Advice in Community Settings

Interim Evaluation Report

February 2023

MAYOR OF LONDON

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Executive Summary

Key Findings (delivery to September 2022)

- The programme has directly supported individuals from 1,766 households. Including all known members of these households, the programme has impacted at least 2,309 Londoners.
- Around a third of advice seekers had never accessed advice before. Compared to the population of London and advice seekers at Citizens Advice London branches, beneficiaries of the programme were more likely to be female or from a Black or Black British background and tended to be younger.
- Embedding the programme in different community settings reached different demographic groups of advice seekers. For example, Black advice seekers were most likely to go direct to an advice service while all other ethnic groups were most likely to first access the programme at a food bank.
- Across all advice seekers, 326 reported a financial gain. These totalled approximately £525,000, an average of around £1,600 per person. These financial gains ranged from £35 food vouchers to several thousands of pounds of debt being written off, with the largest financial gain valued at just over £27,000.
- Early findings show that the programme is having an impact on the health, wellbeing, and confidence of advice seekers. Over two in five (42%) of surveyed advice seekers reported that the advice and support had helped their and their family's physical and emotional wellbeing to a great extent.
- While the majority of partnerships did exist before the programme, almost all partnerships surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that partnership working had been strengthened. There were some barriers to partnership connection, such as the challenges of establishing data sharing protocols and referral pathways.
- Sustainability planning has been limited to date and has been particularly challenging due to the high demand for advice and support.

Introduction – what are the aims and context of the programme?

- The Mayor of London launched the Advice in Community Settings (AiCS) grant programme in 2022. This programme is **funding eleven advice partnerships** to support Londoners experiencing, or at risk of, financial hardship.
- The programme aims to **develop or strengthen partnerships between advice services and community settings** such as schools and food banks.
- There were **methodological challenges in evaluating the impact of this programme**. Due to the diversity of organisations involved in the programme, data collection and reporting was not uniform. Fewer interviews than planned were carried out in this evaluation period due to low levels of contacts supplied by partnerships.

- The **social and economic context of 2022, in particular the cost of living crisis, will undoubtedly have impacted delivery**. Nine of ten partnerships reported that demand for their services had increased between July and September 2022 and stakeholders shared that many advice seekers were at or near crisis point.
- Partnerships commenced delivery at various points in 2022 and **this interim evaluation covers delivery up to the end of September 2022**. Evaluation and reporting will continue alongside programme delivery.

Impact Evaluation – what was the impact of the programme?

1. The programme improved access to advice for a wider range of Londoners

- From commencement of delivery to the end of September 2022, **the programme supported individuals from 1,766 households**. For around a third of these households, data was supplied that showed how many other adults and children were living with the primary advice seeker. Including these other household members, the programme has **impacted at least 2,309 individuals across London**. Demographic data was only collected and analysed on the 1,766 people who were directly supported by advice services.
- Early findings suggest that the **community-based model is reaching Londoners who are not traditionally accessing advice services**. Around a third of all advice seekers seen by the programme had never accessed advice services before. Compared to the general London population and individuals seen at Citizens Advice, beneficiaries of the AiCS programme were more likely to be female or from a Black or Black British background and tended to be younger.

2. Embedding advice in community settings reached different groups of Londoners, accessing advice on a variety of topics

- **Different demographic groups were more likely to first access the programme in different community settings**. For example, Black and younger (18-25) advice seekers were most likely to go direct to an advice service, while all other ethnic and age groups and were most likely to first access the programme at a food bank. Those in employment or who were unable to work – due to immigration status or disability – were most likely to be seen at a community centre while retired or unemployed advice seekers tended to access advice at a food bank.
- **Beneficiaries were seeking advice on different topics depending on where they first accessed the programme.** Individuals who needed advice on debt and welfare benefits were most likely to have first accessed the programme at a food bank. In contrast, seven in ten (70%) of those who needed advice on immigration first engaged with the programme at an advice centre.

3. Advice seekers were broadly satisfied and felt that the advice they received was in line with the support they were seeking

- Management information data found that **welfare benefits was the most common advice topic**, while interviewed beneficiaries were most likely to report seeking advice on housing.

- Surveyed beneficiaries commented on the **ease and speed of access to advice** and support and they welcomed the **responsiveness of advisors**. Of those surveyed, 77% could not see how the advice they received could have been improved. Where improvements were suggested, these included shorter waiting lists and having more face-to-face contact.

"It was really easy after the initial meeting you could just arrange an appointment and it was easy to get to their office. You could ring or text them on the phone or email them and they would get back in touch really quickly." (Beneficiary interview)

4. The programme improved financial outcomes for a substantial minority of beneficiaries

- Financial gains were reported for 326 beneficiaries, with a total value across the cohort of £525,089, an **average value of £1,611 for everyone who reported a financial gain**. These financial gains ranged from £35 food vouchers to several thousands of pounds of debt being written off. The **largest financial gain had a value of just over £27,000.**
- These financial gains were **most likely to have come from a grant**, including food vouchers, with around a third of all individuals, for whom information was available, receiving a grant.
- **Financial gains from debt had the highest average**, at £9,103, likely reflecting the large amounts of debt written off or re-negotiated for each individual through the AiCS programme.

5. Early survey results found that the programme improved the health, wellbeing and confidence of advice seekers

- Results from surveys indicate that the **AiCS programme is already having a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of advice seekers**. Over two in five (42%) of surveyed beneficiaries reported that the AiCS support and advice had helped their and their family's physical and emotional wellbeing a great extent.
- **Stakeholders identified impacts to physical and emotional wellbeing** as one of the most common areas where the AiCS programme was generating positive outcomes.
- Preliminary findings found that **beneficiaries had improved confidence and resilience** to tackle similar problems again in the future.

"[The support has benefitted]...my mental health more than anything, I'm less stressed. When you start getting letters like that you feel your home is in jeopardy." (Beneficiary interview)

6. The programme has strengthened partnership working

- The majority of partnerships involved did exist before the commencement of the AiCS programme. However, **partnerships strengthened their partnership working and identified new community settings** to work in as a result of their involvement in AiCS.

- **Nine out of ten partnerships surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that partnership working had been strengthened** and stakeholders reported they were able to offer a more holistic support service.
- There were **some barriers to increased connection**, such as the challenges around data sharing protocols and establishing referral pathways.
- There is limited evidence to date that the increased connection has enabled resource sharing or reduced waiting times for advice seekers.

> "Working with partners has expanded our network and the ways through which we provide help. It's important to have links with other services, and the more personal a link is, the better". (Stakeholder Interview)

7. Recruitment has been an ongoing challenge and sustainability planning has been limited to date

- There has been **limited recruitment of new advisors and other staff**. Of the ten partnerships who were surveyed, six had not recruited any new members of staff and interviewed stakeholders reported challenges around securing enough advisors, either as volunteers or paid staff
- **Sustainability planning has also been limited to date**, with the demand for services limiting the ability of partnerships to develop new funding bids or engage extensively in future planning. Nevertheless, four partnerships had made applications for additional funding.

Process Evaluation – what have been the successes and challenges of programme delivery?

1. The central logic of the programme is understood and has brought added value to both partnerships and advice seekers

- Stakeholder interviews found that **partnerships have a good understanding of the aims of the AiCS programme and support its central logic**. All partnerships have made good progress in the set-up and delivery of advice and support, but some partnerships were much slower to commence. These partnerships tended to face greater challenges in establishing partnership agreements, recruiting staff and establishing common referral and signposting agreements. These challenges have mainly been overcome, with all partnerships commencing delivery by the end of this initial evaluation period.
- Stakeholders are clear that the **AiCS programme has brought significant added value both to the partnerships and to advice seekers**. The evaluation found the programme has allowed advice services to extend their reach into traditionally under-represented communities and to provide a more holistic support service.

2. **Challenges faced by the partnerships include set-up difficulties and referral issues**

- Some partnerships that were slower to commence delivery **faced challenges in the set-up of their partnerships**, particularly around data sharing protocols, referral pathways and staff recruitment.
- There have been **consistent challenges around referrals**. Some cases have been delayed by the poor quality of information included in the referral from a community setting. In addition, even once they have been referred, some beneficiaries have faced challenges that prevent their engagement such as poor mental health or childcare needs.

Key recommendations – what improvements could be made to this and future programmes?

1. **Recommendations for ongoing AiCS programme delivery**

- Partnerships should **continue to expand into new types and locations of community settings**, and the GLA should ensure partnerships are adequately supported in this work.
- In order to **effectively reach their target groups, partnerships should work with organisations that are already embedded in these communities**. The GLA should support partnerships in their outreach activities, particularly in helping them to forge connections with relevant organisations.
- Where possible, partnerships should aim to **increase the availability of face-to-face advisors, reduce waiting lists** and provide more **follow-up support** on cases.
- Ongoing **evaluation work should focus on the emerging demographic differences in financial outcomes**. Partnerships should be aware of how this applies in their setting and take appropriate action if necessary.
- The **GLA should continue to provide opportunities for inter-partnership collaboration**, problem-solving and sharing of best practice.
- Partnerships should be **further supported by the GLA to identify future funding opportunities** and to plan for the future resourcing of their advice services.

2. **Recommendations for future grant programmes**

- **Cross-partnership data collection** should be embedded from the commencement of the programme to ensure efficient and timely evaluation.
- Partnerships should **connect with a wide range of community settings and organisations from the commencement of delivery**, with a view to continue expanding into new locations as delivery progresses.
- As well as specifying target groups, **partnerships should identify specific outreach activities and organisations** they can connect with. Funders should ensure outreach plans are likely to be effective and are adequately resourced.

- Future programmes should **build in opportunities for cross-partnership support** and sharing of best practice.
- Future programmes should **embed an implementation phase** for partnerships to recruit the required staff or volunteers and establish data sharing protocols and referral pathways.

Introduction

Advice in Community Settings

In 2022, the Greater London Authority (GLA) launched the Advice in Community Settings (AiCS) programme.

Access to good quality advice is a key part in supporting people experiencing financial hardship but many people are not reached by traditional advice services. This project therefore aims to work with organisations that are already embedded in communities, such as schools and food banks, to ensure as many people as possible can access advice. It builds on the successful Child Poverty Action Group pilot[1] that delivered welfare advice to low-income families in primary schools in four London boroughs in 2019.

The AiCS programme is funding eleven advice partnerships to support Londoners experiencing, or at risk of, financial hardship by developing or strengthening partnerships between advice services and community settings. The programme aims to support partnership working between advice organisations and local schools, food banks and community centres to ensure as many Londoners as possible have access to good quality advice. The eleven partnerships that took part in the AiCS programme are summarised in the table overleaf. The below map highlights the boroughs where partnerships are located, excluding the two pan-London partnerships.

