessary to sustain take-up of the service? What particular features of a rural advice scheme would carry importance for people in the area? These questions the SCC sought to answer through a sample survey of households conducted by postal questionnaire in each of the areas covered by the two experiments.

Of fundamental interest was the cost of running an advice service extending to rural areas and from its monitoring of each experiment the SCC sought to draw up a detailed breakdown of expenditure and work out the cost of dealing with individual enquiries, either by "freephone" or through an "information link" scheme.

Finally, some evidence was needed about the degree of user satisfaction with the experimental advice service and whether the handling of enquiries presented any special problems. Arrangements were made for enquiries to be monitored in terms of the amount of time spent dealing with them, action taken, the amount of follow-up work involved, and any technical or other difficulties encountered.
REFERENCES

1 Figures supplied by the Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureau show that 53,435 initial enquiries were handled by 33 bureaux in 1972; by March 1981, the number of enquiries dealt with in the previous twelve months had risen to 267,532, with bureaux now numbering 55, plus a further 12 extension bureaux. There was also a general increase in the number of enquiries handled by each bureau over this period; the Glasgow Bath Street bureau for example, saw the number of enquiries it received rise from about 14,000 in 1972 to over 39,000 in 1981.

2 Advice centres in Wales, Welsh Consumer Council, Cardiff, 1980.


6 Hugh Butcher, Ian Cole and Andrew Glen, Information and Action services for Rural Areas, Papers in Community Studies, Studies No. 4, Department of Social Work, University of York, 1976.

ADVICE LINE

2.1 Telephone advice services

The percentage of UK households with a telephone has more than trebled in the past 15 years: from 25% of households in 1966 to over 75% today (1981). Some 19.9 thousand million inland telephone calls were made in 1979-81 - more than quadruple the number 20 years ago. Over 65% of all telephones currently in use are residential. There were also 77,000 public telephone call boxes in the UK in 1979. These figures are probably sufficient to demonstrate that the telephone is no longer regarded as the home luxury it was several years ago, although this does not necessarily mean that telephones are now within reach of everybody's income.

The telephone has been of particularly great benefit to housebound and elderly people, who may in certain circumstances qualify for free telephone installations and assistance with rental charges; but it is only being recognised, if belatedly, that people living in rural and very sparsely populated areas depend on the telephone to a far greater extent than can be appreciated by people living in towns. This applies especially to their access to key information and advice services, which in a sparsely populated area may be based at centres more than 40 or 50 miles away from the communities they serve. This situation is particularly acute in the very sparsely populated highland areas of Scotland, which extend over many thousands of square miles and where the nearest large town (over 20,000 population) may be 60 or more miles away. The problem is compounded by a higher proportion of people in these areas being of retirement age or without their own transport. Faced with time consuming journeys, infrequent or non-existent public transport, and expensive telephone calls, inhabitants in remote areas such as these may resign themselves to doing without information and advice services at all.

It was largely in this context that the idea of setting up a freephone advice service received consideration by the Scottish Consumer Council in its review of advice services in Scotland, Let the People Know, published in 1977. Essentially the idea was that rural inhabitants seeking information or advice should be spared the cost of having to make a long distance telephone call in order to do so. By asking the operator to connect them to the appropriate "freephone" number, callers from any exchange in a given area would be put in instant contact with their nearest citizens' advice bureau or other advice centre, which would arrange, if necessary, to ring them back later if their enquiry could not be answered straightaway. The cost of the freephone call and related outgoing calls would be met
from public funds. The availability of this service would be publicised by leafleting throughout the area. In setting up such a scheme, on an experimental basis (described more fully in the next section), the SCC was looking for a "freephone" telephone advice service which would:

(i) provide information and advice over a wide range of consumer problems or topics, connected with consumer goods and services, housing, social security benefits, family and personal matters, health, education, legal services, etc. Referrals to specialist agencies (e.g. social work departments, solicitors, marriage guidance counsellors, etc.) would be arranged where appropriate.

(ii) provide information and advice promptly, reliably, and confidentially, preferably through an established agency that was likely to be widely understood and respected by people living a long distance away. It was believed that inhabitants living in areas where people were well acquainted with one another would attach particular importance to the confidentiality of the service.

(iii) be reasonably straightforward to administer by an agency used to dealing with enquiries by pay-telephone, without involving any major diversion from its existing activities or recruitment of additional workers.

(iv) be straightforward enough to publicise and explain how to use.

The development of telephone advice services already in operation in various parts of the UK, whether on a "freephone" basis or not, suggested that there could be scope for setting up such a service in a sparsely populated area, such as the Scottish highlands, for the first time. There was evidence that advice centres such as citizens' advice bureaux were already dealing with a considerable number of enquiries by telephone - 46% of enquiries, averaged out over Scotland, were dealt with by bureaux in this way - so that the idea of a free-phone advice service to a large extent reflected existing practice, albeit devised to encourage more people from outlying rural areas to utilise the service of their nearest advice centre.5

A telephone advice service resembling the sort of scheme the SCC had in mind had already been initiated in October 1978 by Northumberland Rural Citizens' Advice Bureau, which offered its own "freephone" service by arranging to ring callers back as soon as they phoned in. This service, which in its first year attracted some 75 to 90 enquiries
a month from a rural population of 70,000 people, was run in con-
junction with a home visiting service and the occasional use of
"village contacts". Advertising was done through weekly inserts
in the information sections of local newspapers and the distribution
of publicity posters and materials to parish councils,
churches, doctors surgeries, clinics, branch libraries, age concern
groups, public houses and social clubs. "Village contacts" also
supplied local publicity of their own, in shop windows, parish maga-
zines, and notice boards. Regular press releases on the development
of the rural CAB were invariably printed in full by the local press.
The bureau appeared to have encountered no major difficulties in the
running of the service and believed that take-up of the telephone
link might have been even greater but for a delay in getting the
bureau number printed in the main telephone directory. In an un-
published background paper, the bureau's organiser commented:

".....the telephone link helps demonstrate
how much can be dealt with over the phone.
To this extent the rural CAB is gaining use-
ful experience in dealing with telephone
queries which may, in itself, have ramifications
for all CABs. Telephone technique will no
doubt become more important to all bureau
workers as transport costs, etc. increase, and
the rural CAB is developing a body of know-
ledge which will help in future training on
the subject."

Although no other comparable freephone advice services existed prior
to the setting up of the SCC's proposed scheme, the consumer protection
department of the Western Isles Islands Council, based in Stornoway,
embarked on a freephone advice scheme of its own in September 1980,
nine months after the SCC scheme had come into operation. The service
which covered the whole of the Western Isles 30,000 population, attracted
118 enquiries in its first month, every household in the area having
been leafleted. Forty percent of enquiries in subsequent months came
from the outlying Ulis and Barra areas - over 50 miles away from Storno-
way and representing 23% of the islands' population.7 There was,
however, a rapid falling off of enquiries in subsequent months, to under
10 a month some months later, attributed to the lack of budgetary pro-
vision for further publicity. (Press advertising and leafleting of
shops and post offices had been planned.) Over 75% of enquiries were
"non consumer" related and 18% of enquiries came from Stornoway, the
islands' largest population centre (5,000 inhabitants). But the service,
which attracted about one enquiry for every 23 households, and was
officially regarded as a "promising and cost effective concept", died
a "premature death" in March 1981, only seven months after it had been
set up, due to cutbacks in the department's budget. Partly as a
result of the SCC's AdviceLine experiment, however, a freephone advice
service will be set up for the Orkney Islands on 10th June 1982, funded
jointly by the Islands Council and the Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux and based at the citizens' advice bureau in Alness.\(^8\) *

One of the most well monitored telephone advice services has been run since 1974 by the trading standards department of Surrey County Council, whose BOX 99 phone-in/write-in advice scheme, serving one million residents, was attracting in 1981-82 some 650 enquiries by telephone a month.\(^9\) Enquiries have been handled by two paid advisers and are serviced by seven telephone lines; when all public lines are engaged, an ansaphone automatically takes any additional calls, and callers are informed that if they leave their name, address and telephone number, they will be contacted within half an hour. Some 85% of enquiries are resolved immediately by the giving of advice, but arrangements can be made to follow up enquiries with a special visit to the consumer or trader. The service is supplied with regularly updated information from the Consumers' Association advice centre servicing unit and linked to the CA's Hotline to deal with more unusual enquiries.

The main problem encountered by staff has been that telephone enquiries have not been evenly spread over opening hours (9.15 a.m.-4.45 p.m.), putting heavy pressure on advice staff at certain times of the day. The scheme has been publicised through the local press and through leaflets distributed to libraries, citizens' advice bureau home helps, and local groups like Age Concern. Pre-paid postcards have also been available at these points for people wanting to put their enquiry into writing, although it appears that they have not been used very often. According to a report submitted to the county's general purposes committee in September 1975, 67% of a sample of 52 users of the service said that they were "completely satisfied" with the help they had been given, and even among the 12 who were not satisfied, dissatisfaction arose from the state of the law rather than the advice service as such.\(^10\) Some 47% of the sample said that they had heard about the service as a result of press publicity and 31% said they had heard about it through a friend. Remarking on these findings, the report concluded:

"The telephone service seems to be well liked, particularly amongst people living outside the towns in which the five divisional offices and the CAB are situated. In many instances a query can be dealt with over the phone, which saves the consumer time, money and effort. Others liked the telephone system because it gave them a degree of anonymity."

* In June the service attracted 91 initial enquiries and another 56 in July, with leafleting of all households in the islands (pop. 17,000) to publicise the service.
ADVICE LINE

Dial 100 and ask the operator for Freefone 8202

Needing advice on . . . housing . . . consumer goods . . . family matters . . . welfare benefits . . . employment . . . legal problems . . . tax, insurance, debt, other money matters . . . education . . . health services . . . transport . . . or any other problem? Then dial 100 and ask the operator for FREEFONE 8202.

You will be connected free of charge to ADVICE LINE. A trained Citizens' Advice Bureau worker will answer your call and help with your problem.

What happens then?

You may be given the advice and information you need there and then . . . or you may be asked to give your name, address and telephone number so that you can be contacted later with an answer. Or you may be advised to go to another agency which deals specifically with your problem.

Use ADVICE LINE from:

Kyle of Lochalsh Area

Adrachiel
Achnahairn
Achnahairn
Balnacash
Braemore
Cullen
Dunbeg
Dunbeath
Gairloch
Gairloch
Inish Glora
Inish Glora
Kishorn
Kyle
Loch Carron
Loch Suyning
Muckleroy
Portknockie
Halkirk
Rossay
Shalbuck Bridge
Seilachan
Saffin
Smardeny
Smash
Tarskenay
Uig
Waternish

Ullapool Area

Achnahairn
Achnahairn
Achnahairn
Balnacash
Bealach
Dunalastor
Dunbeg
Dunbeg
Dunbeg
Dunbeg
Dunbeg
Dunbeg
Gairloch
Gairloch
Inish Glora
Kishorn
Kyle
Loch Carron
Loch Suyning
Muckleroy
Portknockie
Halkirk
Rossay
Shalbuck Bridge
Seilachan
Saffin
Smardeny
Smash
Tarskenay
Uig
Waternish

You can use ADVICE LINE from your home or from a call box at any time between 10a.m. and 4p.m. each weekday except on Wednesday and Saturday, when you can call between 10a.m. and 1p.m.

This advice costs you nothing and is given in confidence. Calls are being paid for over an experimental period by the Scottish Consumer Council. 4 Somerset Place, Glasgow.

Please use ADVICE LINE as often as you need to.

Please pass on this information to your friends, relatives and neighbours.

You can use ADVICE LINE through any of the exchanges listed on the right.
Use ADVICELINE for problems about:
HOUSING,
CONSUMER GOODS,
FAMILY MATTERS,
WELFARE BENEFITS,
EMPLOYMENT,
MONEY,
EDUCATION,
HEALTH SERVICES,
TRANSPORT,
LEGAL MATTERS,
and so on.
It costs you nothing.
And it is confidential. Details overleaf.

Dial 100 and ask the operator for Freefone 8202

Use ADVICELINE through exchanges (listed overleaf) in shaded area.

ADVICE LINE

Ask for Freefone 8202
There are a number of more specialised telephone advice services, some of which make use of the freephone facility. One of these is a police advisory telephone service called PAT, run by Devon and Cornwall Constabulary. Set up in 1977 to serve the more sparsely populated West Cornwall area, PAT has been providing help and advice at all times of the day and night for people asking for the appropriate freephone number. Although geared to deal with routine enquiries and crime alerts (other than 999 calls), PAT, which was attracting 30 calls a day in 1979, has also attempted to deal with non-police matters as well including the provision of information on such matters as the availability of duty doctors and chemists, advice on domestic problems, and answering queries on legal matters. Enquiries are handled by an experienced member of police staff, who will if necessary direct the caller to the agency best able to deal with his problem. Glossy posters publicising the scheme were displayed in public places throughout the west Cornwall area. In a press statement issued at the launch of the scheme, the organisers stated:

"Our aim in developing the PAT service is to put fast friendly contact with the police back into everyday life. We're not replacing the village bobby with the system - he's still there - but because of the pressures of modern society, quite often people just don't know how to reach him any more. PAT solves this dilemma."

In Strathclyde, the social work department has also made use of the freephone facility in the running of its "standby" service for clients set up in 1979. Over 82% of the 8,298 calls for assistance received by the standby service in its first 30 weeks came through the freephone system. The service, which covers 2.5 million residents also resulted in a doubling in the proportion of "referrals" to the social work department coming directly from the clients themselves rather than through another agency such as the police. Nearly one third of cases handled were connected with financial matters, another quarter were related to child care, and one fifth were about housing accommodation. Over one half of the calls came from families with children under 17, 20% were from non-retired people living alone; and 9% came from supplementary pensioners. Nearly one third of all calls received were on a Saturday and 40% of cases involved giving practical assistance.

A number of voluntary organisations in the UK provide specialist advice or counselling services of their own (e.g. dealing with housing, disability, medical, personal and other problems) although their services are not advertised as "freephone" services as such. A useful directory of these services has been published by the Mutual Aid Centre, London, as part of its report Hello, Can I Help You? the growth of telephone advice services (see reference at end of chapter).
2.2 Setting up of Adviceline

Following publication of its report Let the People Know (1977), which highlighted various gaps in advice provision in Scotland, the Scottish Consumer Council was invited by Highland Regional Council to set up an experimental service of its own, using a "freephone" facility covering the sparsely populated north west area of Scotland. An advisory committee, comprising representatives of organisations in the area, including two local councils of social service, was appointed by the SCC to develop and promote the scheme. (See list of acknowledgements for full membership of the advisory committee). Arrangements were made for the scheme, which was named "Adviceline", to be administered by Inverness and District Citizens' Advice Bureau, whose area included a large part of the west Highlands and which, according to unpublished figures, was already used to dealing with a large proportion of enquiries by telephone.

The costs of incoming "freephone" calls and related outgoing calls were to be met from SOC funds, as were the cost of publicity and monitoring the experiment. Inhabitants in two telephone areas - Skye/Lochalsh and Ullapool - were selected as the target population for the experiment, which was scheduled to run for 18 months, commencing October, 1979.

As indicated in chapter 1, the areas to be served by Adviceline were among the most sparsely populated in the whole of Scotland, with fewer than 6.9 persons per square mile in Sutherland, 10.1 persons a square mile in Skye and Lochalsh, and 18.1 persons a square mile in Ross and Cromarty - compared with a "rural Scotland" average of 42.7 persons at the time of the 1971 census. The area served by Adviceline extended over some 2,200 square miles, reaching Cape Wrath in the extreme north west and extending along the west coast as far south as Skye. Agriculture (including crofting), fishing, and forestry are among the staple economic activities in the area, which also attracts some income from tourism. As shown in Table 2.1 significantly larger proportions of people in the area were retired - as many as a quarter or more in some parishes, compared with the much lower Scottish figure of 15.4%. The level of economic activity among women was much lower than in the rest of Scotland. Fewer households were in council accommodation and a larger number were in owner-occupied accommodation compared with the rest of Scotland; the large amount of croft accommodation in the area largely accounted for the latter proportion being so high. A much lower proportion of householders were without the use of a car than in Scotland as a whole, reflecting the very limited public transport provision in the area rather than the prosperity of households as such.

According to official estimates for August 1980, 55% of households in the Skye/Lochalsh area and 59% of households in the Ullapool area were residential telephone subscribers, compared with 65% of households with telephones in Scotland as a whole. The two telephone areas were
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil parish (*island parish)</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Retired</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Semi/unskilled manual*</th>
<th>Econ. active married females</th>
<th>Council accom.</th>
<th>Owner Occup.</th>
<th>Without car</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skye &amp; Lochalsh area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Applecross</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>30-6</td>
<td>33-3</td>
<td>13-3</td>
<td>21-5</td>
<td>2-9</td>
<td>66-5</td>
<td>46-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracadale*</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>19-9</td>
<td>26-1</td>
<td>16-7</td>
<td>12-8</td>
<td>4-0</td>
<td>74-2</td>
<td>37-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duirish*</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>28-1</td>
<td>21-4</td>
<td>17-1</td>
<td>19-7</td>
<td>7-2</td>
<td>78-9</td>
<td>46-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenelg</td>
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<td>266</td>
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<td>6-5</td>
<td>73-2</td>
<td>55-6</td>
</tr>
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<td>112</td>
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<td>39-6</td>
<td>44-4</td>
</tr>
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<td>45-0</td>
<td>20-0</td>
<td>15-8</td>
<td>11-0</td>
<td>63-3</td>
<td>43-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lochalsh</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>21-0</td>
<td>11-3</td>
<td>16-7</td>
<td>36-4</td>
<td>36-8</td>
<td>48-0</td>
<td>44-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portree*</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>22-8</td>
<td>4-0</td>
<td>11-2</td>
<td>33-0</td>
<td>39-9</td>
<td>42-1</td>
<td>46-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleat*</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>35-5</td>
<td>24-0</td>
<td>20-0</td>
<td>16-5</td>
<td>6-0</td>
<td>78-4</td>
<td>52-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snizort*</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>23-2</td>
<td>33-3</td>
<td>26-9</td>
<td>21-6</td>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>78-8</td>
<td>42-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strath*</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>24-3</td>
<td>10-5</td>
<td>18-2</td>
<td>29-0</td>
<td>18-6</td>
<td>68-3</td>
<td>53-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Weighted aver.)</td>
<td>3,778</td>
<td>28-8</td>
<td>not aggregated</td>
<td>24-3</td>
<td>23-8</td>
<td>59-2</td>
<td>43-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ullapool area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assynt</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>23-7</td>
<td>7-1</td>
<td>13-0</td>
<td>28-0</td>
<td>19-5</td>
<td>51-9</td>
<td>40-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contin</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>15-5</td>
<td>25-0</td>
<td>17-8</td>
<td>31-9</td>
<td>28-0</td>
<td>34-5</td>
<td>31-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunnet</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>25-1</td>
<td>16-7</td>
<td>9-1</td>
<td>19-8</td>
<td>16-9</td>
<td>53-2</td>
<td>31-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edradurichills</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>21-8</td>
<td>32-0</td>
<td>16-6</td>
<td>24-1</td>
<td>19-0</td>
<td>59-1</td>
<td>46-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gairloch</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>22-7</td>
<td>17-3</td>
<td>15-7</td>
<td>22-1</td>
<td>7-1</td>
<td>72-7</td>
<td>36-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lochbroom</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>19-3</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>14-0</td>
<td>23-4</td>
<td>21-6</td>
<td>51-6</td>
<td>37-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (weighted aver.)</td>
<td>2,019</td>
<td>20-8</td>
<td>not aggregated</td>
<td>24-8</td>
<td>17-7</td>
<td>55-7</td>
<td>37-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland</td>
<td>53,254</td>
<td>17-0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32-2</td>
<td>39-5</td>
<td>37-4</td>
<td>52-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Scotland</td>
<td>353,933</td>
<td>18-5</td>
<td>17-3</td>
<td>18-2</td>
<td>not aggregated</td>
<td>38-3</td>
<td>36-9</td>
<td>44-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>1,686m</td>
<td>15-4</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>21-1</td>
<td>40-4</td>
<td>53-6</td>
<td>29-3</td>
<td>57-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES: * Non-agricultural semi and unskilled manual workers.
GEOGRAPHICAL AREA
SERVED BY ADVICELINE

ULLAPOOL
TELEPHONE
AREA

SKYE AND
LOCHALSH
TELEPHONE
AREA

ROSS & CROMARTY
D.C.

