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## Profile of the Service

### Profile

Citizens Advice Direct is an innovative Glasgow based charity established to deliver an accessible telephone advice and information service. As part of the Citizens Advice network in Scotland the service provides free, impartial advice delivered by a combination of paid staff and volunteers.

For many people accessing a Citizens Advice bureau can be problematic. This is particularly true for the elderly, disabled or housebound. It also applies to those who cannot afford transport or childcare costs or, quite simply, people who are always at work during bureau opening hours. Citizens Advice Direct will provide a telephone-based information, advice and assistance service to Glasgow, an area with a population of over 577,869.

Glasgow has one of the lowest proportions of working age people in Scotland, in employment, despite an expanding jobs base, falling unemployment and a rising employment rate. Just over 90,000 working age adults are claiming a non Job Seekers Allowance, including 71,000 sick and disabled and 17,000 lone parents. 15.7% of the population are elderly and the city has the third highest rate of pensioners living alone in the UK. Areas of the city suffer from a number of problems including poor housing, poor shopping and facilities, unemployment and low income.

### Management

Citizens Advice Direct was established in 2001 and is managed by an elected Management Committee who are responsible for the finances, employment of staff and the quality of service provided to the public.

It is staffed by six full time paid workers, Operations Director, Service Manager, two Team Leaders, Project Development Officer, Housing Officer and Admin Officer, who together provide training and administrative support to more than 40 volunteer advice workers. The Bureau is a member of the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and works locally to serve local needs. The first priority of the Management Committee and staff is the quality of service offered to the community.

### Service

The service provided is *free, confidential, independent, and impartial* based on *respect* for the client. The service aims to *empower* and *enable* clients to make informed choices and take appropriate action regarding their circumstances, by providing information and advice and assistance.

Trained and supported volunteer advice workers provide the telephone-based advice service to the public on a wide range of issues dealing with approximately 20,000 enquiries each year. The average call lasts between 6 and 7 minutes. The service answers 96% of calls offered and is able to deal with 95% of enquiries with 5% being referred on to other advice agencies for further help. The largest group of enquiries concern benefit enquiries, consumer issues (including debt) and employment issues.

In order to provide this level of service a wide range of basic, ongoing and specialist training is provided for advice workers.