Location of partnerships

NB. Two partnerships are pan-London

Figure One: Location of the partnerships taking part in the AiCS programme

[1] For more information, see https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/communities-and-social-justice/tackling-child-poverty-through-schools

	Partnerhip summary
Citizens Advice Barking and Dagenham	Leading a partnership between the local authority, borough VCS, social sector and food bank networks
Community Links (Newham)	Leading a partnership between five advice providers with support from Newham council, delivering in food banks, community centres and schools
Ealing Mencap	Leading a partnership of advice services seeking to connect residents with training to access online social welfare platforms, entitlements and support services
Fair Money Advice (Pan-London)	Leading a pan-London partnership with Money A&E which will embed welfare and debt advice and financial education in different locations
Help 4 Hillingdon	An existing partnership of health and wellbeing charities, will manage a new partnership between local Citizens Advice, local charities and DDPOs to deliver advice in food banks and SEN schools
Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Association (South London)	An existing partnership between three community anchor institutions in south London will expand to deliver advice in new locations
Little Village (Pan-London)	A pan-London baby bank service, will lead a partnership with the Money and Pensions Service and other advice providers to deliver triage, signposting and advice
Peabody Community Foundation (Greenwich)	Leading a hyperlocal partnership linking existing social prescribing infrastructure with up to eight schools in the Moorings in Thamesmead, Greenwich
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	Leading a partnership between local authority and all major in-borough advice services, several primary schools, food welfare settings and child play settings
Salusbury World Refugee Centre (Brent)	Leading an existing Brent-based partnership to expand to include three 0-18 family and children's centres
Citizens Advice Waltham Forest	Leading a partnership with fuel poverty, youth and food charities and children and family settings to offer training to frontline staff in community settings

Table One: Summary of advice partnerships

Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (ToC) approach has been used in this evaluation. As an approach it ensures the complexity of a programme is fully understood and captured by data collection. Its use is actively encouraged by HM Treasury[2] to support policy making and project design work because it aids the development of a full understanding of an intervention and how its operation and delivery is expected to achieve its desired outcomes. It is relevant in this case because the evaluation wishes to understand the extent of the change AiCS is bringing about, why that change is occurring, and what learning can be taken from this to potentially replicate any successful delivery in future.

A ToC is best considered as a roadmap that sets out the things that need to happen to achieve the intended final impact and address the need (and rationale) for an intervention. It is also a method of identifying assumptions that are being made within the identified 'causal chain', barriers that need to be overcome and the enablers — things that need to be in place for the theory to work, as well as the rationale for the intervention.

They can help policy makers understand where policy developments could be improved and help evaluators unpack the complexity of programmes and interventions to more accurately assess whether a programme's intended outcomes and impacts are being achieved.

A ToC is often presented diagrammatically as a logic model, a graphical illustration of the logical relationships between the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes (sometimes referred to as 'results') and impact of a policy or intervention as illustrated in the graphic below:

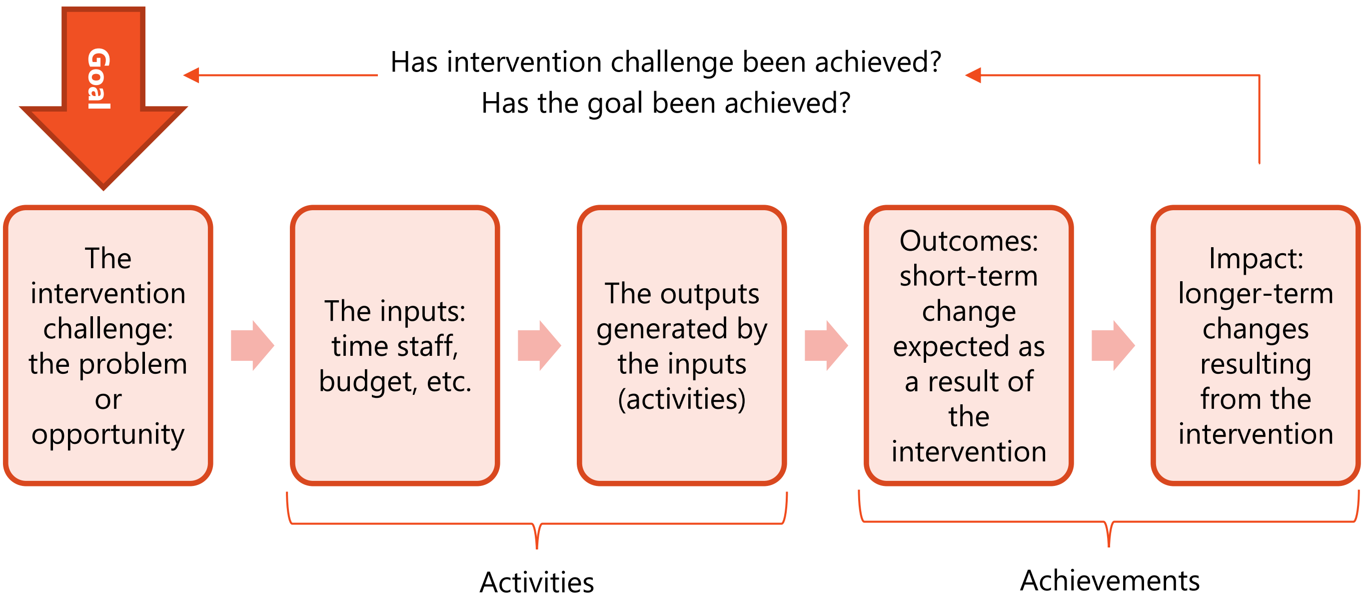

Figure Two: ToC Logic Model Example

[2] See HMT_Magenta_Book.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk) and The Green Book (2022) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

To develop the ToC for the AICS evaluation, Wavehill and Mime jointly hosted four virtual workshops with partnership staff, GLA officers and key partners and stakeholders in March 2022. The resulting ToC presented detail of the refined programme goal and vision, detailed the activities and inputs of the AiCS programme, and defined its key outputs, and impacts.

Details of the agreed AiCS ToC model can be found in the appendix. The workshops also confirmed the ultimate logic of the programme as below:

Context
London has some of the highest levels of poverty in the UK once housing costs are taken into account. Londoners are experiencing, or at risk of, fianancial hardship that contributes to the poverty levels and is detrimental to their health and wellbeing.

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Problem
Those experiencing, or at risk of, financial hardship are unable to readily access support because of geography, language, family circumstances, isolation, disability or other demographic features. This can be in their local community, and acts to prevent them from maximising their income and/or resolving complex social welfare legal issues that are a barrier to them claiming or enforcing their financial rights and entitlements. Barriers are likely to differ across communities.

→

Intervention
By providing community based access to information, advice, guidance and/or advocacy/case work, Londoners can be supported to resolve these issues over time and reduce their risk or experience of financial hardship. Thus reducing levels of poverty in London.

Figure Three: Central logic of the AiCS programme

Methodology

Introduction

The interim evaluation of the AiCS programme has utilised a Theory of Change based evaluation model. This section outlines the evaluation framework developed as well as methodological challenges and external barriers to delivery.

Evaluation Framework

An evaluation framework (see Appendix 5) was developed based on the Theory of Change model to collect all the data required for the evaluation. This framework aims to assess if the design and delivery of the AiCS programme produces the expected outputs and outcomes. Across this work, the evaluation will capture learning to help shape delivery during the programme operation, as well as learning that could help support the roll out of similar programmes across London. This framework utilises both qualitative and quantitative data across surveys, interviews, and management information systems to provide a holistic view of the programme. The four data collection methods are described in greater detail below.

1. Beneficiary management information data

Partnerships were asked to submit management information data for each beneficiary they saw as part of the AiCS programme. This data covered the demographic information of the individual, the activities the organisation had undertaken with that individual and, where possible, the financial outcomes achieved.

All eleven partnerships submitted participant data but due to variations in data collection processes, it was not entirely uniform. We have made clear in this report where gaps in data may have impacted the analysis. In addition, while the data covered the period up to September 2022, the start date varied as different partnerships began delivery at different points in the year.

A full summary of what data was provided by partnerships is available in the appendix.

2. Beneficiary interviews

Partnerships were asked to supply lists of beneficiaries who had consented to participate in a telephone interview. These interviews included questions on the circumstances that had led to their receipt of support from the programme, their experience of the support received and their early thoughts on the effectiveness and impacts of that support. The discussion guide for these interviews can be found in the appendix.

Ten partnerships provided contact details for beneficiaries but due to delays in the start of project delivery, and challenges in securing consent from them, numbers of beneficiaries were lower than had originally been planned. In total, 97 beneficiary interviews were completed by telephone between August and November 2022 from a contact list of 224 contacts, a response rate of 43%.[3]

The demographic make-up of advice seekers who participated in interviews was compared with the demographic profile of all advice seekers who accessed the programme. A complete table of this comparison can be found in the appendix but in summary, interview participants were slightly more likely to:

- Be a woman
- Be disabled
- Be Black Caribbean or from a Black Caribbean background
- Be a British citizen
- Have a first language other than English
- Rent from a social housing association or local authority

Some of these differences may be due to missing management information data. Almost all beneficiaries who were interviewed provided complete demographic information, which was not the case for all advice seekers across the programme. Nevertheless, these differences should be considered when comparing findings from interviews with data from the management information dataset.

3. Partnership survey

Each quarter, the lead at each partnership is asked to complete a survey. This is to understand the impact of the programme on partnership working and includes questions on funding applications, joint working, and improvements to training and recruitment.

In this initial evaluation period, the survey has only been completed once, by ten of the eleven partnerships.

4. Partnership and stakeholder interviews

Interviews were conducted virtually with individuals overseeing AiCS delivery, or those working directly with beneficiaries. Eight of the partnerships provided contacts for these interviews and in total, 26 individuals were consulted through a mix of one-to-one or group interviews between September and November 2022.

Interviews sought the views and reflections of staff on early programme roll out, the nature of the support needs of beneficiaries, areas of support provided, and detail on the impacts and outcomes that had occurred if these were apparent to the staff.

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[3] The original target for this first wave of interviews was 200-300 completed interviews but too few contacts were provided to complete these. This illustrates the importance of partnerships providing further contacts going forwards so samples can be boosted in the later stages of this work.

Methodological Challenges

The main methodological challenge in evaluation was standardising data collected across eleven partnerships. While the diversity of organisations involved in the programme was a strength, this meant data collecting and reporting was not uniform. In addition, partnerships commenced delivery at different times over the year and therefore had differing levels of activity.