INVERNESS CAB

TELEPHONE
AREA

DISTRICT
COUNCIL
BOUNDARY

SKYE & LOCHALSH
D.C.

ULLAPOOL

CAITHNESS
D.C.

SUTHERLAND
D.C.
were served by 55 local exchanges (see map). The nearest of these exchanges to the Inverness bureau was at Achnasheen, some 45 miles away (by road) and the most distant ones were at Durness, at the north west tip of Sutherland (120 miles away), and Glendale, on the north west coast of Skye (120 miles away).

The SCC proposed to monitor the running of the experiment throughout its 18 months' duration but with an interim review after the first 9-12 months, having regard to:

(i) the total number of adviceline enquiries received by the bureau each month, the type of enquiries received, and the way in which enquiries were handled by bureau workers (special monitoring forms were issued to bureau workers for this purpose)

(ii) the effectiveness of different forms of publicity, including household leafleting

(iii) the running costs of Adviceline (excluding the bureau's normal running costs)

(iv) the response of householders to the provision of a freephone advice service in their area, including patterns of usage and public evaluations of the service.

Detailed breakdowns, giving the cost, timing, and length of Adviceline calls and the telephone exchange from which they were made were supplied by the Scottish Telecommunications Board.

In April, 1981, 18 months after Adviceline was set up, a questionnaire and covering letter was delivered by "mail drop" to all 2,940 households in one of the telephone areas, Ullapool, to obtain answers to (ii) and (iv) above. Some 958 questionnaires (32%) were returned in time for the coding of replies and analysis of results by computer two months later. A "freepost" envelope was enclosed with the questionnaire to facilitate its return and reminder cards were sent out to every household one month after the delivery of the questionnaire. A further 36 questionnaires arrived too late for inclusion in the analysis. As indicated in Table 2.2, there was slight over-representation of householders in owner-occupied accommodation and under-representation of crofters among the returns.

Although Adviceline was meant to run in parallel with another advice experiment set up and funded by the SCC in the Grampian region (this is described in chapter 3), the SCC and the Adviceline Advisory Committee envisaged that if the Adviceline attracted a sufficient
Table 2.2

SOC Adviceline questionnaire response rate according to housing tenure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All respondents (Spring 1981)</th>
<th>Valuation Roll (1979)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner occupied</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croft accommodation</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council/SSHA</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately rented</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>941</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures most closely related to Ullapool telephone area as supplied by the planning department of Highland Regional Council. The number of croft dwellings may have been understated here since some may have been classified as private dwellings on the valuation roll. According to figures supplied by the Crofters Commission, there were 1,240 crofts in the five parishes covering the Ullapool telephone area in 1981-82, but since some of these parishes overlap into other telephone areas, exact figures are not obtainable.

The number of enquiries the local authorities serving the area covered by the experiment should be asked to take over the funding of the scheme from the SOC after its first 18 months. Following publication in October 1980 of the SOC's interim review of the scheme, which indicated that Adviceline had demonstrated a need for a freephone advice service in the area, a meeting was held with representatives from Highland Regional Council, Sutherland District Council and Skye and Lochalsh District Council, which agreed to contribute to the funding of the scheme in 1981-82. Ross and Cromarty District Council, whose area also accounted for a substantial proportion of Adviceline enquiries, was also approached but was not able to provide the £300 contribution asked for in 1981-82 due to shortage of funds. The Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux subsequently agreed to meet the resultant shortfall from its own development funds, but only for the year 1981-82.* (see footnote on page 25).
Representatives from the funding authorities were subsequently appointed to a reconstituted Adviceline Committee, which took over responsibility from the SCC for the promotion and development of Adviceline on 1st April 1980, secretarial support being provided by the Scottish Council of Social Service from its Inverness office. The Committee’s constitutional objectives included implicit provision for the promotion and development of telephone advice services, operated on an agency basis, for other parts of the highlands.

2.3 Enquiries

Adviceline attracted 569 enquiries in its first 18 months, representing 7.2% of the total number of enquiries (7913) received by the bureau in this period. This was the equivalent of one enquiry for every 23 households within a single year. The bureau estimated that this figure represented at least a fourfold increase in the number of enquiries it would normally have expected to receive from the Skye and Lochalsh and Ullapool telephone areas before Adviceline was set up. Inspection of Table 2.3 shows that Adviceline received its largest influx of enquiries in the month of its launch (October 1979), representing one fifth of the total number of enquiries handled by the bureau that month.

Table 2.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 79</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand total</td>
<td>569</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All four authorities agreed to make a further contribution totalling £1170 for 1982-3, Ross and Cromarty district council providing £220, Skye and Lochalsh £400 and Sutherland £440 (each district was asked to contribute £440 each), with Highland region providing £110 to cover telephone rental.
Subsequently there was a tailing off in the number of enquiries each month, with the second six months of the experiment (April-September, 1980) resulting in only half of the number of enquiries received in the first six months. The high initial take-up of enquiries stemmed directly from the large amount of leaflet and press publicity timed to coincide with the launch of the Adviceline service (see Table 2.5 below). The inevitable tailing off in the number of enquiries was aggravated, however, by a main cable fault resulting in Adviceline being out of action for the greater part of November 1979, barely a month after the service had been launched. With the second-wave of leafleting and other publicity in October 1980, however, and possibly as a result of seasonal factors, there was a considerable increase in the number of Adviceline enquiries, bringing the total over the six months from October 1980 to March 1981 back to its initial level (though again with a noticeable tailing off in December, February and March).

Adviceline enquiries were not greatly dissimilar to the sorts of enquiries handled by the bureau in the ordinary way - with the notable exception of social security enquiries (see Table 2.4). Social security enquiries represented a much larger proportion of Adviceline enquiries (over 17%) than ordinary bureau enquiries (10%). They were also more frequently received than any other sort of Adviceline enquiry. The reasons for the proportion of social security enquiries being significantly high are unclear but they could be connected with either or both of the following factors:

(1) People making enquiries about social security are likely to be social security claimants themselves or living on marginal incomes and they would therefore be expected to attach more importance than people making other sorts of enquiries to freephone facility when using Adviceline; this view was endorsed by the manager of the social security office at Inverness when asked to comment on the above findings. Related to this is the fact that the nearest social security office for dealing with telephone enquiries is at Inverness, with other offices at Dingwall and Wick along the east coast, necessitating a long distance call. Although social security offices will arrange to ring callers back where they are having difficulty meeting the cost of the call, social security offices cannot accept transfer charge calls.

(2) As the census figures in section 2.2 above have shown, the area served by Adviceline contains significantly higher proportions of people who are retired, and it is known that this group of people are among those groups most likely to be social security claimants or on marginal incomes.

26.
Consumer, trade and business enquiries (15%) were the next most frequent sorts of Adviseline enquiry (though occurring somewhat less frequently than the 19% handled in the ordinary way), followed by enquiries connected with housing (14%), family and personal matters (12%) and employment (9%), with their frequency again being slightly smaller than the normal run of bureau enquiries in each of these categories.

Matters connected with health, education, transport, communications, nationality and leisure each accounted for under 5% of Adviseline enquiries, in accordance with the normal pattern. Somewhat fewer Advice enquiries than ordinary enquiries were about the administration of justice but a slightly larger proportion were about taxation.

Table 2.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Category</th>
<th>Adviseline enquiries</th>
<th>Other enquiries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel and transport</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and nationality</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of justice</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National and international</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local information</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and personal</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social security</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxation</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer, trade, business</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enquiries about CAB</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 569 100.0 7353 100.0

2.4 Publicity

A leaflet advertising Adviseline was delivered to every household in
the Ullapool telephone area at the beginning of October 1979 and again exactly a year later, in October 1980 (when the leaflet was accompanied by a small circular sticker reminding householders of the freephone number to ask for). In the Skye and Lochalsh area a different publicity method was used for comparison: leaflets (and a year later, stickers) were distributed through the local council of social service to community and voluntary organisations, shops, offices, etc. for displaying on notice boards or for circularising among individuals with whom they came into contact. The leaflet (see appendix) indicated the times when bureau staff were available to answer Advoceline enquiries and the sorts of enquiries that could be dealt with. The leaflet also explained how to make the freephone call, listing all 55 exchanges through which Advoceline was available, and described how householders could expect their enquiries to be handled, laying great stress on the confidentiality of the service. Local press and radio publicity at the launch of the scheme and again after Advoceline had been going for one year further assisted in drawing attention to Advoceline.

One half (50%) of the 944 householders in the Ullapool telephone area replying to the SOC questionnaire in April 1981 - 18 months after Advoceline had been set up - claimed to have heard of the Advoceline service. Almost one third of the total sample (32%) also claimed that they knew how to contact the Advoceline service. Just over one in six respondents (16%) were able to specify the freephone number to ask for in order to be connected to Advoceline.

Among the householders who knew about Advoceline, by far the largest proportion (60%) said that they had heard of the service through the leaflet delivered to their homes. One third of them said that they had read about Advoceline in a newspaper, and one fifth had heard about the service through a radio broadcast. About one in every eight of them (12%) said that they had heard of Advoceline through somebody they knew. One fifth of respondents mentioned more than one of these sources.

As indicated in Table 2.5, however, householders who had made use of Advoceline at some time were significantly more likely to have heard about the service through the leaflet than through press or radio publicity; non-users were much more likely to have heard about Advoceline through press or radio publicity.

The publicity generated enquiries from all but six of the 55 telephone exchanges covered by Advoceline, as shown in Table 2.6. Many of these exchanges each serve very small populations indeed - fewer than 100 inhabitants - but about one third of the exchanges are in areas of larger population, such as Portree (1047 households), Ullapool (570 households) and Kyle (573 households). The table also indicates that much greater use was made of Advoceline in the Ullapool telephone area than in the Kyle and Lochalsh area. The number of
### Table 2.5

**Sources of publicity about Adviceline mentioned by respondents according to their use of the service, Spring 1981**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heard about Adviceline through:</th>
<th>Aware of Adviceline Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adviceline users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflet</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somebody I know</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n respondents)</td>
<td>(118)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. Percentages add up to more than 100 due to some respondents mentioning more than one item.

Adviceline calls, expressed as a proportion of the number of residential subscribers (after allowing for the fact that 16% of these calls were made from coin boxes) was much higher in the Ullapool area (23%) than in the Kyle and Lochalsh area (9%). There can be little doubt that the intensive leafleting of individual households in the Ullapool area contributed to the much higher proportion of enquiries from that area. The closer proximity of district council and area social work offices at Portree in the Kyle and Lochalsh area may have had some effect in reducing the number of Adviceline enquiries from there, although the influence of this factor is believed by the bureau to have been very slight. The table further indicates that within each of the two main telephone areas, the enquiry rate from some telephone exchanges (notably Lochinver) was proportionally higher than others (such as Ullapool) despite the larger population of the latter. These differences cannot be straightforwardly accounted for, but there is evidence that local community councils and other representatives in some areas have been active in promoting Adviceline.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telephone Exchange</th>
<th>Telephone Exchange</th>
<th>Residences</th>
<th>Residences</th>
<th>Call box/offices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyle &amp; Lochalsh Tel. Area</td>
<td>Kyle &amp; Lochalsh Tel. Area</td>
<td>Adviceline calls</td>
<td>on phone</td>
<td>postal addresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achnashellach</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applecross</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardvase</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmacara</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadford</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbost</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dornie</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunvegan</td>
<td>10(1)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duntulm</td>
<td>8(1)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinbane</td>
<td>11(3)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glendale</td>
<td>11(1)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenelg</td>
<td>17(5)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenshiel</td>
<td>13(1)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isle Of Rhum</td>
<td>3(1)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killilan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kishorn</td>
<td>7(4)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>30(3)</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loch Carron</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loch Sween</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plockton</td>
<td>5(3)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portnalong</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portree</td>
<td>27(8)</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>1047</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rassay</td>
<td>19(10)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shieldaig</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleat Bridge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligachan</td>
<td>4(1)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffa</td>
<td>13(5)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stromeferry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tariskavaig</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uig</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waternish</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>285(49)</strong></td>
<td><strong>2747</strong></td>
<td><strong>5002</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes 1. Adviceline figures include some 116 calls connected to a machine giving a recorded message outwith office hours. Calls originating from call boxes in parentheses.

2. Figures supplied by British Telecom, Scotland, and Post Office, Inverness. Due to administrative differences between telephone exchange and postal delivery areas, postal figures are only approximations (and include a few holiday homes).
2.5 Costs

Total combined running costs of the Adviseline service from its launch in October 1979 up to 31st March 1981 amounted to £1,492.72 (equivalent to an annual running cost £1,018.74 for 1980-81). As shown in Table 2.7, this worked out at an average cost of £2.18 an enquiry (or £2.38 for the period 1980-81). This figure does not take into account the additional costs of publicity, which in the case of Adviseline added another 78p to the cost of each enquiry; publicity costs would be expected to diminish over time as the service became more widely known. Nor does it include the office overheads of the bureau and the payment of a salary to a full time organiser, which together amounted to £13,424.82 in 1980-81. When the costs per enquiry for Adviseline are combined with the bureau's running costs, the average cost came to £2.50 an enquiry in 1980-81, taking into account the 5334 other initial enquiries received by the bureau in the normal way during this period.

Table 2.7


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freephone calls</td>
<td>£267.00</td>
<td>£134.55</td>
<td>£288.56</td>
<td>£690.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metered calls</td>
<td>£113.13</td>
<td>£77.73</td>
<td>£272.17</td>
<td>£463.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental + VAT#</td>
<td>£93.85</td>
<td>£89.90</td>
<td>£155.83</td>
<td>£339.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£493.98</td>
<td>£302.18</td>
<td>£716.56</td>
<td>£1492.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of freephone calls†</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average cost per enquiry</td>
<td>£1.92</td>
<td>£2.08</td>
<td>£2.53</td>
<td>£2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity*</td>
<td>£390.00</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>£336.00</td>
<td>£726.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Publicity costs comprised:
- Printing of 10,000 stickers: cost £140
- Printing of 15,000 leaflets: £400
- Two mail deliveries to 3,000 households Oct. 79 and 80: £150

† Figures include 86 connections to bureau giving pre-recorded message outwith office hours

# Plus a charge of £30.00 for the telephone installation and £5 for the installation of equipment giving a pre-recorded message, October 1979

31.
Rises in the cost of attending to Adviceline enquiries between October 1979 and March 1981 reflected telephone tariff and rental increases over this period, when average costs per enquiry increased by nearly a third. The minimum average cost at peak times (9 a.m. - 1 p.m.) of an operator-connected "freephone" call to the bureau rose from 80p in October 1979 to 98p in March 1981. (Table 2.8) It is fair to point out, however, that the changes in October 1979 had been in operation since January 1977, so that the frequency of tariff increases which took place in the course of the Adviceline experiment (in January 1980 and November 1980) need not be representative of the pattern in future years. According to British Telecom, today's telephone charges (1982) are in real terms 75% of what they were ten years ago. Moreover, from May 1982, lower charges have been introduced for the first time on all inland long distance routes at peak and standard times, with even more substantial reductions on certain "low cost routes" between major cities to attract more business custom. Thus the minimum charge for a long-distance (over 50 km.) operator connected (including "freephone") call is reduced from its previous level of £1.10 to 97p (including VAT) at peak times and from 90p to 76p at standard times - in effect bringing costs down to their level over a year previously. Similar reductions apply to metered calls. Long-distance calls at the cheap rate remain unchanged, however.

Over half of the freephone calls (53.1%) were made during peak period (between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.), when charges were about a third dearer than at the standard rate - and over two and a half times dearer than the cheap rate (6 p.m. - 8 a.m. and weekends). From Table 2.8 it is possible to estimate the savings that would have been made during the standard or cheap periods only. Taking, say, the six month period, from October 1980 to March 1981, one can show that the 153 calls made at peak times, costing on aggregate £167, would have cost about £129 at the standard rate and only about £72 at the cheap rate - savings of over a fifth and over a half respectively.

It may also be seen from Table 2.8 that over the whole 18 month period there was a significant upward shift in the proportion of freephone calls lasting 3 minutes or under - from just over 60% in the first six months to over 88% in the last six months. This stemmed from a policy decision mid-way through the experiment to reverse incoming freephone calls to take advantage of the cheaper metered rate, resulting in marginal but significant savings.

A further economy measure was introduced after the first 18 months of the scheme, when the pre-recorded message given to Adviceline callers outwith bureau hours (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) was discontinued. Since the connection charge for these calls was exactly the same as for a call lasting up to 3 minutes, the cost of servicing these
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Peak 9 am - 1 pm</th>
<th>Standard 1 pm - 6 pm</th>
<th>Standard 8 am - 9 am</th>
<th>Cheap 6 pm - 8 am + weekends</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>av.cost (£)</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>av.cost (£)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3 mins.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 6 mins.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9 mins.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 15 mins.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+ mins.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Peak 9 am - 1 pm</th>
<th>Standard 1 pm - 6 pm</th>
<th>Standard 8 am - 9 am</th>
<th>Cheap 6 pm - 8 am + weekends</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>av.cost (£)</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>av.cost (£)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 1980 - Sept. 1980</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3 mins.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 6 mins.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9 mins.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 15 mins.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+ mins.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Peak 9 am - 1 pm</th>
<th>Standard 1 pm - 6 pm</th>
<th>Standard 8 am - 9 am</th>
<th>Cheap 6 pm - 8 am + weekends</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>av.cost (£)</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>av.cost (£)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3 mins.</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 6 mins.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9 mins.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 15 mins.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+ mins.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Peak 9 am - 1 pm</th>
<th>Standard 1 pm - 6 pm</th>
<th>Standard 8 am - 9 am</th>
<th>Cheap 6 pm - 8 am + weekends</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>av.cost (£)</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>av.cost (£)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3 mins.</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 6 mins.</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9 mins.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 15 mins.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+ mins.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
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</table>
calls with the answering equipment outwith office hours was a significant expense, as much as £1.02 a time during the peak period. According to a check carried out by the bureau on these calls, which accounted for an estimated 12% of connections only 5% of them resulted in the caller phoning back next day during office hours, and the Adviceline Committee therefore decided to discontinue this facility.

2.6 Handling of enquiries

Bureau workers were not expected to deal with Adviceline enquiries in any way differently from enquiries received in the ordinary way by telephone from clients paying for their call (with the exception, noted in the previous section that a decision was taken later on in the experiment to reverse incoming Adviceline calls to reduce costs). Adviceline users were to receive the same sorts of services as the bureau’s other clients making enquiries by telephone in the ordinary way. As already indicated in section 2.3 (Table 2.4) the proportion of clients taking advantage of Adviceline to discuss the sorts of problems perhaps requiring extended face-to-face discussions, such as family and personal problems, did not differ significantly from the proportion with these sorts of problems approaching the bureau in the normal way. Indeed there may have been circumstances where the client preferred to discuss his or her problem over the phone rather than through a face-to-face interview, although it was not possible to provide evidence of this.

The bureau's handling of Adviceline enquiries was nevertheless carefully monitored over the 18 month period to assess the operational effects of running a freephone advice service. Arrangements were made for the completion of monitoring forms by bureau workers after handling each Adviceline enquiry. The general impression gained from discussions with the bureau organiser was that the bureau had been well able to encompass the Adviceline service within its overall workload. Adviceline had not unduly interfered with the provision of its normal services or entailed the recruitment of additional volunteers. The fact that the bureau was able to cope with an exceptionally large number of Adviceline enquiries at the launch of the scheme (87 in a month and again a year later following renewed publicity) suggests that it would have required a very large volume of Adviceline enquiries indeed before staffing became a problem.

