

## **PE1834/A**

Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government submission of 18 November 2020

### **Background**

Funding for advice services is provided by both national and local governments, and from other sources such as the charitable sector, for example. The Scottish Government's approach to funding is to support specific projects which enhance the capability of the advice sector more widely, to support the government's aims, for example to maximise incomes, increase benefits take-up and tackle poverty.

Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland are individual charities and each is responsible for its own funding, including any core funding from the local authority and project funding from other sources such as Big Lottery. Since 2019, Citizens Advice Scotland has been a membership organisation which represents these charities' interests. It does not provide funding for individual Bureaux but does distribute funding received from Government for projects to its member network. For example, in 2020-21 the Scottish Government will provide over £1.4 million for Welfare Reform Mitigation to the network. This funding has been provided by the Scottish Government since 2013 and is distributed through Citizens Advice Scotland. Examples of funding from other sources include £4 million for the network from the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions for delivery of a support programme for Universal Credit – "Help to Claim".

As part of the block grant provided to all local authorities in the annual local government finance settlement the Scottish Government provides funding to support vulnerable and low income people. This provides flexibility to local authorities and it is for each of them to allocate their resources in the way that best meets local needs. Decisions on local funding priorities are for local authorities to make. It would not be appropriate for the Scottish Government to intervene in any Council's decision-making process.

A number of other providers operate within the free-to-client advice sectors, including UK-wide national providers such as StepChange, Shelter or Money Advice Trust, Scotland-wide national providers such as Advice Direct Scotland or One Parent Families Scotland, or local providers such as individual law centres and advocacy organisations. These providers cover a range of issues and provide a range of services in order to meet the needs of their clients. The Scottish Government has a role to support the sector in its entirety in order to ensure that this range of approaches and services is maintained for the people of Scotland.

More widely, the Scottish Government recognises the vital work of the third sector in supporting and protecting communities across Scotland. Overall turnover for the sector is estimated at over £6 billion per year with the Scottish Government contributing almost £0.5 billion.

## **Scottish Government support for Citizens Advice Bureaux network**

The Scottish Government does not provide core funding to the Citizens Advice Bureaux network in Scotland, instead providing funding to take forward specific projects which meet our overarching objectives. This approach is applied consistently across the advice sector. In 2020-21, the Scottish Government will provide over £5.9 million in funding to support the Citizens Advice Bureaux network in Scotland to deliver projects on our behalf, for example, welfare reform mitigation, our Money Talk Team service and a kinship care project.

In addition, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have increased support to the third sector, including a variety of advice providers such as Citizens Advice Scotland and individual Citizens Advice Bureaux. This includes £100,000 to help set up a national helpline and £438,000 to purchase personal protective equipment and to make physical alterations to Bureaux to enable safe reopening for face-to-face advice services, with 19 individual Citizens Advice Bureaux separately and successfully securing a total of £235,000 of funding from the Wellbeing Fund for similar purposes.

## **Conclusion**

The Scottish Government values the important work undertaken by the third sector, including Citizens Advice Bureaux, and has a strong record of support for independent and free-to-client advice services in Scotland. We agree that the Citizens Advice Bureaux network should be adequately supported to ensure that people can get the help and support that they need. This is why we already commit a significant proportion of funding to supporting the network, including additional investment since the beginning of the pandemic, and we will continue to work with the sector to ensure that they continue to be adequately funded from a variety of sources.

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