While approximately 80% of the 1,766 advice seekers had some demographic information, less than half (45%) had core demographic data on their age, gender, ethnicity and disability status and just one in five (21%) had complete demographic data. Data was more complete for the activities carried out by organisations, with 91% of advice seekers having some kind of activity data. Finally, just over half (54%) had some data on what, if any, outcomes had been achieved. This missing data is not uniform across the partnerships, and is therefore not uniform across certain groups of advice seekers. In other words, we cannot assume that the people without data are similar to those with data.

The quantity of missing data leads to challenges particularly when conducting data analysis that requires two categories of data, such as understanding outcomes by ethnicity or gender. Instances where data gaps or differences may have contributed to certain findings will be highlighted throughout the report.

There were also methodological challenges related to interview participation. Interview contact supply was limited and delayed meaning that less interviews than originally planned have been possible in this phase of the work. It is clear to the evaluation team that project staff are very busy dealing with the support needs faced by potential and current project beneficiaries and many project teams have struggled to find the time to provide beneficiary, and staff contacts in a timely manner. Furthermore, staff have identified that they have been too busy to take part in interviews or failed to respond to interview requests. Delays in project delivery have also contributed, as projects have had small numbers of beneficiaries from whom to seek consent for interview.

Subsequent phases of data collection expect to rectify some of these challenges, now that all projects are operating with partnership agreements signed and working arrangements established. All partnerships which supplied contacts have been covered in both beneficiary and staff interviewing and the results from these interviews provide a consistent set of views on the progress and outcomes and impacts to have emerged to date.

External Barriers to Delivery

The wider social context of 2022 had an impact on delivery. In the year to November 2022, the rate of inflation was at a 40-year-high of 9.3%, driven predominantly be rising food and energy prices.[4] Particularly striking are the 65.4% increase to electricity prices and 128.9% to gas prices. The Institute for Fiscal Studies found that poorest households have been hit the

[4] ONS, *Cost of living latest insights*

hardest by the cost of living crisis, as a higher proportion of their total household budget is spent on gas and electricity.[5] Analysis by Crisis also found that the outgoings on rent, energy and food bills of the lowest income households could exceed their monthly incomes by a third.[6]

This wider social context has had a direct impact on advice services. Citizens Advice's most recent trends report, *The Coming Storm,* released in September 2021 was already identifying increased pressures on households before the AiCS programme began.[7] As support from the pandemic was coming to an end and the energy price gap was due to go up, they identified that many more households would be struggling to make ends meet. More recent data released by Citizens Advice shows that between December 2021 and December 2022[8], there was:

- A 79% increase in individuals seeking advice about fuel
- A 21% increase in individuals with fuel debts
- A 414% increase in individuals enquiring about their general benefit entitlement
- A 113% increase in individuals seeking a debt assessment

This pressure on advice services will have been felt across all partnerships and in fact, nine of ten partnerships agreed or strongly agreed that demand for their services had increased between July and September 2022. It will be important to consider the impact this will have had on delivery throughout the evaluation report.

[5] Karjalainen and Levell, May 2022, *Inflation hits 9% with poorest households facing even higher rates*
[6] Crisis, August 2022, *Cost of living crisis threatens homelessness surge – with the lowest income households spending 133% of their monthly income on rent, energy and bills*
[7] Citizens Advice, September 2021, *The Coming Storm*
[8] Citizens Advice, *Advice Trends Dec 2022*

Impact Evaluation

This report presents the findings of the interim evaluation of the AiCS programme, which has the following overarching aim:

> *"To facilitate the creation/strengthening of partnerships to support Londoners to maximise their income, reduce debt or other outgoings, and resolve immigration or other social welfare issues through the provision of community-based access to information, advice, guidance, and/or advocacy/case work to enable them to mitigate the impacts of poverty/financial hardship."*

It includes both a process and impact evaluation to understand how the programme is progressing against its aim at this stage of delivery. The impact evaluation is structured around the following six objectives, which have been identified from the Theory of Change:

A. Improved access to advice services
B. Advice services meeting beneficiary needs
C. Improved financial outcomes for advice seekers
D. Improved health, wellbeing, and confidence for advice seekers
E. Increased connection within partnerships
F. Improvements to partnership recruitment and funding

A: Improved access to advice services

Introduction

A goal from the beginning of the Advice in Community Settings programme has been to improve access to advice services, with the grant prospectus stating that "support should target groups of Londoners who struggle to access advice and support services". This focus was borne out in the Theory of Change workshops.

Examples of the outputs, outcomes and impacts under this objective are as follows:

- Number of enquiries by individuals (by demographic group, including household characteristics and employment status) and households by source
- Number of individuals (by demographic group and sector) and households accessing project support by type of support
- Number of beneficiaries (by demographic group) completing need assessments with project partners.

This section uses management information data and beneficiary surveys to understand who is accessing the support and advice, and where they are doing so.

Summary of Findings

These early findings suggest **the efficacy of this community-based model is already being demonstrated**, even though this remains early days for delivery. The **majority of beneficiaries surveyed had not previously accessed advice services** and almost all advice seekers indicated it was easy for them to access advice and support. The **demographic make-up of those seen by the AiCS programme differs to both the London population and Citizens Advice data**. Individuals seen by the AiCS programme were more likely to be female or from a Black or Black British background and tended to be younger, suggesting that delivering advice in community settings is reaching a slightly different make-up of beneficiaries compared to traditional advice services. However, **partnerships identifying target groups does not seem to be a particularly effective way of ensuring that these groups of advice seekers are reached**.

Evaluation Findings

1. Who accessed the Advice in Community Settings programme?

Across all eleven partnerships, 1,766 people were seen as part of the AiCS programme during this initial evaluation period. For around a third of these individuals, we had access to data about how many other people lived in their households. Including all adults and children living with the primary advice seeker, the programme has impacted at least 2,309 individuals across London. The below bar chart summarises the overall demographic breakdown of advice seekers.[9]

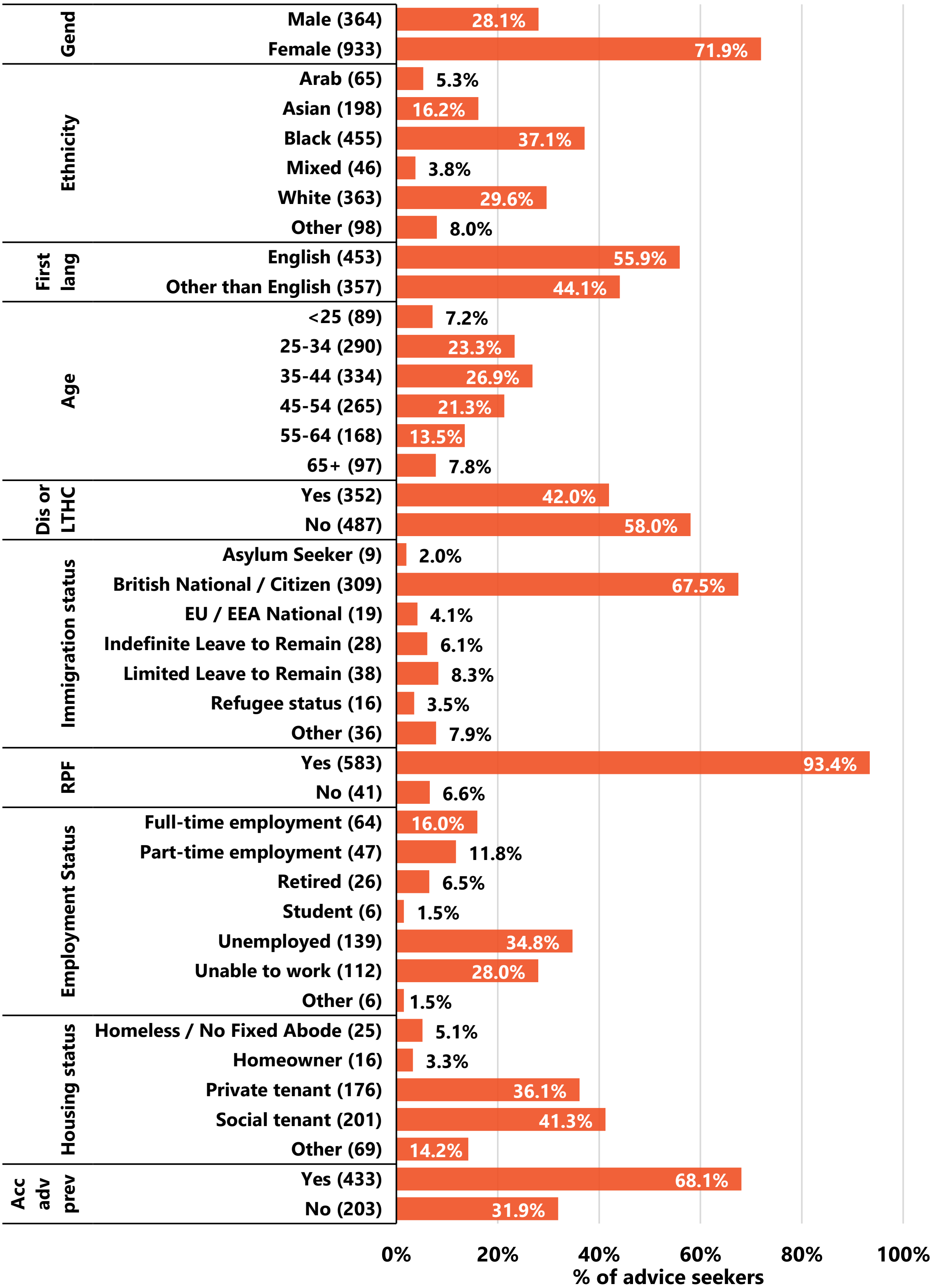


Chart One: Demographic make-up of advice seekers. Sample sizes are shown in brackets. Source – Beneficiary management information data, December 2022

A key goal of the Advice in Community Settings programme was to reach those who had not used advice services before or who would not traditionally use advice services. Of those whose previous interactions with advice services were known (636), around a third (32%) had not accessed an advice service before. The demographic breakdown of these advice seekers is summarised in the bar chart below.