As shown in Table 2.9 the bureau was able to reply immediately to nearly half of the Adviceline enquiries monitored over the 18 month period. In another 30% of cases, the bureau arranged to contact the client with a reply later on, invariably on the same day as the initial enquiry, after further investigation. Nearly
Table 2.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Handling of Adviseline enquiries</th>
<th></th>
<th>% base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 1979–March 1981</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of enquiries monitored(^1)</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action taken in response to enquiry(^2) (base:501)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reply given immediately; no further action needed</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau arranged to contact client with reply later on</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client referred to another agency</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client advised to contact bureau again</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflets, etc. posted to client</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultations with other agencies</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of reply to enquiry (base:513)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information only given</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice only given</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and advice given</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical assistance given</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing of replies to enquiries (base:504)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reply given on same day as initial enquiry</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>94.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply to enquiry given following day</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply to enquiry given two or more days later</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for not giving immediate reply (base:486)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further investigation necessary</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enquiry difficult to handle over phone</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More information from client required</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time spent dealing with enquiry, on and off phone (base:499)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes and under</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 minutes</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 minutes</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-24 minutes</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30 minutes</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-45 minutes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-60 minutes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 1 hour</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical and for other difficulties encountered (base:530)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES: 1 Missing monitoring information on 39 cases.
2 Due to category overlap, base percentages add up to more than 100.
a quarter of clients were referred to other agencies, such as their local authority or to a social worker or solicitor, although this was often accompanied by advice as well. In only a very small number of cases (30) did clients have to wait until the following day or longer for an answer to their enquiry or problem. Occasionally, delay was caused by the client needing to supply further information or documents for checking before his enquiry could be satisfactorily attended to. Eight per cent of enquiries involved some form of consultation between the bureau and another agency (e.g. Department of Health and Social Security) before a reply could be given, and another 8% resulted in leaflets or other information being sent to the client.

There was no evidence that the estimated 97 Adviseline calls made from public call boxes or offices during bureau hours (representing 17% of enquiries handled) presented any special problems, and bureau workers invariably made a special effort to give an immediate reply to calls made in this way. In the 34 cases where the bureau advised clients not leaving a number to phone the bureau again for a reply to their enquiry later on, 26 callers are recorded as in fact doing so; and since not all such calls originated from public call boxes (a few clients evidently preferred not to leave a telephone number) the disadvantages of using a call box appeared to be slight as far as the Adviseline service was concerned.

The time spent dealing with individual enquiries averaged 5 to 15 minutes, with 45% of them being dealt with in under 15 minutes and 93% in half an hour or under. It was not possible to work out how much of this time was actually spent dealing with the enquiry over the telephone, but a rough estimate suggests that, on aggregate, 70-80% of the time was spent doing so (with the remaining time spent in investigation and administration). However, it is possible that some bureau workers may have understated the amount of time they spent dealing with individual enquiries, and therefore figures such as these may be subject to a wide margin of error.

There were very few reports of any technical or other difficulties being encountered by bureau workers in their handling of Adviseline enquiries. In only 6 cases was technical interference on the line reported as causing difficulties; in 14 cases there were difficulties in contacting the client by phone; in another 6 cases the client was reported as having difficulty explaining his/her problem over the phone.

2.7 Public response to Adviseline

There was no evidence from the replied of householders filling in the postal questionnaire that the use made of Adviseline and public awareness of the service was affected to any significant degree by
the socio-economic circumstances of householders in the area, taking the housing tenure of respondents as a "proxy" measure in this regard. As shown in Table 2.10 the proportions of householders in different tenure groups saying they had made an Adviceline call at some time did not differ greatly from their representation in the population of the area.

Table 2.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing tenure</th>
<th>Users of Adviceline</th>
<th>Aware of Adviceline</th>
<th>Unaware of Adviceline</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Valuation Roll*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croft accommd.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council/SSHA</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately rented</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>118</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures supplied by planning department of Highland Regional Council (but see note beneath Table 2.2).

It is especially notable that householders living in croft accommodation, which accounted for 30% of dwellings in the area, took as much advantage of the service as might be expected from their representation in the population: indeed a greater number of them reported having used Adviceline at some time than did either council or private tenants, who each occupied under one fifth of dwellings in the area.

It is also noticeable from the table that among the non-users of Adviceline the level of public awareness of the service did not differ markedly according to tenure group: on the whole each group was just as likely to report being aware of Adviceline as not aware of the service up to the time they received the questionnaire.

There were only slight differences between the proportions of Adviceline users (84%) and non-users (82%) who reported that they had a telephone in their household: but these differences may have been
attenuated by the over-representation of telephone subscribers in the sample when compared with the official estimate of 59% of households in the area with telephones. Some 22% of respondents claimed that they had convenient access to a public call box or to a neighbour's telephone only; 6% said they had no access to a telephone at all. Again, due to bias in the response rate, these proportions may have understated the number of people in the area without proper access to a telephone. A third of respondents said that they had use of a motor vehicle, though with a slightly higher proportion of Adviceline users (38%) mentioning this than non-users (32%).

Well over a quarter (29%) of respondents said that they had approached one or more agencies or individuals with an enquiry or problem in the previous 12 months. But Adviceline users were much more likely to report having done so (49%) than non-users, whether they were already aware of the service or not (27% and 24% respectively). The higher mention of other agencies by Adviceline users may stem from the fact that 24% of the Adviceline enquiries monitored resulted in some kind of referral to another agency. As shown in Table 2.11 the agencies or individuals most frequently mentioned by respondents were solicitors, social security/unemployment benefit offices and the district or regional council (although it was perhaps surprising to find that none had been referred to the Crofters' Commission in view of the substantial proportion of crofters in the population). There were no marked differences in the sorts of agencies approached by Adviceline users compared with non-users.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency/individual contacted</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Non-users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sollicitor</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social security/unemployment office</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District/regional council</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected representative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inland Revenue</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer protection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIBD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAT office</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal Board</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crofters' Commission</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Service</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total number of single mentions                  | 74    | 279       |

| Total number of respondents mentioning one or more of above | 58    | 215       |

All of the 455 respondents claiming some awareness of Adviceline mentioned one or more main attractions of having such a service in their area. As indicated in Table 2.12, four fifths of respondents, when prompted, attached importance to the saving in journey time and expenses involved in having to make a personal visit to their advice centre. Three fifths were attracted by the confidential handling of enquiries and nearly another three fifths considered the freephone facility to be one of the main attractions of the service. Over four fifths of the respondents who had actually made use of Adviceline also attached considerably more weight than the non-users to the prompt attention that could be given to their enquiries handled in this way. As a result of using Adviceline, they were also somewhat more likely to mention the con-
Table 2.12

Main attractions of Adviceline mentioned by respondents, Spring 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Attractors (%) mentions</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Non-users</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No journey necessary</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freephone facility</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompt attention</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Base)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(116)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB Percentages add up to more than 100 due to some respondents mentioning more than one main attraction.

Confidentiality of the service and the fact that they were not charged for the cost of the call. All told, however, exactly one half of all respondents who had heard of Adviceline considered three or more of the above factors to be among the main attractions of the service. The significance of these findings is discussed in the next section. Ninety-seven respondents also ascribed to the service various attractions or benefits of their own, as summarised in Table 2.13.

Table 2.13

Attractions and benefits of Adviceline volunteered by respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attraction/benefits</th>
<th>n respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source of reliable/unbiased advice or information</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes up for lack of services in area</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces sense of personal isolation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of advice/help in an emergency</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very beneficial to elderly</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful starting point</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saves expenses on petrol</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service quick and efficient/easy to use</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous help</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good source of help to newcomers in area</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (single mentions only)</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One hundred and four out of the 118 Adviceline users among respondents reported that they had been "satisfied with the way in which their enquiry had been handled: only five reported that they had had difficulties in "getting through", three claimed that the bureau had been "unable to supply the information requested" and another two said that they had been given "inaccurate information". One user reported dissatisfaction with the call made through his local telephone exchange. Another three users could not recall whether they were satisfied with the handling of their enquiry or not.

Respondents were also invited to offer more general comments on Adviceline at the end of the questionnaire. Of the 146 respondents doing so an overwhelming number (110) spoke in favour of the service, many of them commenting on Adviceline in very complimentary terms. Typical comments included:

"For rural areas this is a good and necessary service."  
Council tenant, Lochinver

"Please keep this service going!"  
Owner-occupier, Poolewe

"We find Adviceline useful and have used it on several occasions. Please keep it going."  
Crofter, Ullapool

"Deserves to succeed."  
Private tenant, Gairloch

"Would not like to see this service terminated."  
Persioner, Aultbea

"An excellent service for a small remote community."  
Owner-occupier, Scourie

"Speedier attention to our delayed cases than in the past."  
Crofter, Torridon

"Strongly support Adviceline/CAB and should not be cut."  
Private tenant, Achnasheen

"Good to know that at the end of the telephone there is someone who wants to help."  
Council tenant, Ullapool
A number of respondents offered more specific comments, as in the following examples:

"Great idea for elderly, lonely or housebound, and especially the free phone call."
Tied tenant, Lochbroom

"Your service vital in an area generally unserved by professional advisers against the activities of councils, service utilities, salesmen, etc."
Owner-occupier, Diabaig

"Especially valuable service for anyone who cannot afford to consult a solicitor."
Owner-occupier, Gairloch

"With Inverness being 100 miles away and the price of petrol, Adviceline is essential."
Crofter, Kylestrone

"A godsend to incomers who don't know their way around."
Owner-occupier, Lochinver

"As an ex-CAB worker, I'm pleased to see these outlying areas covered and help available free to all people."
Owner-occupier, Stow

"The DHSS had ignored my claims and refused benefit until I quoted my rights as advised by Adviceline."
Council tenant, Lochinver

"The staff at Inverness CAB are efficient and courteous. I cannot speak too highly of them."
Owner-occupier, Aultbea

"I think it's a good thing that people can get advice and help just by a phone call and get a reply the same day without worry."
Council tenant, Ullapool

"I have used Adviceline for consumer problems and without it I know I would have accepted the problem I had. I found the person I spoke to extremely helpful, understanding and efficient."
Tied dweller, Ullapool

"Many thanks for the help so readily and courteously given. The nearest advice bureau is sixty miles
from here. They are super!"

Owner-occupier, Ullapool

"I work as a health visitor and have been able to give the phone number to clients who have used it for confidential advice not available locally."

"As a local councillor, I get to know from electors the value of this service and its becoming better known and providing an excellent service to remoter areas."

Some 20 respondents offered various positive suggestions of their own for promoting Adviceline, especially through extended publicity in post-offices, the local press, through community councils, and in the telephone directory. One respondent wanted to see publicity about the service in Gaelic, for the benefit of elderly people whose English was their second language. Another respondent suggested that greater use should be made of doctors, health visitors, clergymen, mobile libraries, etc. since information in the area was spread only by word of mouth.

Among the 30 respondents offering negative comments, 11 felt that the scheme had not received enough publicity, and 4 of these respondents were clearly disenchanted that advantage had not been taken of the questionnaire to inform or remind them how to use and contact Adviceline. (For survey purposes this was not possible.) Another five respondents drew attention to what they saw as an inferior telephone service provision in their area and three respondents (including a pensioner) indicated that they could not afford to have a telephone installed.

Only two respondents claimed that their enquiry had not been dealt with properly:

"I felt that the person who was dealing with my problem with the DHSS could have handed over my problem to the replacement when she went off duty rather than giving me the DHSS number to telephone myself. If I could have dealt with it and got satisfaction initially myself, I would never have used Adviceline in the first place. The person manning the phone said she'd been unable to contact the DHSS office herself and explained that she was going off duty so I could phone myself."

Crofter, Kinlochbervie

"Vague unhelpful answer given."

Owner-occupier, Lochinver

43.
2.6 Discussion

Owner-Occupier, Galloch
"Stop wasting my time and the country’s money."

Owner-Occupier, Beddington
"Money and time."

These questions relate to a fairly bureaucratic waste of money and time, are paid for by the taxpayer. This so-called free service is misleading; all services sense.

Owner-Occupier, Upplands
"We cannot afford. This is an extravagant luxury. It is too much spoonfeeding, this is an extravagant luxury.

I think the young generation are being spoiled.

These people learn to read for themselves. They are not used to taking advantage of this kind of service."

The high initial take-up of advertising in the four responses offering comments appears to be hostile.
many social and voluntary social services by certain socio-economic groups more than others. Adviseline was also used at some time by people living in most of the communities covered by the service, although uptake was higher in the areas where leafleting had been done on a house-to-house basis.

(2) Publicity As indicated in the preceding paragraph, Adviseline was very dependent on a large amount of publicity to encourage take-up of the service. Although initial waves of publicity were undertaken both at the start and in the middle of the scheme, through leafleting, press publicity and advertising, arguably this was not enough to sustain the enquiry rate at a substantial enough level. A related difficulty was getting people to remember the freephone number to ask for, since leaflets tended to be discarded after a time. The provision of stickers midway through the experiment, reminding people of the freephone number, to some extent circumvented this problem, but the low proportion (16%) of people who knew the freephone number to ask for six months after receiving stickers suggested that more recurrent publicity was needed. The provision of leaflets and or stickers would appear to be essential (if rather costly) in getting a freephone advice service off the ground in a sparsely populated area where other forms of communication are limited. But various other forms of publicity need to be applied if such a service is to become more widely known and used.

These might include:

(i) regular advertisements in the local press and in community newsletters, preferably free of charge, reminding people of the freephone number

(ii) a special insert or advice services page in the telephone directory, listing the appropriate freephone numbers

(iii) enclosure of publicity with telephone bills (this idea was put to the Scottish Telecommunications Board for the North of Scotland, who replied that it was not their policy to include unsolicited material with telephone accounts, despite the revenue raising potential of advertising a freephone advice service)

(iv) allocation of a freephone number which people can easily remember, working on the "999" principle.
(3) Costs Telephone advice services, especially when manned by unpaid volunteers, represent a cost effective use of public funds, since nearly all of the money needed to administer a freephone service goes directly on advice giving by telephone without entailing other administrative costs. The average cost of handling an enquiry by Adviseline (£2.38 in 1980-81) was not substantially different from what it was already costing the Inverness bureau to handle enquiries in the normal way (£2.52 per enquiry), taking into account the organiser's salary and office overheads. Nevertheless it is unlikely that an advice centre can meet the cost of running a freephone service from the existing budget; some additional assistance from public funds is necessary. In the case of Adviseline the continuation of the freephone service was secured beyond its first 18 months as a result of three of the local authorities concerned agreeing to provide funds in 1981-82 (and all four doing so for 1982-83). Orkney Islands Council has also agreed to provide funds towards the running of a freephone advice service for its own area, administered by the citizens' advice bureau at Alness (Ross and Cromarty) in 1982-83, a joint contribution coming from SACAB development funds.

Rises in telephone call and rental charges may pose difficulties for freephone advice services one they have got going. In the case of Adviseline, two sets of tariff and rental increases over 18 months resulted in the average cost of an Adviseline enquiry being a third more in the last six months (£2.53) than in the first six months (£1.92), even after certain economies were introduced mid-way through the experiment. With the introduction for the first time of reduced charges on long-distance routes at peak and standard times from May 1982, however, it may be that the price rises will not occur with such frequency as in the past few years. Savings can be effected by:

(i) reversing incoming freephone calls from clients which are operator connected, by arranging to phone clients back to take advantage of the cheaper tariffs when calls are dialled direct. Such an arrangement worked out satisfactorily in the Adviseline experiment, resulting in freephone calls accounting for only 40% of telephone costs at the end of the experiment compared with 56% at the beginning.

(ii) requiring clients to pay for incoming calls out of their own pocket, but following the Northumberland rural CAB scheme, arranging for them to leave a number for ringing back straightaway. Potential callers could be made aware that the initial call would cost them only about 5p.

46.
(iii) running telephone advice services at times that take advantage of calls charged at standard (1p.m.-6p.m.) or cheap rates (6p.m.-8a.m. and weekends); up to 50% savings can be achieved in this way. This may be difficult to achieve in practice, however. It would appear, from discussions with advice service staff, that people are generally used to coming forward with enquiries in the daytime, during normal business hours. There may also be difficulties in staffing advice centres during the evenings.

Longer-term consideration may need to be given to allowing local calls to extend over a longer distance, beyond the present mileage limits, however, if rural dwellers are not to be unduly penalised when contacting "local" services by telephone.

(4) Handling of enquiries No major difficulties were reported by bureau workers in their handling of enquiries by telephone, which already represented a major part of the bureau's activities even before Adviceline was set up. Occasional difficulties were encountered where the client had difficulty explaining his or her problem over the phone or where documents had to be checked; sometimes it was possible to arrange for a client to make a personal visit to the bureau, say during a shopping expedition to Inverness. Despite the major breakdown in a main service cable shortly after Adviceline was set up, technical interference on the line thereafter appeared to be minimal. In two thirds of cases, the time spent dealing with individual enquiries on and off the phone was not more than 15 minutes. In almost half of cases the enquiry could be answered straightaway, and when further investigation was required, an answer was normally given by phoning the client back on the same day. Even the 17% of enquiries made from public call boxes did not appear to present any special difficulties to suggest that freephone calls made in this way put clients without their own telephone at a disadvantage; only 6% of householders in the SXC survey said that a telephone was not within their reach. Referrals to other agencies applied in just under a quarter of cases.

All of this is not to suggest that there are no inherent problems in the handling of enquiries by telephone. One likely difficulty, for example, is establishing proper rapport with clients over the telephone. It may be - as a recent seminar on telephone advice services advocated - that advice workers need special training to be given to them for providing advice by telephone. Nevertheless it would appear that the provision of an advice service by telephone constitutes a manageable option for bureaux and other advice centres wishing to extend their services to the more sparsely populated areas around them.
(5) The public response. The results of the SCC household survey indicated that Adviseline was regarded by inhabitants in the sparsely populated area of north west Scotland as a very welcome innovation. Perhaps the most revealing comment of all came from a council tenant who remarked that it was "good to know that at the end of the telephone there is someone who wants to help". Over 80% of the people who had heard of Adviseline attached importance to the saving in travel the service offered, and a similar proportion of householders who had actually made use of Adviseline attached weight to the prompt way in which enquiries could be attended to by this method of advice-giving. Although a smaller proportion of respondents (three-fifths approximately) regarded the freephone facility and the confidentiality of the service as important, there can be little doubt that for the rural populations at large a freephone telephone advice service like Adviseline represents a considerable benefit, in terms of saving in time, money and effort needed to make proper use of advice services some distance away. There is therefore every good reason to suppose that the development of telephone advice services in other rural areas would meet the same enthusiastic public response.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Central Statistical Office, Social Trends, 1981 edition, HMSO, 1981, p. 169. The proportion of households in Scotland with a telephone (65%) is lower than the UK figure (although it is as high as 82% in areas such as Aberdeen).


3 In 1976, 59% of elderly householders, for example, were without a telephone (England only). Social trends, 1979 edition, p. 165.

4 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970, Section 2(h).

5 Unpublished figures supplied by the Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureau. Figures refer to initial enquiries received by bureaux in January 1978.


7 Report prepared for the consumer protection and environmental health department of Western Isles Islands Council, submitted June 1981; written communication from the council's consumer protection and environmental health department.

8 Personal communication from the Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureau.

9 Written communication from principal adviser, Surrey County Council trading standards department.

10 Ditto

11 Written communication from Devon and Cornwall Constabulary.


14 Unpublished figures compiled by the Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureau for January 1978 showed that
the Inverness bureau received 60% of its enquiries by telephone.


16 Written communication from British Telecom, Scotland. These figures may underestimate slightly the proportion of telephones in residential use, since some lines in residential use may be classified as business lines (e.g. in some farming households).

17 Written communication from British Telecom, Scotland.

18 *ibid*.

19 A report on the issues raised at the seminar is presented in *Hello, can I help you? the growth of telephone advice services*, Mutual Aid Press, 1981 (available from the Mutual Aid Centre, 18 Victoria Park Square, London E2 9PF, price £1.00).
3

INFORMATION LINK

3.1 Information/village link schemes

Most rural communities are too small to support an information or advice centre of their own, in the sense that each town or village of a few hundred inhabitants or less is likely to generate only a small fraction of that number - perhaps only a tenth at most - of people coming forward with enquiries each year. One alternative which has gained some ground in recent years has been the appointment of local volunteers working either from their own homes or public meeting places to provide their own network or "chain" of information and advice services in rural communities. There "information" or village "links", contacts or representatives as the volunteers have variously been called, have been seen as supplementing or extending the services of advice or information centres which are too far away for rural inhabitants to reach without too much expense or inconvenience. Some schemes are focussed on the straightforward provision of information about services in the area, working in co-operation with other agencies "signposting" people to agencies or individuals best equipped to deal with their problem, without the links spending too much time of their own on advice giving or complex problems which they have not been specially trained to deal with. Other schemes, mainly CAB-based ones, seek to extend to rural dwellers the full range of services offered to clients able to visit or contact an advice centre in the normal way by appointing their own "representatives" to particular areas. Link schemes may also be regarded as providing an information or advice service which is closely attuned to some of the very special problems facing different rural communities (affected by, say, the closure of a village post office or loss of a bus service), with enquiries being more appropriately handled "on the spot" than from a distance. If communities already contain well-known and respected figures whom people can turn to for information or advice, then there may be an argument for formalising and developing their role through a link scheme. Yet another approach, which is only beginning to be explored, is to see the link not only as a local information or advice provider but as someone who might be able to encourage or set up local community "self help" and other activities, such as the running of a car sharing scheme or toddlers' group or acting as a pressure point against, say, village closures (shops, schools, post offices, etc.). Initiatives of this kind are emerging in some of the schemes described below.

