

Citizens Advice

Press release



Thursday 11 November 2010

Citizens Advice launches DMP provider partnership with CCCS

National charity Citizens Advice is today pleased to announce that after a competitive tender process the charity Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS) has been selected as the CAB service's preferred debt management partner for a one-year pilot scheme involving up to 100 bureaux. The partnership will enable bureaux to introduce clients who need to set up a debt management plan to CCCS as a trusted partner.

The pilot will see CAB clients continue to receive an impartial and complete debt advice service from their bureau and continue to be advised about all the debt remedy options available to them. For clients who choose to set up a DMP through CCCS, the bureau will automatically transfer the client's records to CCCS who will then negotiate with creditors, set up the DMP for the client and manage the client debt portfolio.

A recent report* from the Office of Fair Trading has highlighted that the choices that consumers make to settle their debt problems can have serious consequences on availability and cost of future credit. The partnership will play an important role in helping vulnerable consumers deal with complex and harmful financial problems.

Citizens Advice Chief Executive Gillian Guy said:

"Citizens Advice Bureaux are currently dealing with 9,500 new debt enquiries every working day. But clients who need, and choose, to use a debt management plan provider face an increasingly complex market in terms of the number of potential providers, the services they provide and how to identify quality providers.

"This partnership with CCCS as a trusted supplier will give clients the reassurance of a DMP provider that has been carefully assessed and selected. Our tender process set high standards for quality of advice, customer service and synergy with Citizens Advice's aims and values. CCCS, an established provider of DMPs, demonstrated their resounding commitment to our aims and a shared vision of a constructive and innovative partnership for the benefit of indebted clients.

"We hope that the partnership will set an industry standard to offer consumers a genuine opportunity to access free, quality debt advice that will help and motivate them to resolve their debt problems."

Malcolm Hurlston, Chairman of CCCS said:

"Working together, CCCS and Citizens Advice can transform the landscape for people in debt.

"Debt management plans, which CCCS introduced to the UK in the early 1990s and which over 100,000 of our clients are now using, are vital in helping people sort out their personal finances and learn about the need to organise monthly payments.

"Two principles are clear: first, people in debt should not have to pay for help. Secondly, they should be able to use the channel they prefer - and which will work best for them.

"Allying Citizens Advice Bureaux pre-eminence in face to face advice to the skills we have developed on the internet and using the telephone will make it likely that together we can offer the right service to all who need us."

The award is subject to final contractual details, but CCCS will help Citizens Advice with the set up costs to improve client experience and increase capacity.

* <http://www.ofc.gov.uk/news-and-updates/press/2010/101-10>

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Notes to editors:

1. Consumer Credit Counselling Service is a registered charity whose purpose is to assist people in financial difficulty by providing free, impartial and realistic advice.
2. CCCS's ethos is to help the "can't pay", not the "won't pay", and does not condone debt avoidance. CCCS always aims to help its clients pay back what they owe, in a realistic timescale and manner that is suited to each individual's situation.
3. CCCS is self-funding. Lenders share with the charity the benefit they receive from its operation, making a donation from the money repaid to them. This allows CCCS to retain its independence and ensure that its advice is always in the best interest of the client.
4. The CCCS free phone helpline 0800 1381111 is open 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. CCCS operates Debt Remedy, an online counselling service available round the clock at www.ccs.co.uk for those who prefer an anonymous option.
5. The Citizens Advice service comprises a network of local bureaux, all of which are independent charities, and national charity Citizens Advice. Together we help people resolve their money, legal and other problems by providing information and advice and by influencing policymakers. For more information in England and Wales see www.citizensadvice.org.uk
6. The advice provided by the Citizens Advice service is free, independent, confidential, and impartial, and available to everyone regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age or nationality. For online advice and information see www.adviceguide.org.uk
7. Citizens Advice Bureaux in England and Wales advised 2.1 million clients on 7.1 million problems from April 2009 to March 2010, an 18% increase on the previous year. For full 2009/2010 service statistics see: http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/pressoffice/press_index/press_20100517.htm
8. Out of 22 national charities, the Citizens Advice service is ranked by the general public as being the most helpful, approachable, professional, informative, effective / cost effective, reputable and accountable. (nfpSynergy's Brand Attributes survey, May 2010).
9. Most Citizens Advice service staff are trained volunteers, working at around 3,300 service outlets across England and Wales.

10. Volunteer hotline 08451 264264 (local rate)