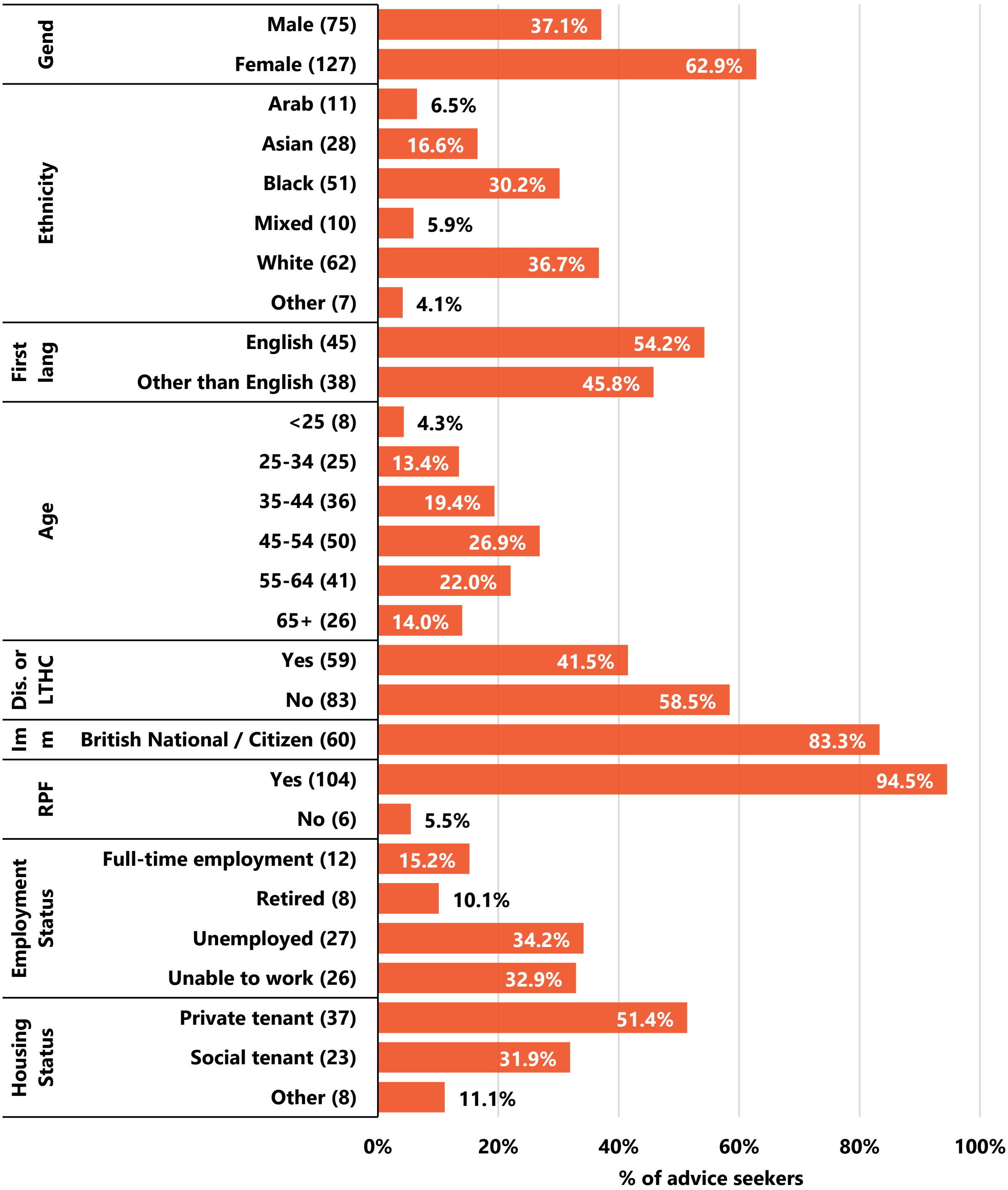


Chart Two: Demographic make-up of advice seekers who had not previously accessed advice services. Sample sizes are shown in brackets. Source – Beneficiary management information data, December 2022

[9] This bar chart does not include advice seekers who did not have any demographic information, or if the relevant question had been answered as “Prefer not to Say”. It also excludes groups with fewer than 5 individuals.

Of the beneficiaries who were interviewed, around half had not previously received support in the area of advice they were currently seeking support in. Beneficiaries who responded to the survey reported that they most commonly presented with immediate needs for support such as issues with their housing situation, needing to claim a particular benefit, or deal with a debt crisis. The below bar chart summarises the proportion of beneficiaries who had not previously been supported, broken down by advice area. In summary, 55% of those supported with employment issues by AiCS, 53% wanting support on immigration issues, and 52% with debt issues, had not previously accessed support from advice services on this topic before.

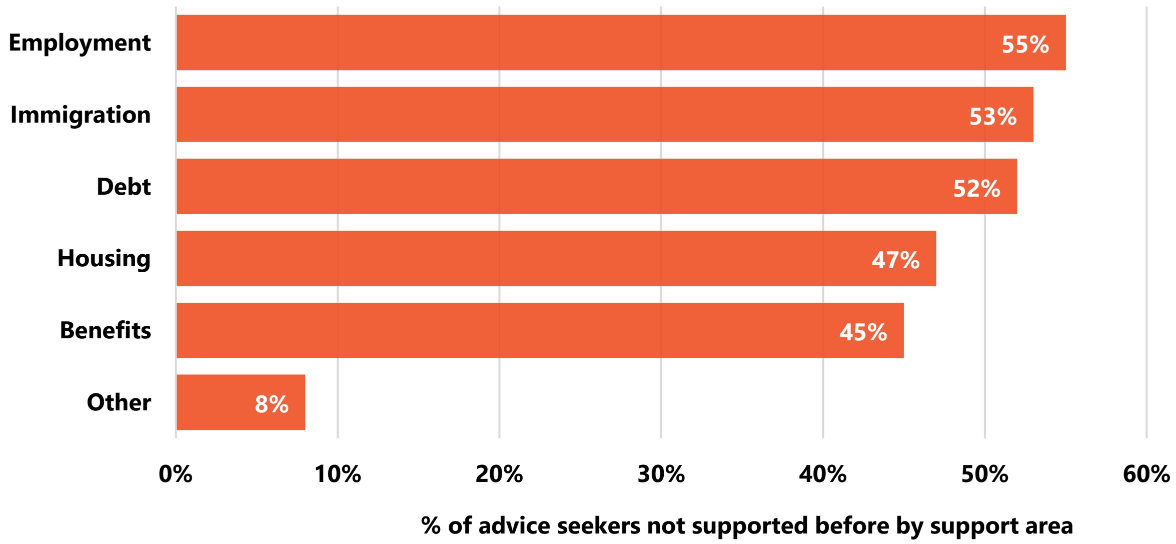


Chart Three: The proportion of advice seekers who had not previously accessed advice by support area. Sample size = 97. Source – Beneficiary Survey, 2022

Overall, 95% of surveyed beneficiaries identified that it was easy, or very easy, to access the advice support provided by the AiCS programme. However, this only reflects those who attended their appointments. Stakeholders highlighted that there were many beneficiaries who did not attend booked appointments, often due to other challenges they were facing in their life that affected their ability, or time, to attend. In other words, they did not believe the inaccessibility of the setting was affecting attendance, rather the personal circumstances of the advice seeker.

These early findings suggest the efficacy of this community-based model is already being demonstrated. The majority of beneficiaries surveyed had not previously accessed advice services and almost all advice seekers indicated it was easy for them to access advice and support.

The challenge for partnerships will be to maintain their outreach work, to ensure they continue to provide advice and support to beneficiaries who have not accessed advice before. This work should focus on building links with other local community groups, who may have specialist understanding of those least likely to access services.

2. How does this compare to other advice services and London?

It is possible to benchmark the proportion of people seen by ethnicity, disability, age and gender against the general London population and the profile of those seen by Citizens Advice. To make comparisons more accurate, we only looked at people seen by Citizens Advice branches in London. The exact breakdown of each of these three populations is summarised in the bar chart overleaf.

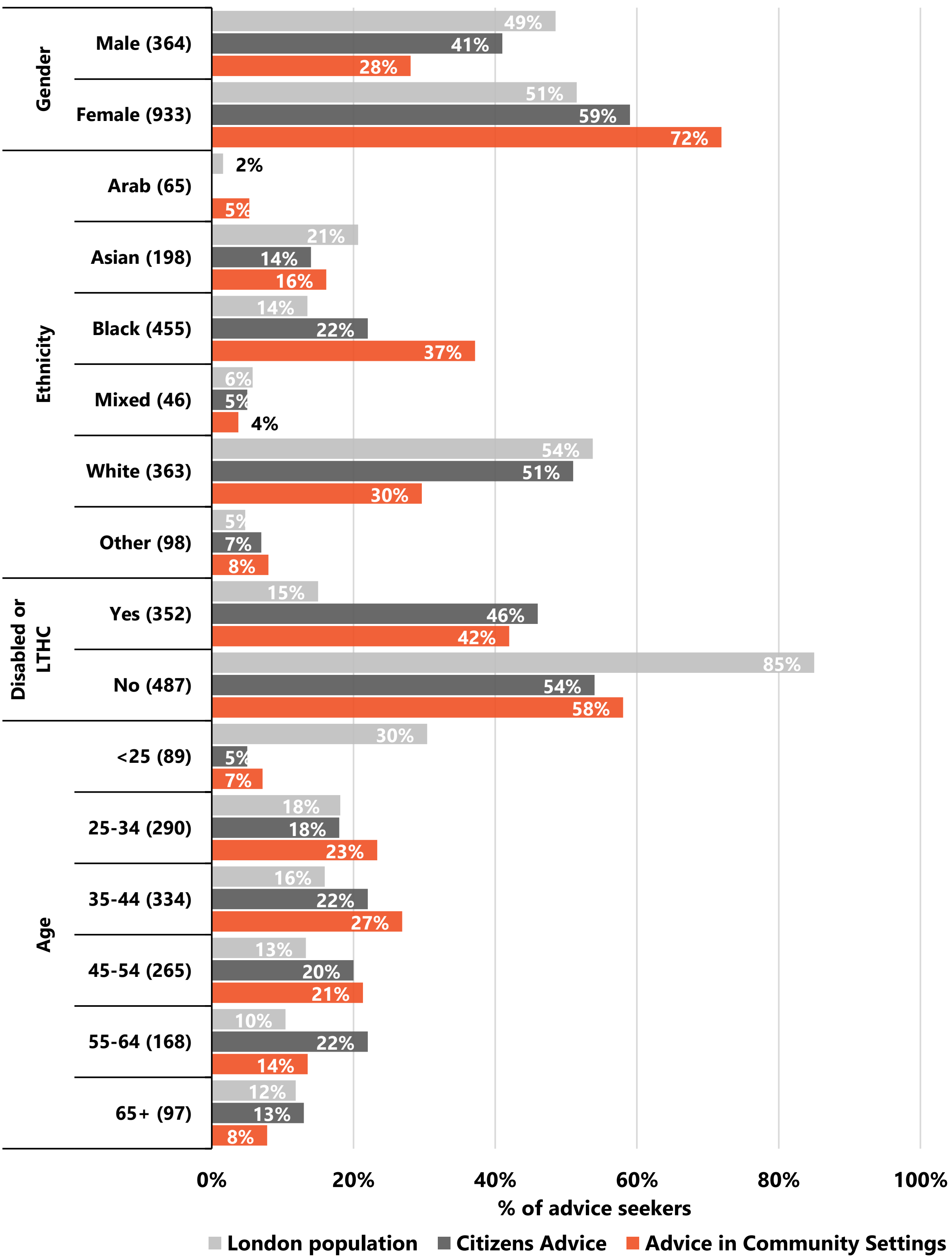


Chart Four: Demographic make-up of advice seekers compared to London and Citizens Advice. Sample sizes for AiCS advice seekers are shown in brackets. Sources – Beneficiary management information data (AiCS) December 2022, ONS (London population – Gender, Age and Disability), London Datastore (London population – Ethnicity) and Advice Trends November 2022 (Citizens Advice)

Compared to both London and Citizens Advice, individuals seen by the AiCS programme were more likely to be female or from a Black or Black British background and tended to be younger. Almost three-quarters (72%) of those seen by the AiCS programme were female and well over a third (37%) were from a Black or Black British background. In contrast, participants were slightly less likely to be disabled compared to Citizens Advice but more likely compared to the general London population.