The earliest known link scheme was set up by the Community Council of Shropshire in 1973 after a rotary club survey revealed a need among local residents for more information about services in the
areas. By 1978 the scheme had appointed 140 local representatives to cover their own villages, such representatives having been nominated by their parish council. By 1982 in some of the larger villages, experimental projects were under way in 1982 involving (initially) groups of three representatives specialising in different areas of enquiry and able to refer cases to one another. "Area representatives" have also been appointed for different parts of the county to give field work support to 12-15 local representatives in each area. Representatives have so far included housewives, teachers, postmistresses, clergy, a garage owner, a retired policeman, a district nurse, etc. (the large majority of volunteers being women). Although the representatives were given no formal training, guidance and support was provided by an honorary field officer (who provided the links with information folder of leaflets, updated regularly, and a directory of essential community services). In the first year of the scheme the field officer made visits to the homes of every representative, involving over 2,300 miles in travel and 1½ days work each week. The scheme was publicised through posters bearing the local representative's name, address and phone number and placed on village noticeboards, shops public houses, post offices, surgeries, etc. Other bodies such as women's institutes, churches, the Red Cross, etc. were able to publicise the scheme through "word of mouth".

Leaflets bearing the names of local representatives and the addresses and telephone numbers of citizens' advice bureaux in the country have since been widely distributed among community organisations. A Guide to local community services, with an alphabetical list of centres by subject, has also been published by the Community Council of Shropshire, which, in addition, has issued a quarterly newsletter CONTACT to keep local representatives informed of legislative and other developments. Another leaflet tells people how to start their own village newsletter.

Although no formal monitoring of enquiries was carried out, 15 representatives who were selected to record enquiries in November and December 1977 reported handling 38 enquiries, half of them being dealt with on a face-to-face basis and most of the remainder by telephone. Enquiries were most frequently about transport, health, housing and social security. Much of their work, as well as involving information giving, included some sort of practical assistance, such as help with filling in forms or making telephone calls on behalf of the enquirer. The cost of the scheme in 1977-78 amounted to £2,120, to cover the representatives' and field officer's travelling, postal and telephone expenses, publicity and information materials and some clerical costs. Recent running costs have amounted to about £1,000 a year, an unpaid honorary organiser now being responsible for the running of the scheme. Similar schemes based on the Shropshire model have more recently been set up by rural community councils in Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire, albeit on a smaller scale. Commenting on link schemes run by rural community
councils, the joint NCC/NCSS discussion paper The Right to Know (1978) concluded:

"It is clear that any scheme will make considerable demands on the main RCC office. First of all, setting up a scheme requires at least a year: to convene a working party, to recruit the village links, to brief them and, at the same time, to gather basic information material, possibly including the publication of a directory of local services. Once a scheme is established, someone has to be available to deal with enquiries from volunteers in difficulties, for example, over finding factual material, with handling an official department or perhaps an awkward situation with an enquirer."

The paper recommended the provision of national and local information pack for the links' own use and the provision of specialist training for field officers in charge of teams of volunteer links.

Similarly, in a review of advice and information services in Cambridgeshire (1980), a working party, while wishing to encourage local self-help schemes using volunteer links, commented:

"Whilst the volunteer links could be expected to cope with basic information needs, they would not have the training and information resources to deal with more complex enquiries and detailed advice needs. The review has also shown that villagers are often wary about local people knowing their problems. To satisfy these needs this working party believes that they should have access to a general purpose centre in a nearby town, where free impartial and confidential advice and information can be obtained ...... it is important that close working relationships are established between volunteer links and the information and advice centres."3

At least two citizens' advice bureaux are known to have established link schemes of their own. The first of these, launched by Newtown CAB, Montgomeryshire, in 1976, appointed volunteers with CAB training to act as "referral points" in six villages, all lying within a 30 mile radius of the bureau.4 Any enquiries which could not be properly dealt with "on the spot" were attended to by the links when they made their weekly or twice weekly visits to the bureau for training and advice giving sessions. Each link was
supplied with information leaflets for issuing to clients but
not the CAB information pack, which was available for reference
at the bureau. The scheme was publicised through printed posters
displaying the name, address and telephone number of the link
for the community on public noticeboards, in shops and offices,
church halls, etc. Volunteers comprised a retired bank manager,
a retired postmaster, a Red Cross and WRVS worker, a headmaster's
wife, a community council and church council member, and a
minister's wife. Four of the links had been living in their
community for 15 years or more.

The scheme was carefully monitored on behalf of the National
Association of CABx between April 1977 and March 1978, when the
six volunteers handled 101 enquiries from a "community population"
of 7550 (or one enquiry per 74 inhabitants). This may be compared
with one enquiry per 17 inhabitants handled by a CAB mobile advice
van and one enquiry per 25 inhabitants handled by a CAB extension
bureau in other parts of rural North Wales in this period. The
largest proportion of enquiries were connected with housing, property
and land (28%), social security (20%), and employment (14%) – these
figures being considerably higher than the national averages for
England and Wales of 17%, 7% and 8% respectively. Family and
personal problems accounted for another 8% of enquiries, compared
with a national average of 20%. Some 56% of enquiries were made
through personal visits to the link's or enquirer's home, 35% were
made by telephone, and 9% by letter. A third were made outwith
normal office hours. Two thirds of those requiring further action
by the link involved making telephone calls on behalf of the enquirer.

While it was not possible to account properly for variations in the
take up levels between individual links, the study suggested that
they could be attributable to a "complicated mix" of factors:
e.g. the existence of informal, traditional advice/information
networks alongside the services provided by the link, the perceived
status of the link in the community and his/her personal character-
istics, the nature of the community itself, and public assessments
of the confidentiality of the service being offered. Take-up
rates were found not to be associated with the link's length of
residence in the area (7-30+ years) or the distance of the link's
area of residence from the bureau (7-15 miles). The highest
enquiry rates were, however, observed in communities where the link
appeared to have some easily recognisable status (e.g. retired
bank manager, headmaster's wife, community councillor), although
given the very small number of links involved makes it impossible
to draw any statistical inferences from these observations. To
safeguard the confidentiality of the scheme, investigations did not
extend to survey work among enquirers (or even non-users), but
detailed analysis of enquiries showed that more enquiries came from
women than men (59 and 39 respectively) and that the links attracted
a significantly greater proportion of enquiries from members of

54.
their own sex. The study concluded:

"The fact that the links reside in the small communities in which they serve and are familiar with many of the potential users of the services must give rise to fears about the confidentiality of the information shared and must inhibit enquiries being made of a personal nature. This is borne out by the fact that less than half of the national average percentage of family and personal enquiries were made in this scheme."

Another CAB-based scheme "Village Link", was started by Castle Douglas CAB, Kirkcudbrightshire (Dumfries and Galloway) in April 1979, the first link scheme in Scotland having been established by the SCC some 10 months previously and the subject of this report. It involved nine of the bureau's team of volunteers, who in the first year of the scheme handled 204 enquiries from a combined parish population of 2490 households. This represented one enquiry for every 11 households and accounted for one fifth of all enquiries handled by the bureau. As in the Newtown, Montgomery, scheme, the links were trained as CAB volunteers, through 15 one-day sessions, and were very much seen as local "representatives" of their bureau, which they attended once weekly to conduct advice giving sessions. The closest link was 7 miles from the bureau, the most distant 25 miles away. Each link was supplied with duplicated publicity handbills for delivery to all households in their village and posters for display in shops and offices, etc. A paid advertisement, giving the name, address and telephone number of every link, was also inserted in the local press once a month. In addition, the links were sent Job Vacancy cards for display on local noticeboards from the Employment Service Agency in Dumfries, which was anxious to improve its service to rural communities. This arrangement is reported to have proved very successful, with 37 people having found jobs in the first six months of the Link scheme as a result of these cards. The SCC came to see the Castle Douglas scheme as providing an interesting parallel to its own advice experiments in the north of Scotland, and the bureau agreed to let the SCC monitor enquiries in the second year of the scheme, from April 1980 to March 1981. Commenting on the scheme's first year, the bureau organiser remarked:

"The link scheme in Castle Douglas is, as far as we are aware, unlike other rural advice and information services in Scotland in that it aims to provide a full CAB service using trained volunteers. The level of enquiries has justified the time and effort necessary to achieve this.

Two factors have been identified as important to the success of the scheme. The first is the initial
recruitment of links who are known and respected in the community, who are available and involved in village affairs. The second is the ongoing contact with the bureau, giving support and encouragement to the link."

3.2 Setting up of the SCC Information Link scheme

The setting up of an experimental "village link" scheme in Scotland was recommended by the Scottish Consumer Council in its report Let the People Know (1977). As a result of a seminar on rural advice services, which it had sponsored at Inverness in 1977, the SCC appointed a working party to consider the feasibility of setting up of a village link scheme of its own in the Grampian region. Grampian region had been selected by the SCC because it not only covered a large rural area but also contained a number of information and advice agencies with which the links could be in contact (these being in Aberdeen, with one information centre at Fraserburgh). The working party comprised representatives from four of the five district councils in the region, the consumer protection department of Grampian Regional Council, the Scottish Association of CABs, Aberdeen CAB, the Scottish Council of Social Service, (Shelter, St. Katherine's Centre, Workers Educational Association) and some voluntary organisations in the area. An SCC paper describing the rural community council scheme in Shropshire was circulated at the meeting of the working party in October 1977.

At the working party meeting, some of the participants argued that advice need in rural areas were in practice fairly adequately catered for already, through bodies such as local community associations, various specialist advice giving bodies (marriage guidance councils, councils on alcoholism, etc.) as well as through official channels such as solicitors and local authority departments. In addition it was also argued that rural inhabitants were more self-reliant about their problems than their urban counterparts. Other participants argued, however, that not all of the advice needs of individuals could be met through these agencies and that people were often uninformed about which local authority department to approach with their enquiry or problem. The advantage of the village link scheme, it was claimed, would be that the links would be accessible, socially and geographically, and that they would not be confined to giving advice on a particular topic. An important feature of generalist advice services was their ability to identify the actual problem which underlay the "presenting" problem.

The working party also discussed the sort of service which the links should be providing. The representative from the Scottish
WHAT DOES THE INFORMATION LINK DO?

Your information link is a trained volunteer who can help you obtain information advice or assistance with problems. If necessary the link can direct you to the best professional or voluntary worker or professional to deal with your enquiry or problem. Your link may also be able to obtain or provide any leaflets you need, or help you to fill in any forms.

WHAT KIND OF ENQUIRIES CAN THE LINK DEAL WITH?

Most domestic, family or personal problems, including housing, employment, consumer goods and service, welfare benefits, legal and money matters, health, education, transport and so on. Your link can, if necessary, signpost you to a key worker, who can offer you specialist help and may also be able to arrange an interview or a visit by the person or agency concerned.

HOW DO I GET IN TOUCH WITH THE INFORMATION LINK?

You may either telephone, write or call in person. Your link should be available at the times given overleaf, and may sometimes be contactable at other times. You may be given the assistance or information you need straight away or your link may well arrange to reply to your enquiry later on.

CAN I BE SURE THAT MY ENQUIRY WILL BE HANDLED CONFIDENTIALLY?

YES. Your link has been trained to handle your enquiry in the strictest of confidence. Any information passed on to official or other bodies specialising in your problem would only be done with your express consent.

WHO IS RUNNING THE SCHEME?

The Scottish Consumer Council - an independent research and policy orientated body, government funded, set up to represent the interests of consumers. The SCC wishes to encourage access to information and advice services by people living in rural or semi-rural areas. If you would like to know more about the scheme, why not contact your local information link, whose address is given overleaf, or write to the Information Links Co-ordinator, c/o Linden Centre, Huntly, Aberdeenshire.

Information Links have the co-operation of: Grampian Regional Council, Banff and Buchan, Gordon, and Kincardine Oyserde District, and Moray district councils, the Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, Aberdeen Citizens' Advice Bureau, the Scottish Council of Social Service, the Workers' Educational Association, the Scottish Rural Women's Institute, St. Katherine's Information and Advice Centre, Shelter, and Gordon Federation of Community Huts.
Do you have a problem?

Ask your

Information Link

how to get help

Your nearest

Information Link

Sponsored by the Scottish Consumer Council
Association of CABs said that the service should give greater emphasis to advice giving than straight information giving: if the scheme was started on this basis, the links could be trained as advisers rather than simply as information providers; there was otherwise the danger that the links would stray into advice work without the benefit of prior training. SCC representatives on the working party pointed out, however, that the links could perform different functions, some concentrating on advice giving, others on information provision, and that the link should not be seen as a sort of omniscient individual or advice agency but more of a "signpost" pointing people to the appropriate agency or individual best able to deal with their enquiry or problem. A further issue, raised in a letter to the SCC from the SACAB representative on the working party, concerned the sort of agency to which the links would be affiliated or associated with: the agency to which they are attached would have an effect upon the role that the links should play, the training given, and the information resources made available to them.

Despite the reservations of some participants about the scheme, it was agreed that a steering group of representatives directly involved in the provision of information services in the Grampian region should be set up to run a "pilot scheme" covering a variety of communities. No rigid limit was set on the size of these communities to be served by individual links, although it was agreed not to try to cover larger communities large enough to support an advice centre of their own or areas within easier reach of council offices. The local authority representatives present agreed to co-operate by notifying their other officials about the scheme and offering to deal with enquiries referred to them by the links.

A press release, issued by the SCC in November 1977, announced the setting up of the scheme in the following year and information about the scheme was circulated to all community councils in the region inviting people to volunteer their services as village links (followed by another press release issued in February 1978 appealing for volunteers). As a result of these efforts sixteen volunteers attended an initial weekend training session sponsored by the SCC in Aberdeen in April 1978. The training session, introduced by the chairman of the SCC, dealt with interviewing techniques, information materials, consumer problems, legal aid and court procedures, employment and employees' rights, housing, family and matrimonial problems, welfare rights and benefits and the role of advice agencies. The session also included role playing exercises. Links were supplied with information packs of leaflets from Aberdeen CAB and "fact banks" of localised information purchased from the north of Scotland branch of the Workers' Educational Association, which had prepared the material under a
job creation programme. Links were also issued with a specially prepared checklist and other notes of guidance for reference when dealing with enquiries.

An advertisement was placed in the Aberdeen Evening Express in May 1978 for a part-time worker to co-ordinate the work of individual links, to service links with updated information materials, to organise further training and recruitment, to service the steering committee and to report on the progress of the scheme to the SOC. The co-ordinator was offered a salary of £60 a month for the equivalent of 1 day's work a week. From applicants an Aberdeen housewife who had worked as a CAB volunteer for two years was selected, her home being used as a work-base. The SCC scheme was formally launched in June 1978, the links serving sixteen communities of varying size and background (see chart).

Most of the links arranged to work from their homes, but the link at Huntly conducted sessions three mornings a week at an information centre she had established at a local community centre, and a link who was a headmistress made herself available for consultation at her school outwith school hours. Posters advertising the whereabouts of the links were issued to individual links for display on public noticeboards, in public meeting places, etc. The co-ordinator arranged to meet all of the links personally through visits to their areas. A further one day training session was held in Aberdeen in February 1979.

By the time the scheme had reached the end of its pilot stage just over a year later, the links had dealt with 171 initial enquiries. Nearly two fifths of enquiries (68) were handled by the link at Huntly working from the information centre, and the links at Crimond (27), Pennan (19) and Aberchirder (14) accounted for another two fifths. The remaining 12 links received under 10 enquiries each, three of them having received no enquiries at all. By the time the SCC came to conduct its interim review of the scheme in autumn 1979, links in eight of the sixteen areas covered had resigned, due to either lack of enquiries or other commitments.

In its interim review, the SCC agreed to continue the scheme for a further 12-18 months but decided to make a number of changes after conducting its own enquiries by interview and postal questionnaire among individual links:

1. The scheme would be monitored to run in parallel as far as possible with the SCC's other advice experiment, "Adviceline" due to commence in October 1979, so that comparative assessments could be made. Members of the steering committee would become members of a new SCC advisory committee.

2. Co-ordination of the scheme would take place from
### TABLE 3.2

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (1971 CENSUS) OF CIVIL PARISHES IN WHICH SCC AND CASTLE DOUGLAS LINKS BASED

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<td>9·5</td>
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<td>14·2</td>
<td>21·7</td>
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<td>28·5</td>
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<td>44·8</td>
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<td>Kemnay</td>
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<td>14·2</td>
<td>21·5</td>
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<td>Pennan</td>
<td>Aberdour</td>
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<td>41·2</td>
<td>22·3</td>
<td>25·3</td>
<td>8·7</td>
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<td>Premnay</td>
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<td>31·3</td>
<td>21·4</td>
<td>25·3</td>
<td>10·4</td>
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<td>17·6</td>
<td>24·5</td>
<td>42·1</td>
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<td>27·4</td>
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<td>327</td>
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<td>38·1</td>
<td>5·9</td>
<td>18·8</td>
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<td>Corsock</td>
<td>Parton</td>
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<td>24·1</td>
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<td>Crocketford</td>
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<td>52·4</td>
<td>10·6</td>
<td>26·2</td>
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<td>62·9</td>
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<td>Dalry</td>
<td>Dalry</td>
<td>214</td>
<td></td>
<td>22·2</td>
<td>33·3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>28·4</td>
<td>23·0</td>
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<td>Gatehouse</td>
<td>Anworth</td>
<td>195</td>
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<td>26·3</td>
<td>6·7</td>
<td>35·6</td>
<td>29·0</td>
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<td>Haugh of Urr</td>
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<td>19·6</td>
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<td>12·5</td>
<td>37·8</td>
<td>39·6</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Galloway</td>
<td>Kells</td>
<td>252</td>
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<td>19·9</td>
<td>33·3</td>
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<td>31·1</td>
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<td>Total (weighted average)</td>
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<td>31·5</td>
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<td>48·1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dumfries &amp; Galloway</td>
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<td>46,009</td>
<td></td>
<td>18·9</td>
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<td>35·2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Scotland</td>
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<td>353,933</td>
<td></td>
<td>18·5</td>
<td>17·3</td>
<td>18·2</td>
<td>not aggregated</td>
<td>38·3</td>
<td>36·9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
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<td>1·686m</td>
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<td>15·4</td>
<td>5·9</td>
<td>21·1</td>
<td>not aggregated</td>
<td>40·4</td>
<td>53·6</td>
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**NOTES:** * Non-agricultural semi and unskilled manual workers.

**Sources:**
- Scottish Office Central Research Unit, *Rural Indicators Study*, HMSO, 1978;
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES:
1. Additional 171 initial enquiries received at pilot stage (June 1978 - Sep. 1979).
2. Link at Abadieniet received in Apr. 1980.
3. CaB figures revised to Apr. 1980 - Mar. 1981 (only); figures for households & employes revised to 1980 - 81 for both four themes, however.
4. Households population based on total household in pilot four themes.
an established information and advice centre within a rural catchment area; the link who had established her own information centre at a community centre in Huntly, with evident success, agreed to take on this additional role, again paid on a part-time basis.

3. While existing links would continue to serve their areas, new links would be recruited on a personal basis by the co-ordinator from areas not more than 30 miles away from the Huntly centre, which would serve as a base for future training sessions.

4. To facilitate the provision of training and information materials, the Huntly centre would seek affiliation to the Scottish Association of CABs, possibly with a view to the centre becoming a CAB in its own right in due course.