This is likely to be partly driven by the partnerships who were involved in the programme. Several of the organisations involved, such as Little Village, work predominantly with women and families while others, such as Salusbury World, work solely with refugees and migrants. It may also be due to where people are accessing the programme, which we explore in greater detail in the following section.

In summary, it does appear that delivering advice in community settings is reaching a slightly different make-up of beneficiaries compared to traditional advice services.

3. Did embedding advice services in community settings enable a wider reach?

Part of these differences in the demographics may be explained by where individuals are first accessing the project. Surveyed beneficiaries commented that it was the ease and speed of access to the contact location that they found so useful about the programme and the responsiveness of the advisors was particularly welcomed. In the surveyed group, this accessibility did not vary by demographics. Instead, all groups identified the ease with which they could access the support and advice.

> "The lady who dealt with me was good, she helped me understand about my debt a bit more. I saw her quite quickly and we've spoken on the phone. She's also helped me with food bank vouchers as well." (Beneficiary interview)

The majority of stakeholders reported that they provided the support and advice through their existing offices, with three organisations stating they have used satellite offices. These tended to be based in the target communities or at partnership locations, such as food banks or schools. Most stakeholders identified that this contributed to the access beneficiaries had for their support and advice but the location was not seen by them as a key influence for beneficiaries to attend. It was much more about the availability of the specialist support and advice they could offer to beneficiaries who wanted a quick and effective solution.

While advice seekers reported on the ease of accessing support across demographic groups, management information data shows that the proportion who accessed the programme at different locations did vary by demographics. Table Two shows, for each demographic group, the proportion seen at either an advice service, community centre, food bank or school. This only considers advice seekers who provided demographic information and who had a first contact location as one of those four options. In other words, those who did not have demographic information or who had a first contact location of "Other" were not included.

		% seen at an advice service (101)	% seen at a community centre (59)	% seen at a foodbank (282)	% seen at a school (51)
	All (493)	20.5%	12.0%	57.2%	10.3%
Gender	Male (88)	20.5%	10.2%	68.2%	1.1%
	Female (206)	27.2%	23.8%	44.2%	4.9%
Ethnicity	Arab (15)	13.3%	0.0%	80.0%	6.7%
	Asian (58)	13.8%	10.3%	53.4%	22.4%
	Black (129)	41.1%	17.8%	33.3%	7.8%
	Mixed or multiple (10)	0.0%	20.0%	70.0%	10.0%
	White (139)	6.5%	14.4%	66.2%	12.9%
	Other (19)	5.3%	5.3%	57.9%	31.6%
First lang.	English (114)	51.8%	6.1%	42.1%	0.0%
	Other than English (30)	36.7%	36.7%	26.7%	0.0%
Age	18 to 25 (19)	36.8%	26.3%	26.3%	10.5%
	26 to 45 (157)	26.1%	22.9%	35.7%	15.3%
	46 to 65 (122)	19.7%	13.9%	58.2%	8.2%
	Over 65 (38)	10.5%	0.0%	89.5%	0.0%
Dis. or LTHC	Yes (157)	6.4%	10.8%	63.7%	19.1%
	No (187)	35.3%	21.4%	38.0%	5.3%
Immigration status	Asylum Seeker (6)	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%
	British National / Citizen (90)	17.8%	22.2%	60.0%	0.0%
	EU / EEA National (12)	50.0%	41.7%	8.3%	0.0%
	Indefinite Leave to Remain (10)	60.0%	30.0%	10.0%	0.0%
	Limited Leave to Remain (21)	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Recourse to Public Funds	Yes (144)	15.3%	38.9%	45.8%	0.0%
	No (28)	85.7%	3.6%	10.7%	0.0%
Employment Status	Full-time employment (9)	22.2%	44.4%	33.3%	0.0%
	Part-time employment (12)	33.3%	41.7%	25.0%	0.0%
	Retired (6)	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%
	Unemployed (40)	2.5%	10.0%	87.5%	0.0%
	Unable to work (21)	23.8%	42.9%	33.3%	0.0%
Housing status	Homeless / No Fixed Abode (15)	53.3%	26.7%	20.0%	0.0%
	Homeowner (6)	16.7%	66.7%	16.7%	0.0%
	Private tenant (52)	25.0%	40.4%	34.6%	0.0%
	Social tenant (67)	31.3%	28.4%	40.3%	0.0%
Acc. adv. prev	Yes (113)	11.5%	19.5%	66.4%	2.7%
	No (76)	5.3%	10.5%	76.3%	7.9%

Table Two: Percentage of advice seekers accessing AiCS at each contact location. Sample sizes are shown in brackets. Source – Beneficiary management information data, December 2022

While both male and female advice seekers were most likely to access the programme through a foodbank, there were some gender differences. Around one in every twenty (4.9%) female advice seekers were seen at a school, compared to just 1% of male advice seekers. Female advice seekers were also more likely to first access the programme at an advice service or a community centre.

There were also differences depending on how old an individual was. Almost all of the over-65s first accessed the programme through a foodbank, while those aged 18 to 25 were most likely to go direct to the advice service. Black advice seekers were the only ethnic group to be more likely to first access the programme through an advice service, as opposed to a food bank. These ethnic differences may be partly driven by advice topic. Those seeking advice on immigration tended to go directly to an advice service, perhaps because they were aware of the complex legal advice they would require. Of the 98 advice seekers looking for support with immigration, over half (54%) were Black, which may partly explain why Black advice seekers were most likely to go direct to an advice service.

Other demographic differences in first contact location may be partly driven by the financial situation of advice seekers. For example, those who were retired or unemployed were more likely to access the programme through a food bank, compared to advice seekers with any other employment status. This may be because they are groups that are generally more likely to access food banks, due to their financial circumstances. The Trussell Trust's *State of Hunger* report found that those who were unemployed were the most likely group to use a food bank.[10]

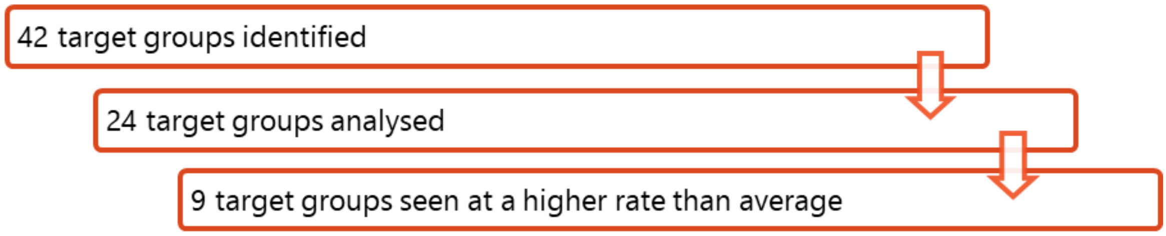
In summary, interviewed advice seekers and stakeholders did not report any impact of location on attendance and access, with ease and availability being cited as more important. However, according to management information data, different groups of advice seekers do appear to prefer accessing advice and support at different locations and services. Ensuring a variety of community settings is therefore likely to be key to reaching different groups of Londoners.

4. What, if any, was the impact of target groups on the demographics of advice seekers?

All eleven partnerships were asked to identify target groups in advance of delivery, as part of their application process for the AiCS programme. Across the eleven partnerships, 42 specific target groups were identified. The most common target groups identified were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Londoners (three partnerships), older people (three partnerships) and refugees, migrants and asylum seekers (two partnerships).

Using management information data, we were able to analyse 24 of these groups across eight partnerships. We found that for just nine of these groups, partnerships were seeing members of their target group at a higher rate than average.

[10] Trussell Trust, November 2019, *State of Hunger: A study of poverty and food insecurity in the UK*



There may be several reasons for this lack of success with reaching target groups. Organisations may have had limited time and resources to conduct specific outreach, instead only being able to manage the existing rate of people trying to access services.

It also takes time for organisations to become places of trust and safety for vulnerable groups. To support this, we found that target groups were only really successfully seen where they were groups who were already engaging with those partnership organisations. For instance, one partnership did successfully see their target group of disabled people at a higher rate than average, likely supported by having a disability-specific organisation as a key member of the partnership.

In summary, identifying target groups may not be the most effective way of encouraging partnerships to reach Londoners who do not traditionally access advice services. Instead, ensuring that partnerships include organisations who are already working with these most vulnerable groups may be a more effective way to reach these individuals.

B: Services meeting beneficiary needs

Introduction

Part of the Theory of Change involved understanding whether advice services were delivering advice and support as expected by advice seekers, and that beneficiaries felt satisfied and that their needs had been met.

Examples of the outputs, outcomes and impacts under this objective are as follows:

- Beneficiaries reporting that their advice needs have been met
- Beneficiaries reporting satisfaction with support received
- Beneficiaries reporting satisfaction with outcomes to date attained against identified needs

This section uses management information data and beneficiary survey data to identify if the support and advice provided by the AiCS programme meets the needs of those it seeks to support.

Summary of Findings

According to **the management information data, welfare benefits was the most common advice topic**. In contrast, interviewed beneficiaries most commonly reported seeking advice on housing. The **needs of advice seekers did vary slightly based on where they first accessed the AiCS programme**. For example, those seeking advice on debt and welfare benefits were the most likely to access the programme at a food bank, while 70% of those seeking advice on immigration went direct to an advice service. The **majority of beneficiaries surveyed identified that they were able to access the support and advice they were looking for when initially joining the programme**. Stakeholders did identify some barriers in meeting the needs of advice seekers, which included external challenges preventing engagement and the complexity of cases.

Evaluation Findings

1. What were the needs of advice seekers and to what extent were these met?

The topic of advice was known (excluding Other and missing data) for 1,332 individuals, 75.4% of all those seen by the programme. The below table summarises the primary topic that an individual sought advice about[11], as well as the areas of advice reported by beneficiaries who were interviewed.

[11] In some cases, participants sought advice for more than one topic. In these cases, only the main topic has been reported.

	No. of advice seekers	% of advice seekers	% of surveyed beneficiaries seeking support	% of surveyed beneficiaries receiving support
Welfare benefits	423	24%	25%	92%
Debt	300	17%	14%	79%
Housing	225	13%	35%	88%
Food	188	11%	-	-
Employment	98	6%	6%	100%
Immigration	98	6%	11%	91%
Other	181	10%	-	-
Unknown	253	14%	-	-

Table Three: Percentage of beneficiaries seeking advice by advice topic for both all advice seekers and surveyed beneficiaries. Source – Beneficiary management information data, December 2022, and Beneficiary Survey, 2022

This shows that the areas of advice reported by those interviewed varied slightly. The most common advice topic reported by interviewed advice seekers was housing, with 35% seeking support in this area. This illustrates that unmet needs are particularly focussed around housing and thus AiCS access to specialist support and advice is especially important. Around a quarter (25%) were seeking advice related to welfare benefits, which accords with management information data and 14% wanted advice on debt. Both housing and debt are areas of need that are likely to involve longer timescales for resolution and therefore may have lower rates of advice seekers reporting their advice needs being met. For instance, applications for access to housing lists or resolution of issues around debt are likely to take longer and involve agencies over whom the advice workers have little influence.

Table three also summarises whether a beneficiary believed they had received the appropriate advice and support. This shows that a majority of beneficiaries received the type of support they were seeking. In other words, 88% of all those seeking housing advice and support said they had received it.

While 77% of interviewed beneficiaries said that they could not see how the advice they were provided with could have been improved, other beneficiaries did identify some areas of improvement. These included:

- Having more advisory staff available that can enable more face-to-face contact
- Shorter waiting lists
- Providing more detail on the holistic services available
- Providing vouchers that have a wider use
- More follow-up on cases

This data suggests that the early picture of the AiCS programme is positive. Beneficiaries reported receiving the support they were looking for and a majority did not believe this could have been improved.

Case Study 1 – Solving a housing issue

This advice seeker was non-binary, disabled and in their late-50s. They currently live alone in social housing and are not working. They were seeking support with a housing issue, related to a disagreement over rent arrears that had been running for several years. They had not previously sought, or received, help on this issue and were becoming stressed and anxious about how it might get resolved.

What support did the AiCS programme provide?

This advice seeker found a contact for the AiCS programme online while searching for a local organisation as they are unable to travel far due to their disability. They made contact themselves with the programme and were impressed at how quickly they were able to meet with someone to talk through their issues.

"I went up there, I knew where it was, I waited my turn, it was easy. I thought there'd be a lot of waiting around like with Citizens Advice, pre-pandemic I went there about something, can't remember what and I had to get there at stupid o'clock in the morning and still had to wait for about 3 or 4 people to be seen before me. This time it was so much quicker"

The adviser listened and was able to offer lots of reassurance that things could be investigated in more detail and some potential solutions identified. Programme staff contacted the housing association and had detailed conversations with them, and the issue with rent arrears is now resolved.

What difference did this support make?

The advice seeker now feels much more confident about dealing with these issues in the future and they are much calmer about their living arrangements, especially as their relationship with the housing association has changed.

"It was excellent, the way he dealt with it on my behalf was excellent. I'm less stressed and anxious, I felt my stress levels go down, the longer I don't hear from them (about rent arrears) the better I feel [...] There's no animosity between me and the organisation anymore. We just had differing opinions but all the advice has put my mind at rest and it's meant I don't have to go anywhere else to sort it. I feel more independent now"

They also noted improvements to their own mental health because the situation has been resolved and they no longer feel that their home is in jeopardy.

2. Did the needs of advice seekers vary by community setting?

We can explore whether advice topic varied depending on where someone first accessed the programme. This excludes those whose primary area of advice and first contact location was either blank, unknown or categorised as "other". Individuals with a primary advice topic of "Food" were also excluded as only very small numbers had an identified first contact location. Following these exclusions, 595 individuals remained. From these, we can see clear trends about an individual's primary advice topic depending on where they first accessed the programme.

Individuals who needed advice on debt or welfare benefits were most likely to have first accessed the programme at a foodbank. Almost three-quarters (74%) of individuals who were seeking advice on debt and half (50%) of those who needed welfare benefits advice had this as their first contact location. This may be because these individuals are facing the most financial pressure. Almost three-quarters (73%) of those who wanted advice on employment and around three in every five (62%) who needed housing help had a Community Centre as their first contact location. Seven in ten (70%) of individuals who needed advice on immigration first engaged with the programme at an advice centre. This may be due to the more complex nature of immigration claims and the need for more specialist advice. Schools are showing as relatively low proportions for all advice topics due to the small numbers of individuals who were first seen at schools. If we look just at individuals who first accessed the programme through a school, the majority were seeking advice on welfare benefits.

In summary, this suggests that ensuring a diversity of community settings is key to reaching individuals who are facing a range of circumstances and have differing advice needs.

3. What were the barriers to meeting the needs of beneficiaries?

Stakeholder interviews showed there were a few, albeit limited, barriers to addressing the needs of advice seekers.

The first was being able to engage with beneficiaries who failed to attend referred appointments. Current data does not allow us to estimate the proportion of advice seekers who disengaged with the programme and this should be assessed in later stages of data collection. Stakeholders identified that such disengagement was driven by the significant levels of mental health issues reported by beneficiaries, which may have prevented them attending.

The second was the complexity of issues presented by advice seekers. Poor physical and mental wellbeing has often been greater than expected, which necessitates more support time and a wider range of support or advice options. This has meant that waiting lists and caseloads may be higher than expected, as issues take longer to resolve.

Finally, stakeholders reported that beneficiary expectations of possible outcomes have in some cases been too high. This has been particularly the case in debt and housing, where issues are often complex and resolution is outside the control of the advice workers themselves.

In most cases, partnerships have been able to construct a holistic support and advice offer that meets the needs of beneficiaries. The challenge for partnerships will be to keep the support offer up to date as new needs emerge and ensure that the volume of demand can be supported.

C: Improved financial outcomes

Introduction

The overall goal of the Advice in Community Settings programme aims to support Londoners to mitigate the impacts of poverty and financial hardship. In other words, improving the financial situation of advice seekers is crucial to the success of the programme. Examples of the outputs, outcomes and impacts under this objective are as follows:

- Number and value of successful benefit claims/reassessments
- Number and value of successful debt/income reviews and debt written off
- Reported impact by beneficiaries on their:
    - Benefits
    - Debt reduction
    - Household income
    - Poverty
    - Financial hardship

This section uses management information and beneficiary survey data that shows how, if at all, AiCS delivery has led to the improved financial circumstances of the household the programme has supported.

Summary of Findings

While it remains relatively early in delivery to see marked changes in the financial circumstances of supported households, **evidence from the management information data found that the total financial gains across the entire cohort totalled £525,089**. This number is taken from data from 326 beneficiaries, equivalent to just under a quarter (18.5%) of all those seen by the programme. This total includes both one-off financial gains, such as debt written off, as well as the annualised value of ongoing financial gains, such as new benefits.

Evaluation Findings

1. What were the overall financial outcomes achieved?

Management information data is able to add to this evidence. Of the 1,766 advice seekers, 958 (54.2%) had some kind of outcome data. Of these 958, 359 (37.5%) were recorded as achieving any of the following defined quantitative outcomes. The number of advice seekers achieving each outcome is included in brackets.

- Application for new benefits (107)

- Increase to existing benefits (19)
- Benefit sanction removed (5)
- An increase to income (47)
- Receipt of a grant (170)
- Debt written-off (10)
- Debt renegotiated (5)
- A non-debt cost reduction (52)

Across all advice seekers, 326 (18.5%) had data on the value of financial gain that had been made as a result of the programme. The financial gains achieved across the entire cohort totalled £525,089, an average of £1,611 per person for whom financial gain information was available. These financial gains ranged from £35 food bank vouchers to several thousand pounds worth of debt being written off. The largest financial gain for any single advice seeker was valued at over £27,000.

There are caveats to consider when evaluating these financial gains. Four-weekly or monthly benefits have been annualised to give a value over twelve months. Those who started to receive this benefit part-way through the year or those who received a backdated amount may, in reality, differ slightly from this estimation. Additionally, it is not always clear from the data whether these are actual or potential financial gains.

In this interim evaluation report, we will be focussing on analysis related to these 326 advice seekers with financial gains data, as this dataset is more complete.

Where possible, the source of these financial gains was organised into five categories. Unfortunately, 21.2% of advice seekers had no data that allowed the source of this gain to be identified. For those whose financial gains had identified sources, they were most likely to have received a grant. However, this had the lowest mean financial gain, likely due to food vouchers being included in this category, which tend to be £30-50. The low value of these may mask the valuable impact that a food voucher is likely to have for a household. In contrast, while a very small proportion of advice seekers had financial gains solely related to debts, they saw some of the highest average gains. This is due to the large amounts of debt being written off.

	No. of advice seekers	% of advice seekers	Total financial gain	Mean financial gain
Benefits	58	17.8%	£201,205	£3,469.05
Cost reductions	29	8.9%	£9,509	£327.90
Debts	7	2.1%	£63,722	£9,103.12
Grants	121	37.1%	£21,630	£178.76
Multiple	39	12.0%	£134,774	£3,455.75
Unknown	69	21.2%	£69,505	£1,007.32

Table Four: Number and percentage of advice seekers with a financial gain by source. Source – Beneficiary management information data, December 2022

Despite the short time elapsed since support and advice provision began, there were some early positive signs of successful financial outcomes from the advice seekers who were interviewed. Very small numbers of surveyed beneficiaries reported financial outcomes at this point in delivery, so figures should be treated with caution and do not allow analysis by demographics. The bar chart below summarises the types of financial outcomes reported by advice seekers during their interviews. This demonstrates that eight beneficiaries reported raised household income and six had seen an increase in benefits received. Interview numbers of those whose debt had reduced were too low at this point to conduct any analysis.