5. The scheme would be publicised through a leaflet delivered to every household in the postal areas of each link, the leaflet providing more detailed information about the link and the scheme in general than provided in the publicity posters. The links should also be encouraged to initiate publicity of their own in local shops and offices, among voluntary bodies, etc., and step up postal publicity.

6. Links wherever possible would be encouraged to arrange to deal with enquiries at sessions in village halls or other public premises at fixed times and not only in their own homes (one problem being that people might be inhibited from visiting links in their homes; leaflets could also be put on display if public premises are used).

7. An interim assessment of the scheme would be made at the end of a further 9-12 months (July - September 1980) with a view to determining the scope for the continuation of the scheme after the SOC's funding and sponsorship had come to an end.

8. A postal questionnaire would be delivered to householders living in some of the areas covered by the links to assess their awareness and evaluation of the scheme. (Arrangements were also made to monitor a similar village link scheme set up by Castle Douglas CAB in April 1979).

Under these modifications, links in nine areas continued to be involved in the scheme beyond October 1979 (consult chart and map above);
four more links resigned later on; and three new links were recruited. Eight links were thus active by the time the SCC's sponsorship of the scheme came to an end in March 1981, five communities having been served continuously since the inception of the scheme in June 1978. Arrangements were made for the links to attend two further one day training sessions (dealing mainly with social security enquiries, the use of leaflets and other matters) and some links attended a course of evening lectures at St. Katherine's welfare rights centre in Aberdeen. By the end of its second year, in July 1980, the scheme had attracted another 189 enquiries through 9 links (compared with 171 enquiries in the previous year through 15 links) and on the recommendation of the advisory committee, the SCC agreed to approach Grampian regional Council and the three district councils (Banff and Buchan, Gordon and Moray) to assist with the future funding of the scheme after March 1981, when SCC funding was due to end. Each authority was asked to contribute an equal amount to meet an estimated cost of £1100 in 1981-2 (to cover the co-ordinator's salary, training and travelling expenses, office overheads, publicity and information materials). If the local authorities undertook to meet these running costs, the Scottish Association of CABS would arrange to provide £2,300-£2,500 from its development funds to set up a citizens' advice bureau in Huntly, staffed by a paid organiser. None of the authorities approached (Banff and Buchan, Gordon and Moray district councils and Grampian Regional Council) agreed to provide the necessary funding, however, and the scheme was formally discontinued in March 1981. The Huntly link/co-ordinator later secured for 1981-82 a capital grant (£800) from the Social Work Services Group of the Scottish Office towards the running of a number of development projects in and around Huntly, including provision of the information centre (which was moved to new shop front premises in the centre of the town). The centre has also continued to provide support for two of the links in the SCC scheme, at Kemnay and Pennan, who decided to carry on with their work in a personal capacity. (The centre is involved in various other projects: a "new opportunities" course for women, a "koala" club for single parents, a luncheon club for elderly people and adult literacy work). The links at Crimond and Pennan decided to carry on as links as well, in conjunction with the information centre at Fraserburgh.

In April 1981 questionnaires were delivered to 3,500 households in five of the areas in which links were active to assess public awareness and evaluation of the SCC scheme. Some 1190 questionnaires (34%) were returned in time for the coding of replies and computer analysis two months later. A "freepost" envelope was enclosed with the questionnaire to facilitate a reply. Reminder cards were sent out to every household one month after delivery of the questionnaire. A further 51 questionnaires arrived too late for inclusion in the analysis. As indicated below, a slightly greater proportion of
owner-occupiers replied than were represented in the household population of the area at the time of the 1971 census. Since, however, the postal areas from which questionnaires were returned do not coincide with the civil parishes from which the census data were aggregated, the table provides only an approximation of the representativeness of the response sample.

Table 3.1

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<th>All respondents (Spring 1981)</th>
<th>1971 Census (aggregated C.Ps)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>47.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council/SSHA</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1168</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A description of some of the population characteristics of the areas in which the links were active — both in the SCC and Castle Douglas schemes — is shown in Table 3.2 (comparable data from the 1981 census were not yet available). In both of the areas covered by the two schemes, there was a higher proportion of retired people that in the respective local authority region and much lower proportions of married females were in paid employment ("economically active"). Lower proportions of householders were council tenants and considerably more were owner-occupiers or private tenants than in the rest of Scotland (notably in the Castle Douglas area). Smaller proportions were also without the use of a car compared with the region, rural Scotland, or the rest of Scotland. Predictably large proportions of people were employed in agriculture. Within the areas served by either scheme there were, however, considerable variations between civil parishes in which individual links were resident. Within the SCC scheme, over one quarter of people in Premnay were retired, in Crimond nearly 60% of households were in council accommodation, and in Huntly nearly 50% of households were without a car, compared with much lower proportions in other areas. Similarly within the Castle Douglas scheme, over 30% of people at Colvend were retired, in New Galloway over 50% of people were private tenants, and in Haugh

63.
### TABLE 3.4

TYPES OF ENQUIRIES HANDLED BY CASTLE DOUGLAS CAB VILLAGE LINKS, APR. 1980 – MAR. 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carsphairn</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colvend</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corsock</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crocketford</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalry</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gatehouse</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haugh of Urr</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkcudbright</td>
<td>1,057</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Galloway</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total n</td>
<td>2,495</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Castle Douglas n CAB-based | %               | 6              | 32         | 8                   | 58                | 23         | 102        | 31              | 129              | 88            | 51     | 169     | 51    | 164      | 39      | 951   |
| CAB-based                  | 0.6            | 3.7            | 0.8       | 6.1                 | 2.4              | 10.7       | 3.2        | 13.6            | 9.2              | 5.2           | 17.8   | 5.3     | 17.2  | 4.1      | 100.0   |
| Scottish CAB%              | 1.2            | 3.3            | 0.5       | 8.3                 | 1.5              | 11.0       | 2.2        | 13.2            | 12.6             | 3.9           | 16.4   | 2.9     | 21.0  | 2.0      | 100.0   |

NOTES (1) Enquiries about local information and CAB excluded for comparative purposes.

(2) Household population based on population in civil parish of Link at time of 1971 census.
of Urr nearly 48% of households were without a car, compared with lower proportions elsewhere. It is possible that some of these proportions have changed since the 1971 census; continued cutbacks in public transport services since 1971 may have resulted in a higher proportion of households now having the use of a car, for example. Home ownership in some areas may also have increased since 1971.

3.3 Enquiries

Between October 1979 and March 1981, the SCC Information link scheme attracted some 426 enquiries - equivalent to one enquiry a year from every 18 households in the area (Table 3.3). Seventy per cent of enquiries were dealt with by the link at Huntly, working three mornings a week from an information centre she had helped to set up there. Here there was one enquiry for every 12 households in 1981-82. When the Huntly-based enquiries are excluded, the overall enquiry rate for the SCC scheme was one enquiry for every 32 households in 1980-81 (working on the principle that a link working from an information centre may no longer be regarded as a "link" in the ordinary sense). The next highest number of enquiries (48) came from the Kenmay link, who also served as the secretary of her community council and who also published her services in the community council's newsletter. The link at Crimond, a village headteacher who dealt with enquiries from her school, dealt with another 31 enquiries. Fewer enquiries were dealt with by the other links, although there is reason to believe that some of the links may have under-reported the number of enquiries they received as a result of not regarding some casual encounters with people (in the street, in shops), as enquiries at all. In one other case, the link (at Insh) was too busy to record enquiries at all in the course of his duties as village postmaster. The low enquiry rate at Turriff may have been due to the link not joining the scheme until a later date (March 1980) and the more limited amount of publicity that could be carried out there.

The overall enquiry rate for the SCC scheme may be compared with that for the Village link scheme run by Castle Douglas Citizens' Advice Bureau, Kirkcudbrightshire, since April 1979. Here the nine links in the second year of the scheme, 1980-81, attracted one enquiry from approximately every 11 households in the area (using the household population of the civil parish in which the link resided as an approximation here). As with the SCC scheme, however, there were wide variations between the Castle Douglas links in the number of enquiries received (between one enquiry from every 4 to 28 households), and these variations between links would appear to be of more significance than overall differences between the SCC and Castle Douglas schemes. It is possible, however, that the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area served</th>
<th>Households (1971 Census)</th>
<th>Description of area</th>
<th>Nearest information advice centre</th>
<th>Link: employment, etc.</th>
<th>Period of service</th>
<th>Enqs.</th>
<th>Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aberchirder</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>SB: farming</td>
<td>Huntly (12 m.)</td>
<td>Housewife, long resident</td>
<td>June 78 – Apr 80</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banchory</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>SB: commuter/retired pop.</td>
<td>Aberdeen (18 m.)</td>
<td>Retired teacher, CC secretary</td>
<td>June 78 – Jul 79</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimond</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>V: farming town, some industry</td>
<td>Fraserburgh (8 m.)</td>
<td>Headteacher, CC member</td>
<td>June 78 – Mar 81</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esslemont</td>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>Farming community</td>
<td>Aberdeen (12 m.)</td>
<td>Housewife, temp. resident</td>
<td>June 78 – Jan 79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finzean</td>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>Farming community</td>
<td>Aberdeen (24 m.)</td>
<td>Shopkeeper, new resident</td>
<td>June 78 – Feb 79</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntly</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>SB: farming, small ind.</td>
<td>Huntly</td>
<td>Social/information worker</td>
<td>June 78 – Mar 81</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>C. Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insch</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>Town: farming, small ind.</td>
<td>Huntly (13 m.)</td>
<td>Postmaster, long resident</td>
<td>Mar 80 – Mar 81</td>
<td>N.I.</td>
<td>P.O.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>1,420</td>
<td>SB: farming, some ind.</td>
<td>Huntly (11 m.)</td>
<td>Teacher, long resident</td>
<td>June 78 – Jul 79</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennay</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>Town: farming/ind./commuters</td>
<td>Aberdeen (14 m.)</td>
<td>Housewife, CC secretary</td>
<td>June 78 – Mar 81</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maud &amp; S'field</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>Farming towns</td>
<td>Fraserburgh (14 m.)</td>
<td>Headteacher, CC member</td>
<td>June 78 – Mar 81</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muchalls</td>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>Town: commuting, fishing</td>
<td>Aberdeen (12 m.)</td>
<td>Housewife, playgroup secy.</td>
<td>June 78 – Feb 79</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennan</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>Town: fishing, farming</td>
<td>Fraserburgh (10 m.)</td>
<td>Housewife, husband secy. of CC</td>
<td>June 78 – Mar 81</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portlethen</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Town: commuting, fishing</td>
<td>Aberdeen (9 m.)</td>
<td>Housewife, new resident</td>
<td>June 78 – Feb 79</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premnay</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>Farming community</td>
<td>Huntly (14 m.)</td>
<td>Vol. worker (meals-on-wheels, etc.)</td>
<td>Mar 80 – Mar 81</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathdon</td>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>Farming village, tourism</td>
<td>Huntly (26 m.)</td>
<td>Minister’s wife, new resid., tourist work</td>
<td>June 78 – Oct 80</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomintoul</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Town: farming, tourism</td>
<td>Huntly (47 m.)</td>
<td>Soc. worker, incomer, titled</td>
<td>June 78 – Oct 80</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turriff</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>SB: farming</td>
<td>Huntly (18 m.)</td>
<td>Housewife, voluntary worker</td>
<td>Mar 80 – Mar 81</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udny</td>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>Farming community</td>
<td>Aberdeen (14 m.)</td>
<td>Housewife, temp. resident</td>
<td>June 78 – Jul 79</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westhill</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Town: commuting</td>
<td>Aberdeen (8 m.)</td>
<td>Housewife, temp. resident.</td>
<td>June 78 – Jul 79</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTES:** Change of Link at Kennay, June 1979; Link at Maud and Stuartfield originally based at Auchnagatt.
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF SCC INFORMATION LINKS, 1978–81

KEY: • Location of Link
○ Advice or information centre
status of the Castle Douglas links as CAB volunteers may have encouraged more people in the area to come forward with enquiries compared with the people living in some of the areas served by the SCC links, who were not formally associated with an advice-giving agency at the time. Differences in publicity methods between the two schemes and in the experience or background of the links within either scheme may also have contributed to these overall differences. Finally, the standing of the link in the local community and such factors as his or her length of residence there may account for some links receiving proportionally more enquiries than others.

Analysis of the types of enquiries handled by the SCC links shows that by far the largest proportion (35%) of enquiries were connected with social security. This was most evident among the enquiries received by the Huntly link, of which social security enquiries accounted for 41% of the total, and this was probably connected with the fact that the link there mounted special publicity campaigns to encourage take-up of benefits; but even among the other links, social security enquiries represented 19% of the combined total. This contrasts with the situation at Castle Douglas, whose village links reported that only 6% of their enquiries were about social security compared with the 20% in this category in the Newtown, Montgomery, scheme in 1977-78. The Castle Douglas links, on the other hand, reported dealing with many more enquiries connected with consumer goods and trade services (20%) than did the SCC links (10%). Health, housing and transport enquiries were also dealt with somewhat more frequently by the Castle Douglas links than the SCC links. Some of the differences in types of problems received may be due to differences in the role of the link in the two schemes. The two sets of figures suggest that the types of enquiries generated by link schemes are not generalisable to other rural areas, each of which may have their own special sorts of problems in addition to the more basic problems described in chapter 1.

3.4 Publicity

Initially the SCC scheme was publicised in each of the areas where the links had been appointed through posters which the links arranged to display locally. Each poster bore the name of the local link and where he/she could be contacted. When the scheme came up for review after its pilot year (1978-79), arrangements were made for leaflets to be distributed to every household in each of the postal delivery areas in which the link was based. Some 5,400 leaflets were dispatched by "mail shot" to households in January/February 1980, each leaflet again bearing the name of the SCC link, his or her address and telephone number, and where
appropriate the times when the link was available. The leaflet also explained how the link could help, how enquiries would be dealt with, and the range of enquiries covered (see appendix 3). An additional 4,000 leaflets were distributed among the links for local leafleting of their own. A press release circulated to local newspapers and radio was the source of additional publicity, including a feature on the Jimmy Mack programme on Radio Scotland. Some links also arranged their own publicity in local newspapers, parish magazines, and community council newsletters.

As indicated in Table 3.5, nearly a third of householders responding to the SCC questionnaire in five of the areas served by the links claimed that they had heard of the scheme, with over a quarter of them being able to specify the name or address of their local link. There were, however, considerable differences in levels of public awareness of the scheme between one area and another.

Table 3.5

| Level of awareness of Information Link scheme among respondents, Spring 1981 |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                                  | Crimond | Huntly | Kemnay | Pennan | Premnay | TOTAL |
| Mention of name/address          | 24.6%   | 15.5%  | 53.8%  | 26.5%  | 36.4%   | 27.7%  |
| No mention of name/address       | 3.9%    | 3.2%   | 6.1%   | 5.4%   | 5.1%    | 4.4%   |
| Not aware of Link                | 71.5%   | 81.3%  | 40.1%  | 78.1%  | 58.4%   | 67.9%  |

Total Number of respondents (130) (504) (247) (91) (137) (1109)

More than half of the householders in Kemnay knew the name of their local link, possibly because she was secretary of her community council, which also published a regular newsletter reminding them of the link scheme. On the other hand, only 19% of the households in Huntly claimed to be aware of the scheme in their area: this is a most surprising finding, given that the Huntly Link attracted one of the highest enquiry rates in the

69.

71.
specified the name or address of their link was not, however, affected by whether they mentioned the leaflet or poster.

3.5 Costs

The total running costs of the SCC's Information Link scheme amounted to £1,474 between October 1979 and March 1981 - working out at £3.46 per enquiry. This was equivalent to an annual running cost of £975. As indicated in Table 3.8, nearly two fifths of the running costs were taken up by the co-ordinator's salary, and expenditure on publicity materials accounted for another quarter of costs. Links' expenses, on the other hand, represented only a very small proportion of costs, most of their expenditure being on travel to periodic training sessions. (There is reason to believe, however, that the links, in dealing with enquiries, may not have claimed all of their telephone and postal expenses.) These costs might have been considerably higher were it not for the fact that free office and training accommodation was provided for the co-ordinator working from a local community centre.

The table also compares the running costs of the SCC scheme with the CAB-based schemes at Castle Douglas. It is noticeable that the largest item of expenditure was related to the travel costs of the links attending the bureau for training and advice giving sessions. The cost of the Castle Douglas scheme was a good deal less than the SCC scheme, however, since the bureau organiser, as co-ordinator, was unpaid for her services (not as much money was spent on publicity, but as in the SCC scheme, free office accommodation was provided). Here the cost of dealing with an individual enquiry in the first year of the scheme worked out at £2.47 (1980-81 prices); but payment of a salary (£3,300 approximately) to a part time organiser, as is now the case at the Castle Douglas bureau, would be expected to raise the cost per enquiry (when combined with bureau-based enquiries as well) to £3.07. The higher costs per enquiry in the SCC scheme, compared with the Castle Douglas scheme, arose mainly as a result of payment to a part time co-ordinator and a greater amount of money spent on publicity, information and training materials at the initial stages; expenditure on the latter two items would be likely to diminish over time.

3.6 Handling of enquiries

About two fifths of enquiries in the SCC scheme - but 80% in the Castle Douglas scheme - were dealt with by personal visit, either through the enquirer visiting the link's home or base, or, on some
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SCC Information Link</th>
<th></th>
<th>CAB Village Link</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-ordinator’s/organiser’s salary</td>
<td>£ 435</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>£ 579</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity</td>
<td>£ 140</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>£ 380</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>£ 162</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>£ 265</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
<td>£ 32</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>£ 62</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage &amp; Stationery</td>
<td>£ 13</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>£ 53</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information/training materials</td>
<td>£ 255</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>£ 135</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and cleaning</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundries</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£ 1,057</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>£ 1,474</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. enquiries</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>219</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost per enquiry</td>
<td>£ 6.17</td>
<td>£ 3.46</td>
<td>£ 2.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES
(1) Castle Douglas CAB organiser unpaid for her services in 1980 — 81. Payment of a part-time organiser would increase costs by about another £3,300, raising the cost per enquiry (when combined with bureau-based enquiries) to £3.07.
(2) SCC publicity expenses relate to the provision of posters (1978 — 79) and household leafleting (1979 — 80).
(3) Travel expenses arose mainly from attendance at training sessions, in the case of the SCC links, and from bureau visits, in the case of the Castle Douglas Links (to attend advice giving and training sessions and do follow up research).
(4) In the SCC scheme, information materials included localised "fact banks" supplied to each link (1978 — 79) and payment of an affiliation fee to the Scottish Association of CABs, which supplied information and training materials (1980 — 81).
occasions, through visits to the enquirer's home (Table 3.9). In the SCC scheme, enquiries were next most frequently received by telephone; but virtually no enquiries were received in this way in the Castle Douglas scheme. In both schemes, a smaller but substantial number of enquiries were the result of encounters in the street or in shops. These divergencies between the two schemes cannot be readily accounted for; but it may be that the greater use of telephone contact in the SCC scheme was due to more enquiries possibly coming from a greater distance away and to a high incidence of telephone ownership there (see section 3.7 below).

Three quarters of the enquiries received by the Castle Douglas links and over half of those attended to by the SCC links involved the straightforward provision of information or advice without any further follow-up action by the link being required. Over half of the enquiries handled by the SCC links and 11% of those handled by the Castle Douglas links involved giving some kind of practical assistance, mainly help with filling in forms, writing letters or making phone calls on behalf of clients. In the SCC scheme assistance (in one or two exceptional cases) even extended to providing help with transport to district council offices. These differences between the two schemes in the amount of practical assistance given by links could have arisen as a result of differences in the training and role definition of the links. Smaller but significant proportions of enquiries in the two schemes involved referrals to other agencies, notably to bodies such as the district or regional council, DHSS, health board, job centre or tourist office, to solicitors and social workers, and occasionally to the police, electricity board, passport office, British Rail, and local M.P. In every seven or fewer cases, links also supplied clients with a leaflet or other information material. Other agencies such as the DHSS, local CAB office, the local council, or employment office were consulted by links from time to time in the course of handling an enquiry or problem.