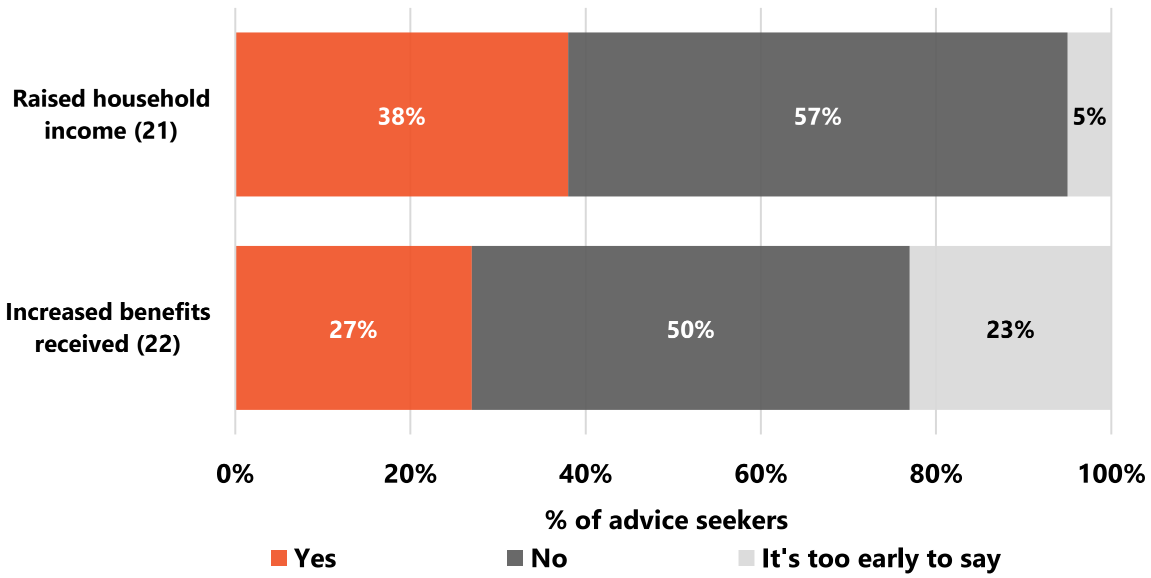


Chart Five: Financial outcomes reported by interviewed advice seekers. Sample sizes are shown in brackets. Source – Beneficiary Survey, 2022

These outcomes have made some difference for the advice seekers that were interviewed. For some, the improvement to their finances provided peace of mind and relief about their circumstances.

"A bit of closure, because I was really worried about the debt, it's given me comfort and support." (Beneficiary Interview)

"It's given me a bit more hope because I felt like I was in a world by myself and had no shoulder to lean on, it feels good that you have someone to talk to without condemning you or judging you." (Beneficiary interview)

Others highlighted practical help that addressed specific needs due to the lack of money:

"Because I had absolutely no money and they helped me to get the most important items for a baby and for me while I was pregnant." (Beneficiary interview)

"They gave me money for things for my house so I could buy a kettle, a toaster, pans because I didn't have anything for my house." (Beneficiary interview)

Case Study 2 – Supporting parents with family essentials

A female social housing tenant in her early-30s from a Black British background accessed the project for assistance with pregnancy and employment issues. She lives with four adults and two children and works part-time.

What support did the AiCS programme provide?

At the time she sought support, she was pregnant and unable to work and could afford neither food or supplies for her older daughter nor nappies and other essentials for the newborn.

The partnership put her in touch with a food bank, sent her a food box for Christmas that also included toiletries, baby clothes and nappies, and were able to provide a bed for her daughter to sleep in. Once the baby was born, the partnership then helped her improve her CV and apply for jobs so she could go back to work.

The advice seeker found that accessing the support and advice was really easy as there were almost no paperwork and staff at the project were helpful and easy to talk to.

"I was really struggling financially because I was pregnant and couldn't work. They just seemed to sort everything out so quickly. They went above and beyond what I expected. They really listen to you and give you the support you need."

What difference did this support make?

The financial support she received allowed her and her family to enjoy Christmas all together. The prompt support she received had a positive impact on both her and her family's lives. In addition, the advice she was given about her CV and job search was very helpful when she could return to work.

"They gave my daughter her own bed to sleep in and gave us things that I just couldn't afford on benefits while pregnant. It meant that we could enjoy Christmas and that I wasn't stressed out"

2. How did these financial gains vary by characteristic of advice seekers?

Demographic differences did emerge in the financial gains[12] an individual achieved as a result of engaging with the Advice in Community Settings programme. The average financial gain by demographic group is summarised in the bar chart below:

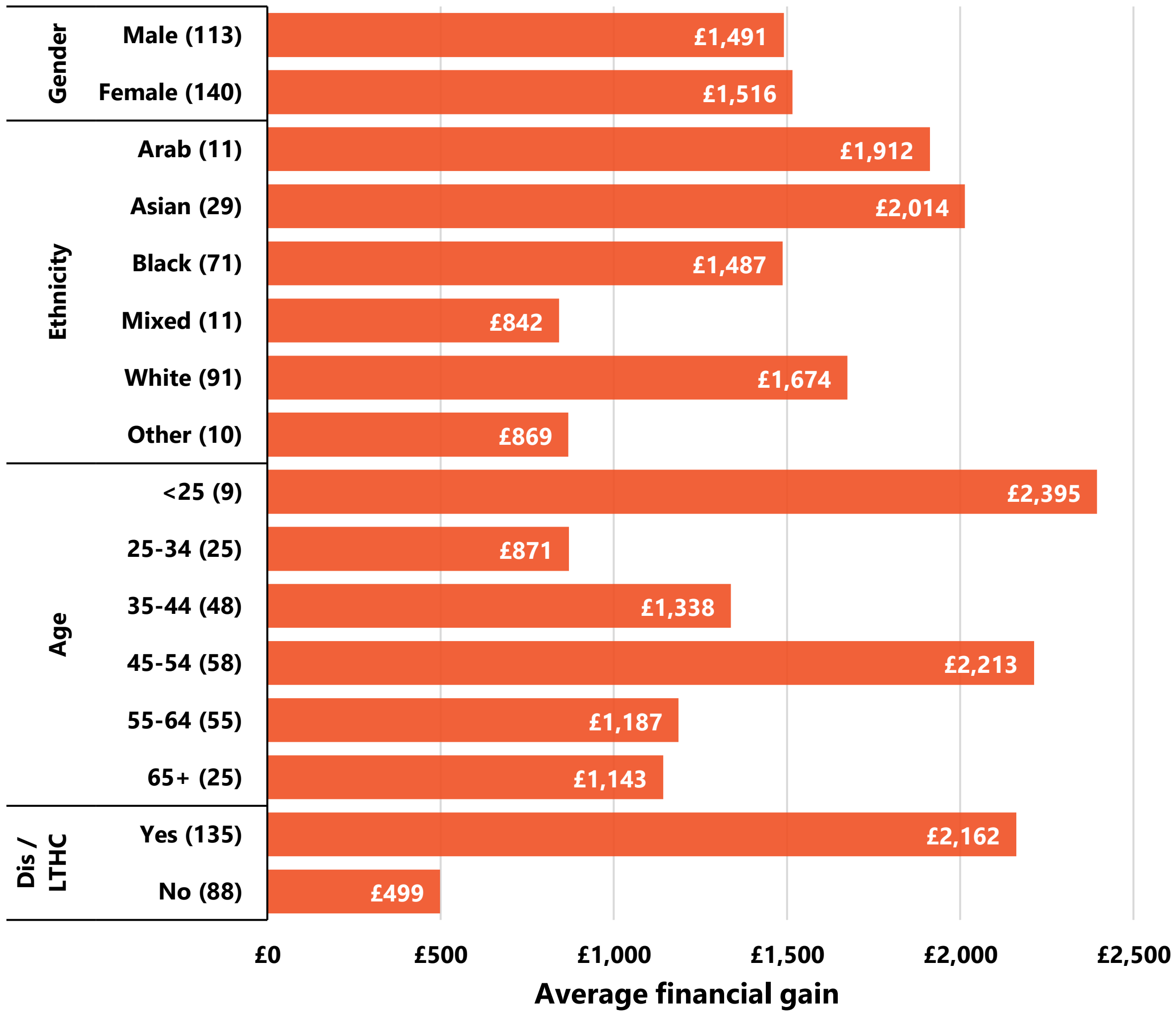


Chart Six: Average financial gain by demographic group. Sample sizes are shown in brackets. Source – Beneficiary management information data, December 2022

Male advice seekers were more likely to have achieved a financial gain, with 31% of all male advice seekers having some sort of financial gain, compared to 15% of female advice seekers. However, the average amount was very similar across both male and female advice seekers.

White advice seekers were the most likely ethnic group to achieve some kind of financial gain, with around a quarter (25.1%) of all White advice seekers having some kind of financial gain. In comparison, 14.6% of Asian advice seekers and 15.6% of Black advice seekers had

[12] We are defining a financial gain as anyone who had a financial value assigned to them, including those for whom the source of this financial gain was unknown. This may exclude those who had valuable financial outcomes from the programme, but for whom there was no value provided.

some kind of financial gain. However, the average amount received follows a slightly different trend, with Asian advice seekers having the highest average amount of £2,014.

Younger advice seekers generally had poorer financial gains. Just 8.6% of those aged 25-34 had some kind of financial gain, with an average value of £871. In contrast, almost a third (32.7%) of those aged 55-64 had a financial gain recorded, with an average value of £1,187.

Finally, there was a clear difference depending on whether or not someone was disabled. Overall, 38.4% of disabled advice seekers achieved some kind of financial gain, compared to 18.1% of advice seekers who were not disabled. The most striking difference was in the average amount, which was £2,162 for disabled advice seekers and just £499 for advice seekers who were not disabled. This is likely due to the greater availability of welfare benefits if you are disabled and, indeed, over eight in ten (81.8%) of all of those receiving financial gains from benefits were disabled.

In summary, there were differences in the likelihood and financial gains received by demographic groups. It will be interesting to see if these differences persist throughout delivery and to understand more about what may be driving these differences.

3. How did these financial gains vary by advice topic?

The below table summarises the proportion of advice seekers who received a financial gain, as well as the average amount, broken down by advice topic.

	No. of advice seekers achieving financial gain	% of advice seekers achieving financial gain	Mean financial gain
Welfare Benefits	96	18.9%	£2,406
Debt	132	40.7%	£1,311
Housing	5	2.0%	£1,504
Immigration	8	7.7%	£468
Other	32	6.7%	£1,722

Table Five: Percentage of advice seekers who achieved a financial gain by advice topic. Source – Beneficiary management information data, December 2022

Those seeking advice on debt were the most likely to have achieved some kind of financial gain. Two of every five (40.7%) of every advice seeker who needed help with their debt had a financial gain recorded, with an average gain of £1,311.

Around one in five (18.9%) advice seekers who sought advice related to benefits had a financial gain recorded, with an average value of £2,406.