The SCC links reported that in half of the enquiries they dealt with, some kind of follow-up visit or other form of renewed contact with the enquirer was undertaken. This might simply involve giving the person the information he or she was waiting for, but it could also include checking on whether the enquirer had acted upon the information or advice given or needed additional help. The Castle Douglas links were less likely to report any subsequent contact with clients with reference to a given enquiry, but those doing so (18%) frequently reported that they had to make more than one follow-up visit or contact. (In one or two exceptionally difficult cases, as many as six or seven follow-up visits were reported.) The large majority of enquiries were each dealt with in under half an hour, with 70% of enquiries in the Castle Douglas scheme each involving up to 15 minutes of the link's time, though
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>New Galloway</th>
<th>Kirkmichael</th>
<th>Church of Urr</th>
<th>Gatehouse</th>
<th>Dalry</th>
<th>Cockford</th>
<th>Conwick</th>
<th>Colvend</th>
<th>Garlieston</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total expenditure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ride</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange to English pounds</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Jan - 30 mins</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Jan - 60 mins</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Jan - 90 mins</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Jan - 120 mins</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time spent on enquiry**

- 90 mins: 2
- 120 mins: 2
- 180 mins: 2
- 240 mins: 2
- 300 mins: 2
- 360 mins: 2
- 420 mins: 2
- 480 mins: 2
- 540 mins: 2
- 600 mins: 2

**Initial means of contact**

- Telephone: 3
- Written: 3
- Visit: 3

**Initial means of contact continued**

- Telephone: 3
- Written: 3
- Visit: 3

**Contact with other agencies**

- Scottish Education: 1
- Scottish Agriculture: 1
- Scottish Fisheries: 1
- Scottish Fishery Board: 1

**Action taken**

- Follow up visit: 1
- Further investigation: 1
- Further correspondence: 1
- Further action: 1

**Notes**

- No of enquiries received: 11
- No of enquiries processed: 11

**Handling of Enquiries by Castle Douglas and SCC Links, April 1980 - March 1981**

**Table 3.9**
with a considerably smaller proportion of enquiries (43%) in the SCC scheme taking under the amount of time. Some of the SCC links reported that one in every five or six enquiries involved over 1 hour of their time (with one or two enquiries even taking "several hours" to attend to); similarly some of Castle Douglas links reported that they were spending over 1 hour on some enquiries, although less frequently so than the SCC links. Such differences as these and others described above may reflect differences in the training and public perception of the links between the SCC and Castle Douglas schemes.

Only very small amounts of expenditure indeed were incurred as a result of attending to enquiries, most expenditure being taken up in telephone calls and (to a lesser extent) travel and postage. Some links appeared to incur more expenditure than others, but it is probable that some links may have under-reported or failed to claim all of their expenses.

3.7 Public response to Information Link scheme

Whether or not householders reported making any use of their Information link or claimed that they were aware of the link in their area was not to any significant extent affected by their socio-economic circumstances, taking the housing tenure of householders as a "proxy" measure in this regard. As shown in Table 3.10, the majority of people aware of or making use of the link were (48%) owner-occupiers but this was largely a reflection of their representation in the population rather than their awareness or readiness to make use of the scheme as such. Comparisons with census data for 1971 suggest, however, that there may have been some over-representation of owner-occupiers among the respondents to the SCC household questionnaire with a slight under-representation of private tenants, thus over-stating the proportions of owner-occupiers in the user and non-user categories. (Regrettably figures on housing tenure were not yet available from the 1981 census to permit more up-to-date comparisons.

Over 88% of respondents reported that they had use of either a car or a telephone, 62% saying that they had both of these amenities and only 12% saying that they had neither. The over-representation of owner-occupiers among respondents may again, however, have overstated the proportion of people in the area with cars and telephones, but census data for 1971 in fact show that 57% of households in the area were with a car, and information supplied by British Telecom, Scotland, indicates that the proportion of households with telephones in the area may be over 80% (compared with a Scottish average of 60% and a UK average of 75% of households with a telephone.) Car ownership in the area would appear to be higher than
the general level of car ownership in rural Scotland (45% at the time of the 1971 census) as a whole however.

Table 3.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing tenure of respondents, Spring 1981</th>
<th>Users of SCC Link</th>
<th>Non-users</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>1971 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council/SSHA</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately rented</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total n cases (100%)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>1168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1971 Census figures derived by aggregating census data for civil parishes in which respondents resided. Since the areas covered by the postal questionnaire and the civil parishes do not match exactly and due to population changes since 1971 only approximate comparisons may be made between the SCC data and Census data.

Some 14% of respondents said that they had contacted an agency or individual other than the link with an enquiry or problem over the previous 12 months, but among respondents who had made use of their link, a significantly higher proportion (29%) had done so (possibly as a result of referrals from their link). The agencies or individuals mentioned are shown in Table 3.11 below.

Table 3.11/
local affairs. One householder remarked:

"Our local link can supply so much information, especially about social security, unemployment and grants that without this valuable service many people would not be aware of the benefits available to them."

At the same time, a substantial number (25) of respondents volunteering comments believed that the scheme had not been well enough publicised and suggested that more local advertising was needed to encourage people to use their Information Link. The local press, libraries, community newsletters, notices in shops and post offices were among the sources of publicity suggested. Six of these respondents remarked that they still did not properly understand what their link was supposed to do.

A further 10 respondents offered a number of more specific comments on the scheme, including the following:

"The link should not be a recent incomer into the community if people are to come forward with their problems; the link should not at the same time allow herself to become emotionally involved in people's problems."

"As newcomers into the area, we would find it helpful if the link could circulate in shops, post offices, village halls, etc., a list of services telephone numbers, and useful addresses."

"The link should be trained on the legal side of things so as to let people know whether they should seek specialist legal advice."

"People would have more incentive to use their link if they could be certain that they could discuss their problem in absolute privacy, without being overheard by anyone."

"Since most official bodies have been centralised, does the work of the Information Link not duplicate the services of the citizens' advice bureau, which is merely a telephone call away?"

Twelve respondents used the questionnaire to draw attention to the prices of goods and services in their area, notably petrol costs, and to what they saw as the poor level of public transport. Six respondents openly expressed their hostility to the Information Link scheme, remarking that it was a "waste of time and money" (or
making similar statements).

3.8 Co-ordinators' and links' evaluation of the scheme

In the course of the SCC scheme, the co-ordinator and her successor provided their own evaluations of the working of the scheme, and a postal questionnaire and some interviews were administered among individual links, including links who had resigned before the SCC scheme came to an end. Their comments are summarised below.

(1) General evaluation. Both of the co-ordinators and nearly all of the links believed that the SCC scheme had been worthwhile and deserved to continue. Particular importance was attached to the links' receptivity to localised needs and their specialised knowledge of the area they served. At the same time, they believed that for the scheme to work properly and reduce the sense of isolation felt by the links, back-up from an established information or advice centre was essential. Another difficulty was that the role of the links was not clearly enough defined - how far should the work of the link extend into advice giving? Some links encountered difficulties in explaining their role to officials, although this problem seemed to disappear as they became more widely known. Some links wondered whether their not being formally associated with a local agency that was trusted and understood might have inhibited people from coming forward with enquiries.

(2) Publicity. There was universal agreement that the scheme needed a lot more publicity if it was to succeed properly. Indeed the amount of publicity given appeared to be the key to the success of the whole scheme, according to many of the links. An inherent difficulty, according to the first co-ordinator, was that the people of the north east of Scotland were traditionally reticent by nature, with a strong tradition of self-help, often living in close tightly-knit communities. A lot of publicity and public education about the scheme would be needed to break down these barriers and encourage people to come forward with enquiries. Links who were already well-known and respected in the community were seen as providing their own publicity. The links who had undertaken specialist publicity of their own (writing articles in local magazines and newsletters, addressing meetings, putting up notices) felt that their efforts had paid off and believed that very localised, personal publicity was probably more effective than once-off publicity from a central source.

(3) Training and support. Most of the links appeared to have
appreciated and found helpful the training and support given to them, both at the time of appointment and during additional sessions arranged by the co-ordinator. Affiliation to the Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux in 1980–81 also resulted in additional training and information materials being made available. There was some disenchantment about the lack of provision for updating* the local fact banks which had been issued to each link at the very beginning of the scheme in 1978 and many links reported that they were unwieldy and difficult to use (the fact banks were arranged as large ring binders of indexed local information). One link suggested that correspondence course materials should also be provided for training. The nature of training and information provision very much depends, however, on how the role of the links is defined, in accordance with the different approaches set out in section 3.1 above.

(4) **Co-operation from other agencies.** Despite the initial difficulties reported above, the links on the whole were satisfied with the level of co-operation received from officials and other agencies whom they found helpful and willing to assist once their role had been explained to them. The assistance was provided by Aberdeen CAB and the Huntly Information Centre and was particularly well appreciated by the links. Many links reported being prepared to spend a great deal of their time phoning around different agencies and individuals in order to provide a satisfactory answer to an enquiry.

(5) **Support from co-ordinator.** All of the links appreciated and welcomed the support and assistance they received from the co-ordinator, although they recognised the difficulties faced by the co-ordinator having to work from a distance, with limited opportunity for face-to-face contact. Some links would have welcomed support and supervision through on-the-job sessions at an information centre.

(6) **Self-assessments.** Most links felt that even if they had dealt satisfactorily with only a very few enquiries that they had achieved something. Enquirers appeared to appreciate the service they were offering and seemed to be more than grateful for any practical assistance (help with filling in forms or writing letters, arranging appointments). But the links who had not been in the area very long or were not so well known in their local community were much more conscious of the need to win local acceptance before people would come forward with their enquiries. Some of the links (at Muchalls, Portlethen, Udny and Westhill) who resigned from the scheme in early stages believed that they were living too close to the Aberdeen area, with fully manned advice services within easier reach, to attract enquiries from local residents, many of whom commuted to Aberdeen daily. A number of links remarked on the uncertainty or

* Regular updating of the Aberdeen fact bank is carried out by the commercial library at Aberdeen in dealing with enquiries from the general public, however.

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lack of definition of their role, never really certain at what point their information and advice giving function should give way to more specialised counselling by the appropriate agency. One link sensed some opposition from local councillors to the work she was doing. One or two links who had received few enquiries simply felt that there was no need for a link in the area. One link found that being without a car of her own proved to be a drawback.

3.9 Discussion

(1) Enquiries. Both the SCC's Information Link scheme and the Castle Douglas CAB Village link scheme point to a need of some kind for an information and advice service among people living in rural communities. This appears to be particularly the case among people living in small towns (such as Huntly) forming centres for rural communities but which do not have certain local government, social security and other offices of their own to deal with enquiries from the general public. Significant in this respect was the large proportion of enquiries connected with social security, suggesting that a serious gap in provision exists for the giving of information and advice to people in rural areas dependent on welfare benefits. Since the areas served by the SCC and Castle Douglas links would appear to be mainly old and well established communities, it is possible that the two schemes may understate the rate of enquiries that might be expected from link schemes in areas with a large number of recent incomers and migrant workers, as in oil-borne coastal and island areas (e.g. Shetland Islands).

Take-up rates appear to be very dependent, however, on circumstantial factors, such as whether the link is well-known and respected locally or not or whether or not he/she works from a special base. The running of sessions from links' own homes in some cases may have had an inhibiting effect on people coming forward with enquiries, although it is difficult to be certain of this owing to the small number of links involved.

Over two thirds of the enquiries were handled by a link working from an information centre, and of the remaining links, most enquiries were received by a link who was the secretary of her community council and by a link (a head teacher) working from a village school. Although the number of links in the SCC scheme was too small from which to draw any firm conclusions, these results do suggest that links are likely to attract more enquiries if they occupy a special position or work from a recognised base in the community that automatically brings them into contact with local people.
(2) Publicity. Despite poster publicity and, later on, extensive leafleting of households (plus additional publicity initiated by some of the links themselves) two thirds of householders in the area covered by the SCC scheme continued to be unaware of the link in their area. Only in the areas where the links had undertaken a lot of publicity of their own (e.g. through community council newsletters) were the public much more aware of the scheme. Thus while initial poster and leaflet publicity may be desirable in getting a link scheme off the ground, only regular and extensive advertising in local newspapers and on noticeboards is likely to ensure that the existence and whereabouts of the link becomes widely known. To succeed properly the links have to generate a great deal of the publicity themselves. This task is facilitated if the link is already well-known and respected in the area or occupies a position which brings him/her into contact with a wide section of the community.

(3) Costs. The Information Link scheme has proved to be inexpensive to run insofar as the links have given their time voluntarily and unpaid and have incurred negligible (but possibly under-reported) expenditure on phone calls, postage and some travel in attending to enquiries. The largest items of expenditure, in the case of the SCC scheme, was the payment of a salary and travelling expenses for a part-time co-ordinator, provision of publicity posters and leaflets, meeting the travelling expenses of links attending periodic training sessions and the provision of information materials, such as local "fact banks". Some money was also spent on information and training materials. The SCC scheme benefitted from free office accommodation provided at a local community centre which might not have applied in other circumstances elsewhere. Clearly savings can be effected if the co-ordinator's services are provided free, if publicity is self-initiated at the links' own expense, and if links agree to meet their own travelling expenses. The co-ordinator may also be able to work from her home (although this may limit the scope for training sessions). But each of these economies may, in one way or another adversely affect the motivation and commitment of volunteers. Training expenses can be minimised, however, if links are appointed in areas not too far away from the training centre, say in towns and villages within a 20 mile to 30 mile radius. (This is essential if links are also spending some of their time in supervised on-the-job training at an advice or information centre.)

(4) Training and role of the links. Although the links in the SCC scheme appeared to be generally satisfied with the training provided, the experiment cannot claim to have resolved the initial problem about defining their appropriate role, a matter which was raised before the scheme was set up. The information materials and periodic training sessions prepared the links for their information giving and "signposting" role, but because the links were
not attached to an advice centre, it was not possible to provide them with the level of supervised on-the-job training required for the sort of advice giving role enjoyed by, say the Castle Douglas CAB links, and into which a number of the links in the SCC scheme found themselves drawn. Judging by the substantial proportion of follow-up calls and visits to enquirers and the longer amounts of time dealing with some individual enquiries, it is possible that some links found themselves in an advice giving role without being adequately trained for it. The decision to train the links for an information giving and "signposting" role may have underestimated the amount of advice giving the links were actually having to carry out.

The National Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux is currently developing an information and training pack for "village contacts" and hopefully this will be of considerable assistance to link schemes which are geared to advice as well as information giving.

(5) Handling of enquiries. Individual links did not report any undue difficulties in dealing with enquiries, although at the beginning of the scheme some links found themselves having to spend time explaining to officials who they were. The large majority of users in the SCC household survey were satisfied with the way in which their enquiry had been handled and appeared to attach special importance to being able to turn to somebody with specialist local knowledge but who could be relied on to handle their enquiry confidentially. The links were probably in the advantaged position of being able to spend a great deal more of their time dealing with individual enquiries than could perhaps be afforded by an advice or information giving agency having to cope with a larger number of enquiries. They were also able to provide a good deal of practical assistance, such as help with filling in forms and in many cases were prepared to make follow-up visits or telephone calls to peoples' homes. The fact that the links could give more personalised attention to enquiries in these various ways may thus account for the scheme being received so favourably by people who knew about it or who had used it.

At the same time attention should be drawn to the extent to which link schemes are dependent upon the proper services of a co-ordinator or organiser to function effectively. Links not only rely on the co-ordinator to supply them with regularly updated information about legislative and other changes, but also to provide them with some kind of day-to-day support, advice or assistance where enquiries prove to be difficult to handle. The services of a co-ordinator are also needed to plan and conduct training sessions, to provide opportunities for the links to meet informally, and, possibly, to ensure that the scheme continues to be adequately funded and well enough publicised. Where links are living some distance from one another the co-ordinator could also be responsible
for the publication of a newsletter, as in the Shropshire scheme, to keep links up-to-date with developments and in touch with each other.

There is also a strong argument for a link scheme being formally associated with an established advice and information centre in the locality with volunteers working part of their time from the centre and the rest of their time from their local base. This is important for a number of reasons. People are more likely to come forward with enquiries if their local link is associated with an agency with a reputation for dealing with enquiries in a confidential and reliable way - of crucial importance in communities where people are well acquainted with one another. An association of this kind is also likely to mean that the links have been carefully selected and been trained to provide a range and standard of services which matches that of skilled advice workers based at an established centre. Such an arrangement, moreover, affords greater opportunity for more supervised on-the-job training and for links to meet one another informally in the course of enquiry sessions conducted from the advice and information centre. The experience gained by links working from an advice centre part of the time will be of benefit, too, when links come to deal with enquiries from their home base; this arrangement would be expected to offer encouragement to links who have had little opportunity to gain practical experience as a result of dealing with only a few enquiries from their home base. Finally, a formal association with an established centre provides the co-ordinator with a suitable office base from which to service the links, conduct training sessions and carry out day-to-day supervision. These were some of the important lessons learned from the SCC and Castle Douglas CAB schemes.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. Written communication from the Community Council of Shropshire.


5. Village link scheme, Castle Douglas Citizens' Advice Bureau, 1980. The household population is based on 1971 Census data for civil parishes in the area and may not accurately reflect the present day population.


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COMPARISONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 General observations

The Adviseline and Information Link experiments have in each of their different ways demonstrated that people living in rural or sparsely populated areas of Scotland are prepared to take advantage of advice and information services which are put within their reach. With its freephone facility for inhabitants living in the remote north-west Highland area of Scotland, Adviseline has succeeded in providing a quick, efficient and reliable service for people who might not otherwise have been able to afford the cost or inconvenience of contacting their nearest citizens' advice bureau at Inverness more than sixty miles away. Similarly, with its use of local information providers who have specialist knowledge of the area, Information Link has encouraged people from a number of communities in rural Grampian to come forward with enquiries which might not otherwise have been satisfactorily attended to without a long-distance telephone call or journey to advice centres in Aberdeen 30-40 miles away. Both schemes have also been cost-effective insofar as the advice or information given has come from unpaid but specially trained volunteers, albeit supported by one paid, full-time bureau organiser (Adviseline) and one paid part-time co-ordinator (Information Link). For an overall assessment of each scheme separately readers are referred to the concluding sections of chapters 2 and 3. In this chapter a number of comparisons are drawn between the two types of scheme. They are complicated however by the fact that each scheme was serving a distinctive kind of rural area. The Adviseline area (north-west Highlands) is much more sparsely populated than either of the areas covered by the SCC or the Castle Douglas link schemes, which covered a larger number of small market towns and villages of various sizes. Patterns of farming and physical geography between the two areas are also different, the north-west Highland areas being characterised by scattered crofting and fishing communities amidst rugged mountain terrain compared with the extensive areas of cultivation found in rural Grampian and in Dumfries and Galloway. There are fewer roads and no rail links in the area served by Adviseline, making transport and communication there more difficult than in many of the sorts of areas served by the links, which are also situated nearer major towns and cities (e.g. Aberdeen). Each of these considerations needs to be borne in mind in comparing the SCC's two experiments.

4.2 Enquiries

The SCC's Adviseline and Information Link experiments on the whole
compared favourably with one another, although the criteria on
which they may be judged should not be taken as being identical.
Judged by levels of take-up, Adviceline attracted one enquiry for
approximately every 23 households in the north-west Highland area
in 1980-81 compared with one enquiry for every 18 households in
the SCC Information Link scheme and one enquiry in 11 households
in the Castle Douglas CAB Village Link Scheme (which was also
monitored by the SCC). These overall comparisons do little
justice, however, to considerable variations in take-up within
the areas covered by each type of scheme. Thus, in the Advice-
line scheme, the take-up for the Ullapool telephone area reached
one enquiry for every 11 households as a result of the more inten-
sive publicity carried out there. Within the two link schemes,
the enquiry rate varied between one enquiry for every four to
fifty or more households. Since one of the SCC links was work-
ing from the Information Centre at Huntly that she had set up
and was therefore not a link in the ordinary sense, based at her
home, the more appropriate figure in the case of the SCC scheme
may be one enquiry for every 32 households which results when the
Huntly-based enquiries (accounting for 70% of all enquiries) are
excluded from comparison.

Area differences in take-up both between and within the two types
of advice scheme are likely to have been affected by one or more
of the following factors:

(i) differences in levels and types of publicity (see section
    4.3 below)
(ii) the perceived need among householders for information and
     advice (see section 4.6 below)
(iii) household access to a telephone, a car and other amenities
     in making use of either scheme
(iv) in the case of Link schemes, the standing of the link in
     the community and the way in which he or she is perceived
     by people in the area.

An aspect which the Adviceline experiment was not able to resolve
conclusively was the extent to which the freephone facility rather
than the publicity about the services of the Inverness bureau was
responsible for the increase in the number of telephone enquiries
coming from the area served. Ideally, the services of the bureau
without the freephone facility, should have been publicised in the
area both well before and after the experiment was set up to see if
there were any differences in take-up. Householder replies to the
questionnaire strongly suggest, however, that the saving in expense
was seen as one of the most attractive features of the Adviceline
service, indicating (if not conclusively) that the freephone facility
accounted for a large proportion of this take-up.

A significant result of both schemes, however, has been their ability to attract a higher than average proportion of enquiries connected with social security: nearly 18% of enquiries in the case of Adviceline and 35% in the case of Information Link, compared with a Scottish bureau average of 11.7% (1980-81). Three factors suggest themselves here: the dearth of outlets in rural areas (government offices, post offices, etc.) for providing people with social security information and advice; the presence of a greater proportion of people in rural areas, such as pensioners, likely to be dependent upon welfare benefits; the greater importance likely to be attached by people of modest means to advice and information services which represent real savings in travel, telephone charges and other costs. Freephone and other rural advice services may be seen as filling a very important gap in the provision of social security advice and information. At the same time, advice agencies may want to direct the attention of social security offices to the proportion and nature of social security enquiries they are having to deal with from people in rural areas, with a view to getting officials bodies such as this to review and extend their information outlets in these areas (e.g. through the provision of leaflets in village halls, community centres, doctors' surgeries, etc.). The two types of scheme should not be judged simply in terms of the number and types of enquiries they succeed in attracting, however. Each scheme has a number of inherent advantages and some disadvantages, which need to be taken into consideration.

1. Geographical coverage. Adviceline operated over a wide and continuous geographical area, whereas the Information Links were uneven on the ground, much depending (in the latter case) on the availability and suitability of local people to volunteer their services and the presence of an advice centre within reasonable reach to train and service the links.

2. Availability. Adviceline was available at fixed times of the day (9.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.), which could mean that it was inconvenient for people wanting to make enquiries during the evening. The links were in principle available at virtually any time of the day or evening, but absences from home at various times could mean that they were less likely to offer the sort of continuous cover at fixed times afforded by a service like Adviceline relying on a rota of volunteers. One option here might be for the links to advertise the times they are normally available and the names of other links to approach when they are not available.

3. Quality of Service. While there was no doubt that Adviceline offered a confidential and reliable service, the lack of face-
to-face contact could mean that it could not provide such a personal-
ised form of service as a link scheme, with the additional dis-
advantage that the advice and information providers, working from
a distant location, might not be so sensitive to local needs as a
link working in the community. (This problem is, of course,
circumvented if the advice providers, working from a central base,
operate as local links as well, as in the Castle Douglas scheme.)
It is important, however, that the link should have a standing in
the local community which encourages people to come forward with
their enquiries.

4.3 Publicity

Both the Adviceline and Information Link schemes relied on very
extensive publicity to get themselves established, including the
leafleting of individual households. Householed leafleting
certainly proved to be an effective method of publicising Adviceline,
with 50% of people in the area claiming to have heard of the scheme
six months after the second wave of leafleting; but it appeared
to have had much less effect in publicising the Information Links,
about whom only about a third of people in the area had heard.
In the latter case, locally initiated publicity, in community
council newsletters, and in shop windows appeared to have been more
effective. A major difficulty in both schemes was sustaining the
level of public awareness and take-up once the initial publicity
had taken place, with the Adviceline scheme showing a significant
tailing off in the number of enquiries month by month until the next
surge of publicity. The links were in a more advantaged position
to initiate renewed publicity of their own, living as they were
near to the doorsteps of most of their clientele; but in areas
with a widely scattered population, as in the Adviceline area,
household mail drops had to be relied upon, and this may prove to
be a rather costly exercise if it has to be repeated too often.
In the case of telephone advice services it may therefore be necessary
to resort to less costly options once the initial publicity has been
undertaken and these could include:

(i) advertising the freephone number in a regular advertisement
in the local press or in a special advice services page of
the telephone directory. (A problem with Adviceline was
that while there was a substantial level of public awareness
about the scheme, many people forgot the freephone number
to ask for, the telephone operators not being in a position
to offer assistance here; and it was not unusual for
clients to phone the bureau on their ordinary line to find
out the freephone number.)

(ii) stickers or slips reminding people of the freephone number
to insert in their telephone directory. (The possibility
of publicity slips being enclosed with telephone bills was put by the Scottish Telecommunications Board for the north of Scotland area, but in its reply the Board said that it was not its policy to include unsolicited material with telephone accounts, despite the obvious revenue raising potential of this method.)

In link schemes it would seem desirable that the links should initiate as much of the publicity as possible themselves, working at local level, and relying only on centralised sources of publicity at the initial stages.

4.4 Costs

Direct cost comparisons between the two types of scheme are by no means straightforward owing to differences in the way they are managed, funded and publicised. Adviceline costs for 1980-81 worked out at £2.38 per enquiry or £2.50 per enquiry when combined with all other bureau enquiries, office overheads and the organiser's salary.* The provision of publicity and the leafleting of households would be expected to increase the costs by up to another 78p an enquiry, however (1980-81 prices). The SCC Information Link scheme cost £3.46 for each enquiry dealt with in the same period (not taking into account free accommodation provided for the co-ordinator). However, since this was not a CAB-based scheme, comparison with Adviceline may be misleading here. When the running costs of the Castle Douglas CAB Village Link scheme are examined, it is seen that each enquiry handled by the link cost £2.47 (or £3.07 an enquiry when combined with all other enquiries received by the bureau, office overheads and the payment of a salary to a part-time organiser).**

The smaller amount of money spent on publicising the Castle Douglas scheme partly accounts for the cost being lower here. Disregarding

* Scottish Association of CABx, Annual Report 1980-81 and Inverness and district CAB, Annual Report 1980-81. Costs per enquiry derived from 5,762 enquiries (including 428 Adviceline enquiries) and total expenditure of £14,443.56 (including £1,018.74 spent on Adviceline, ex. publicity) for 1980-81. Inclusion of £336 spent on Adviceline publicity in 1980-81 raises the cost per Adviceline enquiry to £3.16.

** Castle Douglas CAB, Annual Report, 1980-81. Costs per enquiry derived from 1,248 enquiries (including 279 Village Link enquiries) and expenditure of £541 spent on the Village Link scheme for 1980-81 and £3,300 on the part-time organiser's salary.
any expenditure on publicity, bureau-based freephone advice schemes
would therefore appear to be marginally cheaper than Link schemes,
in which the costs of travel of the links to and from their advice/
training centre on a regular (weekly) basis are likely to be a major
item of expense. On the other hand, differences in costs between
the two types of scheme might be attenuated if, say, telephone
changes were to rise at a higher rate than volunteers' travel
costs.

The costs of freephone advice services can be reduced considerably
if services are timed to coincide with the cheaper rate charge
times (1 p.m. - 8 a.m. and weekends) or if calls are handled mainly
through metered instead of more costly operator-connected calls;
the latter may mean getting clients to leave a number for phoning
back straightaway, using direct dialling facilities, as in the
Northumberland Rural CAB scheme. (But there may be difficulties
in getting people to come forward with enquiries in the evening or
staffing advice centres at this time.)

A special feature of freephone advice services, given the present
tariff structures, is that advice centres can deal with inland
calls from any distance, with calls beyond 35 miles being charged
at the same long-distance rate: calls from 100 or more miles away
cost the same as those only 36 miles away. This provides scope
for extending a freephone advice service over a very wide catchment
area. Initially, however, it is advisable for advice centres to
cover only one or two telephone areas and to monitor their running
costs before extending the service to other telephone areas. If
public funding is to be secured, it will be necessary to reach
agreements with the appropriate regional and district councils in
deciding how extensive an area should be covered.

A significant development having implications for the cost of a
freephone advice service has been the recent reduction in unit
charges for long-distance calls at peak and standard times since
1st May 1982: a three-minute operator-connected call now costs
97p at the peak rate (compared with £1.10 previously) and 76p at
the standard rate (compared with 90p previously), with even cheaper
charges for calls dialled direct. Higher reductions have also been
introduced on certain trunk routes between major cities (e.g.
Edinburgh/Glasgow to London) in order to encourage greater commercial
usage. These developments would seem to augur well for organisations
wanting to set up freephone advice services. There may also be
an argument for introducing a special tariff structure for people
living in rural communities who find themselves having to pay for
a long-distance call to contact "local" service centres (such as
their council or DHSS office). This could be achieved through a
revision of the charge categories on a mileage basis by, say,
not charging calls within a 100 mile radius at the long distance
rate. One interesting development now under experiment in the

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Aberdeen area is the provision of remote area distance dialling permitting people to make long-distance calls for the cost of a local call, the balance being met by the receiver of the call; although the equipment required is such that it is at the present time only cost effective in telephone exchanges with a large volume of calls.

4.5 Handling of enquiries

Volunteers involved in either scheme reported no untoward difficulties in the handling of enquiries, although some of the SOC Information Links mentioned that in the early stages of the scheme their function was not always properly understood by officials. In the case of Adviceline what few difficulties arose were mainly as a result of the enquiry being too difficult to handle over the telephone or clients in a small minority of cases having difficulty explaining their problems over the phone or not always being available for contact by phone later on.

In the SOC Information Link and Castle Douglas CAB Village Link schemes, the links sometimes found themselves having to make a number of follow-up visits to enquirers; but again this did not happen frequently and the majority of enquiries could be handled in a short space of time. An inherent weakness of the SOC Information Link scheme was that the links were not formally associated with any advice giving agency in the area, which may have resulted in the public (and even volunteers) not having a clear (or agreed) a conception of the links' role as they might; this problem did not arise in the Adviceline scheme and was less likely to occur in the Castle Douglas scheme, under which volunteers were trained and identified as CAB workers, whose role was more well defined and readily understood.

4.6 Training

Both types of scheme depended on highly trained and well-motivated volunteers to function effectively and enjoy public confidence. One of the special attractions of the Adviceline and the Castle Douglas Village Link schemes was that they were each manned by people who were also trained as CAB volunteers. The links in the SOC scheme were also able to take advantage of some of the training given to CAB volunteers. But while people replying to the SOC questionnaire appeared to be generally satisfied with the way their enquiry had been handled and the quality of advice given, it may be that advice workers may need to develop special skills when dealing with enquiries either by telephone or from their own homes to establish the sort of "rapport" established with clients in face-to-face situations in the normal way at advice centres. Especially sensitive handling of enquiries may be needed among
rural communities in which people are well-known to one another. Advice workers operating from a distance away, as in a freephone advice scheme, may also have to be sensitive to the very special problems faced by some rural communities, occasioned, for example by the lack of a post office or public transport in the area. Each of these factors would suggest that additional training and training materials should be developed for advice and information providers covering rural areas, whether through freephone advice, information link or other schemes. The National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux is currently piloting training materials for "village contacts" in parts of rural Cumbria and Northumbria, and there may well be scope for a parallel project for telephone advice schemes, as recommended at a seminar recently.

4.7. Public evaluation

Both of the SCC's experimental advice schemes appear to have been widely appreciated by members of the public, although not always for the same reasons. Adviceline was seen as attractive for the saving in journey time and expense it offered and for providing a service that was confidential, prompt and reliable. The Information Link scheme was also seen as representing a service which was confidential and which cut down travel and costs involved when information or advice was sought; one particularly attractive feature was the provision of information and advice from people with specialist local knowledge. The fact that these services existed in the area at all was perhaps seen as of greatest benefit, as evinced from the many encouraging comments volunteered by householders replying to the SCC questionnaire. Only a handful of respondents ventured to say that the scheme in their area was not needed. A significant number of respondents felt that either scheme had not been well enough publicised, however, and some saw advertising in the local press, in newsletters, in shops and libraries as assisting in this task.

4.8 General conclusions and recommendations

(1) Form of advice provision in rural areas. The SCC's two experiments have each indicated that certain types of advice provision may be more appropriate in some rural areas rather than others. A service like Adviceline seems to be specially suited to remote and sparsely populated highland and island communities which cannot be reached effectively in any other way except by telephone. In rural areas where the population is more concentrated in villages and market towns, the link scheme seems more appropriate, provided of course that suitable volunteers are available. A
combination of these services may be necessary, as in rural Northumberland, where there are scattered communities surrounding several smaller towns or villages. In rural areas with a number of larger market towns of say 5,000–10,000 inhabitants it may even be possible to open up extension bureaux or information centres as in the Easter Ross and eastern border areas of Scotland, or in the case of smaller communities, run advice clinics open once a week in, say, a local school school and serviced by a nearby extension bureau or information centre. The setting up of an information centre at Huntly (population 5,000 persons) by one of the SCC links showed convincingly that even in small towns of this size a substantial need for a generalist advice and information centre exists.

Recommendation 1

Regional, islands, and district councils, in consultation with established advice and information agencies and community organisations should take active steps to assess the whole provision of information and advice services in their areas, especially with a view to securing adequate advice and information services for rural communities.

These steps should include the setting up of freephone advice services for sparsely populated highland and islands areas, (Orkney Islands Council having been the latest local authority to do so). Information link schemes should be developed in communities with a large number of small market towns and villages near enough to an established advice or information centre, to recruit, train and service volunteers. Extension bureaux or weekly clinics should be considered for larger population centres which are nonetheless too small to justify the running of an information and advice centre on a full time basis.

Target audiences: local authorities; central government; advice and information agencies; councils of social service.

(2) Funding

Advice and information centres wishing to make their services more accessible to people in rural areas need special funds in order to do so. A freephone advice service needs extra budgeting provision from about £1,000 a year upwards (1930–31 prices) to meet the additional telephone charges involved, costs obviously rising in proportion to the population of the area covered. Information Link Schemes need to make provision for the travelling and some
training expenses of volunteers, as with the village link scheme run by Castle Douglas CAB, where such expenses amounted to over £300 in 1980-81. Either scheme may also require additional funds for publicising its services, whether through leafleting, posters, or press advertising. Schemes which cover more than one local authority area will probably need to secure the support and financial assistance of the district and regional councils concerned; difficulties may arise if not all of the local authorities agree to do so, as when some local authorities have more funds available than others. The funding of Adviceline on such a joint basis after SOC funding ended and the setting up of a free-phone service in the Orkney Islands with the financial support of the islands council suggest that the initiative should come from the local authorities if rural advice schemes are to develop at all. Longer-term consideration of ways in which advice services are and should be funded generally seems to be necessary, however, to secure the proper co-ordination of and rationalise the funding of services run by statutory and voluntary agencies, including ways in which central government funding might be made more widely available. (See appendix 2 of this report.)

Re�commendation 2

Having determined the appropriate form of provision for their areas, regional, islands and district councils should initiate discussions with advice and information agencies in their area to work out ways of funding advice and information services in their rural localities.

At the same time, local and central government and voluntary advice agencies should come together at a national level to consider ways in which they might further assist one another in the funding of advice services on a secure basis.

Target audiences: central and local government; voluntary advice agencies.

(3) Publicity

Advice services, especially in rural and sparsely populated areas, depend on a great deal of publicity to encourage take-up and, indeed, promote awareness that a service exists to deal with their enquiry or problem. The SOC's advice experiments suggest that there is no one proven method for getting this publicity across and that the geographical and social circumstances of the area in question dictate the most appropriate form of publicity. In a sparsely populated area, such as the one served by Adviceline, some initial leafleting of households by mail drop seems to be essential in

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getting a service off the ground; but follow-up publicity in
the form of stickers, advertisements or special entries in the
telephone directory are essential in reminding people of the free-
phone number to ask for. Information link schemes, on the other
hand, seem to be most successful where the links generate most of
the publicity themselves in community newsletters, in shop windows,
and through their own standing or work in the community. There
may also be a role for local radio in reminding people about
advice schemes in their areas.

Recommendation 3

Advice and information agencies should experiment with different
forms of publicity to advertise their services, with special regard
being given to the geographic and social circumstances of rural
localities.

The use of local radio to publicise services should also be con-
sidered.

Target audiences: information and advice agencies, community
councils; councils of social services; local voluntary
organisations; personal service workers; local press; and broad-
casting organisations.

(4) Role of government agencies

The SCC's investigations indicate that various government agencies
could make their own special contributions to the development and
promotion of rural advice services. British Telecom and the
Post Office could make their own outlets available at little or no
charge and with revenue raising potential for giving special
publicity to advice services in sub-post offices and, in the case
of telephone advice services, in telephone directories and communica-
tions with subscribers. Having recently introduced reductions
in charges for long-distance calls at peak and standard times,
British Telecom has shown that it is also in a position to make
telephone advice services cheaper to run; and there may be a case
for revising tariff structures as well in order that rural dwellers,
for whom the telephone is their most important form of communication,
may share some of the advantages of people in towns and cities,
who need only pay for the cost of a local call when contacting
essential services. Finally there appears to be a role for
agencies like the Department of Health and Social Security in
making their leaflets and other information services more readily
or widely available in rural areas, given the higher incidence of
enquiries connected with social security resulting from the SCC's
rural advice experiments. This might be done by making leaflets available through community organisations and representatives rather than just official outlets (post offices, social work offices), which may not always be within easy reach.

Recommendation 4

Government agencies - most notably British Telecom, the Post Office and the Department of Health and Social Security - should liaise with advice and information providers at national and local level to devise ways of making advice services in rural areas easier to publicise and cheaper to run. The distribution of information about welfare benefits and other assistance should also be made more effective in these areas; official leaflets, etc. should also be written in plain language.

Target audiences: British Telecom, Post Office, DHSS and other central government agencies; advice and information agencies; national voluntary organisations, councils of social service.

(5) Training

No untoward difficulties were encountered by advice workers in the handling of enquiries, either by telephone or as links in their own homes or local centres. At the same time both types of service represent significant departures from advice giving in the conventional sort of way through face-to-face interviews in office accommodation and are likely to require special skills that cannot readily be imparted through normal training programmes. A recent seminar on telephone advice services calling for a national training programme and the piloting of information packs for "village contacts" in rural Northumbria and Cumbria by the National Association for CABx testify to the need for some specialist training provision in this type of advice giving. Special training for advice giving by telephone or through volunteer links in their own homes or village centres will probably need to be closely related and sensitised to the very distinctive problems and difficulties faced by people living in rural and sparsely populated areas.

Recommendation 5

Special training schemes and materials should be developed and made widely available through national advice agencies at the earliest
opportunity for the benefit of advice workers providing their services by telephone, in their own homes or in village centres, etc.

Training provisions should give special attention to the handling of enquiries from rural populations, whose needs differ significantly from those of urban dwellers.

Target audiences: Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, Scottish Federation of Independent Advice Centres.

(6) Role of community organisations

Public awareness and use of advice services may in the last analysis depend largely on how individuals perceive advice agencies as helping them with their enquiry or problem. A Consumer Concerns survey conducted by the National Consumer Council indicated that a third of the people in the interview sample (1,470 households) had problems that were rated as serious but only one in ten respondents out of the total sample had sought advice about their problem at any time. While the availability of advice services in an area obviously affects how people respond to or cope with a problem, the NOC survey suggested that public awareness and use of advice services, where these exist, is lower than it might be. The advice agencies themselves are in only a limited position to influence public attitudes other than through their own publicity efforts and the support of community organisations in their areas may be necessary to encourage more people to make use of their services. The support of community organisations, such as councils of social service, community councils, and other local organisations, may have particular application in rural areas where official outlets for directing people to advice agencies are clearly much thinner on the ground. There may also be a role for the community education service here in raising the level of community support and understanding of advice services in the area through the promotion of self-help study groups among community representatives.

Recommendation 6

Advice agencies should enlist the active co-operation of community organisations, including councils of social service and community councils, in promoting the use of advice services.

They should also make use of the community education service to bring to the public attention the nature and range of enquiries with which they can deal through the setting up of self-help study groups
among community representatives.

**Target audiences:** advice agencies; councils of social service; community councils; voluntary organisations; community education service.
APPENDIX 1

Disadvantage in rural Scotland

This appendix draws attention to the very special nature of problems facing people in rural areas, indicating that their need for advice and information services may be as great if not greater than for people living in towns. For a fuller report of these problems, readers are directed to the OCC publication Problems of Consumers in Rural Areas (1982) by G.A. Mackay and G. Laing.

(i) Population structure

Rural Scotland accounts for 23% (1,154,099) of the Scottish population of 5.2 million, occupies 86% of the area of Scotland and has an average population density of 42.7 people per square mile (the most sparsely populated districts, such as Lochaber, Ross and Cromarty and Sutherland, contains fewer than 20 persons per square mile). At the time of the 1981 Census, 147,197 people were living in "remote" areas of Scotland and a further 160,018 people were living in "very remote" (including islands) areas. Between 1961 and 1971 the population of rural Scotland fell by 0.1%, but in remote areas of Scotland, the population declined by 9.6%. Since 1971 the population of rural Scotland has shown a general increase, with substantial population growth in some highlands and islands areas; but most of the rural population growth has been in towns, and in the remote parts of Scotland the population has increased only slightly or remained static (e.g. Caithness) or continued to decline (e.g. Western Isles). Compared with the rest of Scotland, rural Scotland (1971) contained a greater proportion of retired people (18.5%) with the proportion being considerably higher in certain islands and districts, such as Skye and Lochalsh (23.7%) and Western Isles (23.1%) [See Table]. These areas also contained the lowest proportion of children aged 0-14 years, and a study of the remoter areas of Strathclyde noted that there was a general tendency for rural areas to "export" young persons aged 15-25 years old.3

(2) Economic activity, incomes and expenditure

The five industrial sectors paying the lowest wages (agriculture, forestry and fishing; distribution trades; timber; furniture; clothing and footwear) in 1976 accounted for 29% of male employees in rural areas of Great Britain, with the figure rising to over 40% in some areas.4 Poor road and transport services, the lack of local back-up services and suppliers, the non-availability of housing for key workers and inadequate public utilities (sewage, power supplies) may limit the development of other industrial sectors in many rural areas. The domination of one or two major
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NOTE: Italicised districts refer to areas in which the SCC's advice experiments are operative (see chapters 2–4). Rural districts of Central, Fife, and Tayside regions have been excluded from the table for reasons of space.
employers in certain areas may have disastrous consequences if a firm is forced to close. The limited range of employment opportunities in rural areas forces many people to commute, especially school-leavers who cannot afford to live away from home. The absence of local job centres and transport difficulties may further restrict people from rural areas in seeking employment. The existence of seasonal industries, such as tourism, in some areas may mean that not all people in rural areas are employed continuously throughout the year. A special analysis undertaken for the SCC's remote areas study estimated that average weekly male earnings in rural parts of Scotland were between 8 and 9 per cent lower than related non-oil based earnings in Aberdeen. In some of the remoter parts of Scotland, such as the Western Isles, Sutherland and Skye, average male weekly earnings were even lower, by between 16 and 24 per cent. The value of croft housing home food production and traditional opportunities to undertake spare time jobs or "barter" goods and services might be expected to increase rural incomes by 8-10 per cent, according to this study, but "even this would leave a substantial gap between the urban (Aberdeen) earnings and the averages in our areas". Notwithstanding the lower incomes in rural areas, average weekly household expenditure there was higher in 1978 than for the rest of Scotland on housing and transport, with a higher weekly expenditure in some areas (e.g. Orkney) going on consumer durables as well. The higher proportion of women not in paid employment in rural areas also suggests that household incomes in rural areas are on average also a great deal lower compared with the rest of Scotland (see Table).

(2) Prices

In its latest rural price survey, the Scottish Consumer Council and the Highlands and Islands Development Board showed that prices of a "shopping basket" of items between October and December 1981 in 34 rural localities were on average 12.1% higher than in Aberdeen. Food and drink was 14.2% higher, other goods 19.0% higher, housing 8.1% higher and transport 10.0% higher. Only services were cheaper (by about 10%), mainly as a result of labour charges (e.g. for plumbing) being lower in rural Scotland. Broadly similar patterns were observed for previous periods. Rural petrol prices in November 1981 were found to average £1.80 for a gallon of 3-star petrol, prices ranging from £1.65 to £2.00 compared with an Aberdeen average of £1.66. Since there is already evidence that prices in Scotland are on average higher than most other parts of Great Britain (3.5% higher, according to a recent report) it may be confidently asserted that in rural and remote areas of Scotland living costs are among the highest in Britain.

(4) Retail services

There has been a sharp decline in the number of shops in rural and
remote parts of Scotland over the past few decades, forcing more rural dwellers to travel longer distances to market towns or other centres to seek the goods and services they need. In the remotest areas of Scotland the number of parishes with a fixed-site shop fell by almost half from 334 to 180 between 1960 and 1980.8 The majority of these outlets are small grocers' shops or general stores, which are often forced to close upon removal or retirement of the shop owner. Although mobile shopping services are available in many areas, little is known about the frequency of services or the price and range of goods on offer. The SCC's remote areas study revealed that while most of consumers' purchases of food took place locally, 40% of their expenditure on clothes, footwear and durable goods was in their nearest market town (but with very wide variations between survey parishes in the amount of purchasing done locally).9 Some 30% of the 3,100 people interviewed in the survey complained about the prices in local shops being higher than in nearby towns, with the next most frequent complaints being about the lack of shops in their area and the range and standard of goods available (although many interviewees also praised local shops for their friendly service and their role as a social centre or meeting place). In attempting to cover their costs by charging higher prices or stocking only items with a faster turnover, village shops are likely to encourage more people to undertake special shopping trips to town (where discount bulk buys for freezers may also be on offer), thus accelerating their own demise, notwithstanding the savings in transport costs by shopping locally. It may be that consumers purchasing goods in this way (or by mail order) are in greater need of advice than if goods are purchased locally, when, say, faulty goods can easily be returned to the shop.

(5) Transport

Since 1945 there has been a rapid decline in public transport services in rural areas, putting pressure on households to purchase a car, accelerating the decline of services further. Between 1965-75 alone, there was a 9% reduction in vehicle mileage on country bus services in Great Britain and a corresponding reduction of 29% in passenger journeys.10 As passenger services have decreased, so the costs of transport in rural areas have increased. A family expenditure survey in 1979 showed that average household expenditure on transport and vehicles was highest in areas of lowest population density.11 Despite cutbacks and price rises in services, a high proportion of rural inhabitants are still dependent on public transport, however. In rural Scotland in 1971, 45% of households were still without a car.12 A survey carried out in two rural areas of East Anglia in 1976 indicated that over two thirds of retired people and housewives living in rural areas may also be without access to a car during the greater part of the day.13 Even among households with a car, it has been estimated that in mainland remote areas of Scotland an hour on average is spent
journeying to the nearest shopping centre, equivalent to the consumption of one gallon of petrol each way: travelling by public transport takes double this time. Over half of the 3,100 people interviewed in the SCC's CORA study commented, often critically, on the public transport services in their area: the main complaints were that bus services were inadequate (706 respondents) or non-existent (1,426), charged fares that were too high (412) or were badly timetabled (202).

(6) Housing

Census figures for 1971 show that 12.9% of housing in rural Scotland lacked basic amenities, compared with 13.5% for Scotland as a whole, but in remote areas of Scotland over one quarter of houses (26.0%) did not have these amenities: hot and cold running water, a bathroom and inside W.C. Although improvements have probably taken place in many of these houses since 1971, it is likely that the proportion of sub-standard housing in remote areas is still higher than in the rest of the country. The SCC remote areas study found that people living in remote areas of Scotland were generally satisfied with local housing conditions and believed that physical deficiencies were compensated for by a pleasant environment, but 150 interviewees commented on the shortage of housing in their area and 104 said that house prices or rents were too high. According to one commentator, council house building rates in rural areas have not been sufficient to offset the contraction of privately rented housing, and despite the increase in owner-occupation since the 1970's on the basis of council house waiting lists, "some rural areas show equal amounts of housing stress as that found in inner city housing authorities." In some rural areas, the local population may find itself having to compete for housing with commuters, incoming retired people, or, to a much lesser extent, people in search of holiday or second homes. The need to secure economies of scale by concentrating housebuilding in a few sites and the costs of "importing" labour and materials also severely limits the availability of housing in sparsely populated areas.

(7) Health services

Increased centralisation of hospital services and reductions in the number of doctors' surgeries have made the provision of health care a special problem in rural areas. In its remote areas study, the SCC estimated that although there was one resident or visiting doctor for every 1,000 people (well below the Scottish average of 1,620 in 1979) nine of the 26 survey parishes were without any health services at all, even in the form of a visiting doctor, and all but one of the 26 parishes were without a resident dentist or a hospital. The growth of specialised medical care requiring equipment which is uneconomic to run in small "cottage" type
hospitals and the development of group practices by G.P.s have meant that health services are far less accessible to people in rural areas, a problem compounded by the poorer public transport services in rural areas and the greater proportions of people living there who are elderly and therefore more likely to need medical attention. Visiting relatives in hospital, in say Aberdeen or Glasgow, may mean expensive journeys and prolonged absences from home. People interviewed in the remote areas study nevertheless expressed a high level of satisfaction with G.P. (and district nursing) services in their area; perhaps this was testimony to the adaptability of medical services in difficult geographical circumstances (e.g. through more extensive home visiting, "barefoot" doctoring by district nurses, use of air transport in emergencies). Difficulties in reaching non-visiting practitioners, such as dentists and chiropodists, may mean that courses of treatment are not always completed among people in rural areas, however. Added to this are the travel costs of attending courses of treatment over any length of time, which may discourage pensioners and other people on low incomes from making proper use of medical services.

(8) Education

Under a "rationalisation" programme some 350 primary schools in Scotland were closed between 1960-70, the vast majority in rural areas, despite a rise of 38,000 pupils attending primary schools in this period. Although this rate of closures fell greatly after 1970, a fall in school rolls, local government re-organisation and spending cuts saw a further 74 closures between 1975-80, albeit 36 of these closures being in urban areas. The SCC remote areas study observed that in 26 parishes in remote parts of Scotland, 41 schools existed there in 1960, 34 were there in 1970, and 29 remained in 1980. Pupils in these parishes in 1980 travelled 11 miles each way on average journeying to and from school and in 7 island parishes pupils were "living away" from home in order to attend secondary school. Long journeys to and from school may mean that pupils have less opportunity to participate in after-school activities or that they arrive home feeling too tired to do homework. Children may also be living too far away from libraries, cultural and recreational centres to pursue any special interests of their own; likewise, further education opportunities are likely to be curtailed for young people and adults from rural areas. Children attending rural schools may face various other educational disadvantages if the school is too small to provide an all-round curriculum or specialist instruction or if, in the case of a 1-3 teacher school, staff are absent, out-of-touch professionally, or incompetent. Pupils in such schools may have less opportunity to interact with children of their own age. Many of the school buildings in rural areas are also very old, with inferior accommodation and facilities. The remote areas study found that among
766 people commenting on education provision in their area, 417 remarked on the absence of a local secondary school, 337 said that the distances primary school children had to travel were too far and 260 said that there was no primary school in their area. Another 319 were unhappy about their children having to live away from home. Some 368 people commented on the important social role to be played by a school in their locality. While 409 thought that these children received a better education in the local school than what they would get from a similar school in a town or city, another 163 believed that the teaching at their school was poor.

(9) Communications

In the period 1970-78 there was a net loss of 1,565 sub-post offices throughout the UK (out of an initial total of 22,907)21. Many of these closures were in rural areas, where the post office, in evidence to a committee of enquiry in 1976, indicated that offices generally should not be less than two miles apart to preserve a balance between reasonable customer needs and costs. According to one survey a quarter or more of all villages in Avon, Devon and Cornwall were without a post office in 1975-76, and another survey in Hampshire in 1976 revealed that in 36 parishes without a post office, seven of the villages there had a population of over a thousand.22 No comparable figures are available for Scotland but it is known that in remote areas of Scotland the number of sub-post offices there has fallen by a third (to 117 offices in 1980) over the past decade, although this has been mitigated by the development of an extensive postal bus network, especially in the highlands and islands area.23 The absence or closure of a post office in a rural area means people having to travel greater distances than people in urban areas to deal with essential tasks such as the collection of welfare benefits, and this poses special difficulties for the elderly, the disabled and people who cannot afford the extra cost of transport. The survival of a rural sub-post office may be dependent on the successful running of the village shop, with which it shares premises and staffing. Although postmen are known to perform important tasks on their delivery rounds, such as acting as an agent for the payment of pensions and benefits, the post office appears to be reluctant to make these services too widely known (e.g. in case postmen carrying cash become targets for attack). Consumers in rural and remote areas are also likely to pay higher telephone charges, even to make a "local" call to, say, their council or social security offices, because of the banding of call-charges on a mileage basis. The cost of a long-distance call may inhibit poorer subscribers from making proper use of official agencies and information and advice services for their area. The SCC's "freephone" advice experiment, described in chapter 2, was specifically set up to help overcome this difficulty.
All of these differences between rural and urban areas should not be construed as meaning that rural inhabitants are socially "deprived" compared with their urban counterparts. Clearly in a number of respects rural dwellers are better off: they enjoy a better physical environment than many people in large towns and cities, the strains of modern urban living may be less widely felt, personal ties are generally closer, crime rates are lower, and professional and other workers (doctors, postmen) there are more likely to render services beyond the strict call of duty. The geography and social structure of rural areas also suggest that it may not be wholly appropriate to expect urban patterns of service provision in these areas; it might instead be more sensible to look to patterns of provision which are more adapted to rural circumstances, such as mobile shopping, library and other facilities or telephone advice, postal tuition and other services. These considerations should not be allowed to obscure recognition of the very real difficulties and hardships many rural dwellers are having to face, however, as a result of higher living costs and poorer access to essential services, particularly with regard to the higher proportion of elderly and lower income households living there.
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APPENDIX 2

Funding of rural advice services

Although many rural advice schemes rely on unpaid volunteers and need not therefore involve large sums of money, funding may be needed for office accommodation and the payment of a full or part-time worker to set a particular scheme up, to train volunteers and to service volunteers with updated information materials (with additional money need to meet any telephone expenses associated with particular schemes). This appendix briefly considers possible funding options developed in a special paper on this topic, Funding models for Local Advice Services in Rural Areas, published by the National Consumer Council.

Traditionally local authorities (district, regional and islands councils) have been relied on to provide most or all of the funding of local advice services, sometimes with the assistance of central government grants or development funds. But advice services may find themselves in an insecure position if:

(i) local authorities are forced to curtail their expenditure, non-statutory services being the most vulnerable in this respect.

(ii) there is a change in the political composition of local authorities or the membership of funding committees that result in less generous funding policies.

(iii) there is overlap between advice services provided directly by the local authority, such as consumer advice centres, and those provided by voluntary agencies, forcing services to compete for limited funds.

(iv) central government funding has to be "matched" by local authority funding and lasts for a limited amount of time only.

Although advice services in Scotland have been spared the worst effects of spending cutbacks compared with England and Wales, with some expansion of services even taking place in Scotland (mostly in urban areas), the funding of advice services north and south of the border remain haphazard, divisive and inadequate, and this is particularly the case in the development and maintenance of rural advice services. The National Consumer Council has identified four main options for the funding of advice services on a more secure footing than at present:
1. Local authority funding based on a fixed proportion (0.5%) of the rates support grant needs element, funds being allocated to local authority departments or to voluntary agencies upon application. A disadvantage of this arrangement is that it might jeopardise the autonomy of voluntary agencies and mute criticism of local services.

2. Central government direct grants, again based on the needs element formula above but enabling voluntary advice agencies to by-pass and function independently of local authorities. But this dependence on central government support could have the same disadvantages as dependence on local government funding, with the added difficulty that the central government department may not be the best judge of local needs.

3. "Rurban" aid, modelled on urban aid, under which central government provides 75% grants and local authorities meet the remaining 25% of overall costs of projects, government guidelines determining what sorts of projects would be most accessible.

4. An advice services commission, financed by a block government grant and perhaps building on urban aid principles to allocate funds directly to local authorities and voluntary agencies. The commission would also have overall responsibility for reviewing co-ordinating and developing advice services at a national level in conjunction with voluntary and statutory bodies. But central, local and voluntary agencies may be reluctant to cede control to a body of this kind.
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ADVICELINE QUESTIONNAIRE

To be completed by an adult member of the household and returned as soon as possible in the FREEPOST envelope provided. Most questions can be answered with a tick.

1. Had you heard of ADVICELINE before this questionnaire was delivered to you?
   YES
   NO
   If answer is No, go to question 7.

2. How did you learn about ADVICELINE? (You may tick more than one answer)
   - Through a newspaper
   - Through a radio broadcast
   - Through somebody I know
   - Through a leaflet
   - By other means
   - Cannot remember

3. Do you know how to get in touch with ADVICELINE?
   YES
   NO
   If answer is Yes, give particulars below:

4. Have you at any time made an ADVICELINE call for advice or information?
   YES
   NO
   Cannot recall, go to question 6.

5. When you last made an ADVICELINE call, were you satisfied with the way in which your enquiry was handled?
   YES
   NO
   Cannot recall, please indicate below reasons for dissatisfaction:

6. What do you see as the importance of having an ADVICELINE service in your area whenever you need information or advice? (You may tick more than one answer and supply any comments of your own)
   - Confidential handling of enquiries
   - Prompt attention given
   - Phone call is free
   - No need to journey anywhere
   - None of the above
   Please mention any other benefits below:

7. Have you approached any official body, organization or individual with an enquiry or problem within the past 12 months? (e.g. council, social security official, social worker, solicitor, etc.)
   YES
   NO
   CANNOT RECALL
   If answer is Yes, mention body or individual concerned:

8. Please tick if your household -
   - contains a telephone
   - has use of a neighbour's phone
   - has a call-box within reach
   - has use of a motor vehicle
   - has none of the above

9. Please enter name of local telephone exchange

10. Please indicate whether dwelling:
    - Owner occupied
    - Rented from council/SSHA
    - Privately rented
    - Flat/terraced accommodation
    - Tied accommodation
    - Other accommodation

    Please use this space for any comments or suggestions.

Thank you for your help. Please post reply in FREEPOST envelope. Or address to:
SCOTTISH CONSUMER COUNCIL, FREEPOST, GLASGOW G3 7ER.
(No stamp needed)

Please continue from top of next column
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INFORMATION LINK QUESTIONNAIRE

To be completed by an adult member of the household and returned as soon as possible in the FREEPPOST envelope provided. Most questions can be answered with a tick.

1. Before receiving this questionnaire, did you know that there was an INFORMATION LINK in your (nearest) town or village to deal with any enquiries you might have?
   - YES
   - NO
   If answer is No, go to question 7.

2. How did you come to hear about the INFORMATION LINK? (You may tick more than one answer)
   - Through a newspaper, magazine or newsletter
   - Through a radio broadcast
   - Through somebody I know
   - Through a leaflet
   - Through a poster
   - Link known personally
   - By other means
   - Cannot remember

3. Do you know how to get in touch with the INFORMATION LINK?
   - YES
   - NO
   If answer is Yes, mention name or address of LINK below:

4. Have you at any time approached the INFORMATION LINK for information or advice?
   - YES
   - NO
   - CANNOT RECALL
   If answer is No or Cannot Recall, go to question 6.

5. When you last approached the INFORMATION LINK, were you satisfied with the way in which your enquiry was handled?
   - YES
   - NO
   - CANNOT RECALL
   If answer is No, please mention below reasons for dissatisfaction:

6. What do you see as the importance of having an INFORMATION LINK in your (nearest) town or village whenever you need information or advice? (You may tick more than one answer and supply comments of your own)
   - Confidential handling of enquiry
   - Link knowledgeable about locality
   - Do not need to journey very far
   - Phone call not too expensive
   - None of the above
   Please mention below any other benefits/advantages:

7. Have you approached any official bodies, organisations or individuals (other than the LINK) for information or advice within the past 12 months? (e.g. council, social security officer, citizens' advice bureau, social worker, etc.)
   - YES
   - NO
   - CANNOT RECALL
   If answer is Yes, mention body or individual concerned

8. Please enter opposite name of (nearest) town or village

9. Please tick if household contains a telephone
   - Has use of a motor vehicle

10. Please indicate whether dwelling:
    - Owner occupied
    - Rented from council/SSHA
    - Privately rented
    - Tied accommodation
    - Other accommodation

Please use this space for any comments or suggestions

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