While this indicates there are differing financial gains depending on advice topics, this is to be expected. Both debt and welfare benefits are areas of advice where it is easier to estimate the value of any financial outcome. Other advice topics, such as housing or immigration, have less concrete financial and other outcomes that might not be captured by this data.

Case Study 3 – Tackling worries and anxiety around debt

This advice seeker was a woman from a Black Afro-Caribbean background, with English as her first language. She owns the house she lives in and has lived on her own there for more than 10 years. She is currently working full-time (more than 30 hours a week) and was looking for help and support with debt. She had never received specialist debt advice before.

What support did the AiCS programme provide?

Support from the AiCS programme was positive as they took the time to understand the issues she was facing. The partnership was able to write to the debt company on her behalf and followed-up to agree repayment terms that were more manageable. They also helped with her water bill and provided extra support.

The advice seeker reported that accessing the advice and support was easy and that overall, she was very satisfied with the support received:

"The lady who dealt with me was good, she helped me understand about my debt a bit more. I saw her quite quickly and we've spoken on the phone. She's also helped me with food bank vouchers as well."

What difference did this support make?

The support received has given her peace of mind and enabled her to understand more about her loan. She's unsure what would have happened if she hadn't accessed the support provided by the programme.

They helped me understand things so I'm very grateful, I can understand my debt better because of what I've learnt. […] It took off the pressure, there were things that I didn't really understand with that loan, but they opened my eyes and made me understand it more"

D: Improved health, wellbeing and confidence

Introduction

While the AiCS programme has a focus on alleviating financial hardship, the advice and support provided is likely to also have a positive impact on the health, wellbeing and confidence of beneficiaries.

Examples of the outputs, outcomes and impacts under this objective are as follows:

- Reported impact by beneficiaries on their wellbeing
- Number of beneficiaries identifying greater resilience around financial hardship

This section summarises findings from stakeholder and beneficiary surveys that illustrate some of the emerging softer impacts occurring for beneficiaries from their engagement with the AiCS programme.

Summary of Findings

The results show that **AiCS delivery is already having an impact on the health and wellbeing of beneficiaries** and, indeed, this is one of the impact areas most noted by stakeholders. This has also been accompanied by improvements to resilience. **Most beneficiaries who received support in specific advice topics noted that they were more confident in dealing with these issues in the future**. In line with findings from previous research, this demonstrates how the provision of advice can bring wider benefits beyond financial improvements or greater service access.

Evaluation Findings

1. What was the impact on health and wellbeing?

Stakeholders identified that impacts to physical and emotional wellbeing were one of the most common areas where the AiCS programme, like that found for Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) services more widely, was generating positive outcomes and impacts for beneficiaries. This was clearly linked to the complexity of issues faced by beneficiaries.

> "Lots of people are stressed out for payments missed or threat of legal action. Initially just sitting down with them can really help because it calms down their anxiety and stress especially where we are helping with threats of bailiffs and people's mental health improves they walk away smiling and happy and we help with their budgeting and saving money and cut costs or how they can apply for things that will make their household budget better." (Stakeholder Interview)

For beneficiaries, 65% of respondents identified that the AiCS programme had helped them and their family's physical and emotional wellbeing a little or to a great extent, with 42% saying this was to a great extent. A third identified that AiCS had yet to have any impact on physical and emotional wellbeing. This reflects the complexity of issues presented by advice seekers and the length of time it takes for these issues to be resolved. The model will need to pay attention to this complexity and the time and support required to help beneficiaries move towards resolution of their needs.

This greater complexity identified consistently by stakeholders may require partners to review programme resourcing so that there are opportunities to allocate more resources to the most complex cases or identify ways that referral to other specialist providers could be made.

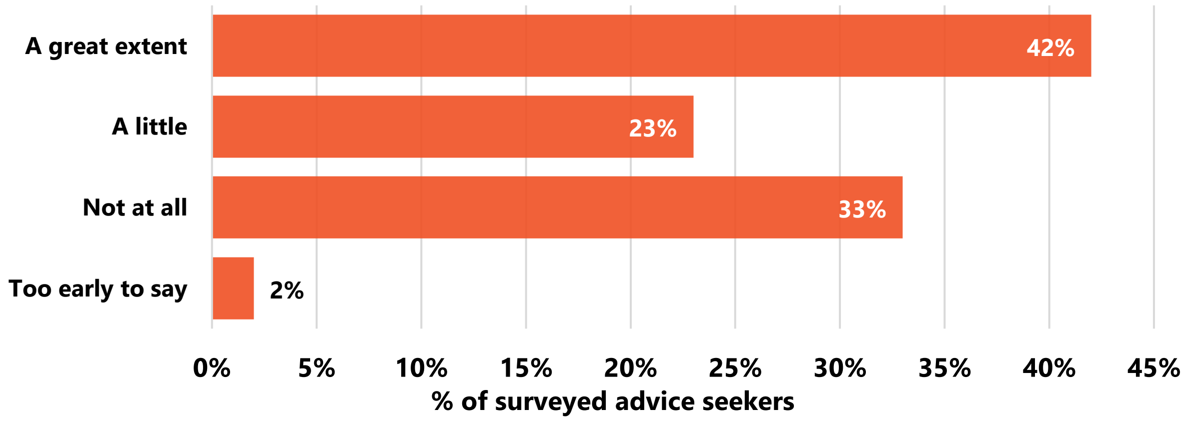


Chart Seven: The proportion of surveyed advice seekers who believed that AiCS support and advice had helped their, and their family's, physical and emotional wellbeing. Sample size = 97. Source – Beneficiary Survey, 2022

These benefits seem to stem from several issues. Advice seekers are relieved that the support and advice is available and readily accessible.

One of the most common was that they were finally able to talk through the issues with someone who takes the time to listen and draw on support to help address them or move to resolution of them.

> "I feel happy because it's been a lot for me as I was facing a difficult time being a single mum of 5 kids and not having to get baby clothes was a massive relief for me."
> (Beneficiary interview)

Case Study 4 – Impacting wider family life

In the summer of 2022, a female social housing tenant in her mid-40s from a White British background accessed the project through a local food bank after a previously unsuccessful application for Personal Independence Payment (PIP). At the time of the interview, she was living with another adult and a child, though at the time of engagement with the AiCS programme, her older daughter and her boyfriend were living with them. This was putting pressure on the family unit and its finances. The primary advice seeker was working part time and looking for help and support with benefits, employment issues and housing issues due to her financial situation.

What support did the AiCS programme provide?

The advice seeker's older daughter has autism and special educational needs and she needed help with a PIP claim to allow her daughter to live independently and support herself. This would make the wider family life better for everyone by improving their financial situation.

Project staff guided her through the claim process and helped her daughter make a successful claim for PIP. At the same time, the AiCS programme was able to provide her daughter's boyfriend, who has special educational needs, with careers advice and help to improve his CV and approach to interviews. The partnership then helped her daughter find a council flat to live in when she received her PIP allowance and secured funding to pay for a washing machine and other essentials that she would not have been able to afford.

The primary advice seeker reported that accessing the advice and support was really easy, and she really valued the support and advice provided:

"The support and advice they gave us about the PIP claim was excellent. I had previously talked to my daughter's social worker and the information they gave us was either wrong or they didn't have the time to help us when we were stuck with the application. The staff were easy to talk to and explained everything clearly and were eager to help us. They walked us through the whole PIP application"

What difference did this support make?

This support made a material difference to the family's life, they are now up to £1,000 better off a month by receiving welfare benefits that they were always entitled to. The family feel more settled and less anxious now, they are less worried about everything and are under much less pressure.

"The whole family is much happier. My daughter has been able to move out and have her own space so there is less conflict. She is happier as she now has more independence and her own place to live. I am less stressed as I don't have to support her financially as much as before and I can give my other daughter more time and attention"

Case Study 5 – Improved finances impacting diet

A European Black woman in her late-30s accessed the project as she needed food vouchers. She currently lives with three other adults and a child in social housing. Since she is unemployed and looking for work, family finances were very tight.

What support did the AiCS programme provide?

She received vouchers that could be used in the local supermarkets to help feed her family. The partnership was able to provide what she needed fairly quickly and accessing the advice and support was very easy.

"They gave me the vouchers very quickly and they treated me with respect and listened to the problems I was facing"

What difference did this support make?

The food vouchers allowed her to feed her family better and her family are now eating better and healthier food. As a result of this, she is feeling less stressed about the amount of money they spend on food.

"I am feeling less stressed about the food bill and my family are eating healthier food as I can use the vouchers in a supermarket and buy more fruit and vegetables rather than the packaged food you get from the food bank"

2. What was the impact on confidence and resilience?

Advice seekers also reported improved confidence and resilience around the advice topics that they had been supported in. Increased resilience is key, as beneficiaries then feel they are better equipped to deal independently when issues arise in the future.

Base numbers in this data are low so trends should be treated with caution, but there was some interview data on the proportion of advice seekers who reported that they felt more confident dealing with this area in the future. Advice seekers were most likely to report increased confidence around benefits. Those seeking support for housing and immigration issues also showed increased confidence, while the effect for debt is less pronounced. This may reflect the greater length of time it can take to be resolve debt issues because the complexity of circumstances.

Although early, these findings show that partnership delivery is providing support that is relevant for beneficiaries even though not all issues have yet reached resolution given the short time (2-4 months) that has elapsed since support was first provided.

E: Increased connection within partnerships

Introduction

In addition to positive outcomes for advice seekers, the AiCS programme also aims to impact partnerships, including through improving partnership working. Examples of the outputs, outcomes and impacts under this objective are as follows:

- Number of partners identifying strengthened partnership work due to programme
- Number of partners identifying better integration of support provision through the project

This section utilises stakeholder interview findings to identify how the AiCS programme has supported the development of partnerships to administer and deliver the support and advice to beneficiaries in their communities. It seeks to demonstrate whether the programme facilitated greater connection between partners.

Summary of Findings

Partnership development has tended to build on existing partnerships, but **links with new partners have been facilitated**. **Food banks have been a particularly successful connection**, acting as a good access point to those who were previously unsupported. Key **challenges to partnership connection have been around data sharing, and service overlap requiring the establishment of agreements and protocols.** Partnerships would value further support and practice sharing with other partnerships here to support future delivery.

Evaluation Findings

1. To what extent was connection increased within partnerships, and what enabled this?

Of the eleven partnerships, eight existed before the commencement of the AiCS programme. These existing partnerships have then been refined to add new partners as delivery has proceeded and needs identified. This has enabled both new and existing partnerships to evolve and initiate new relationships to provide support through the programme.

> "There is this wide network of knowledge we have access to. We are developing more in-depth relationships and gaining more in-depth knowledge so we can all upskill and better support families". (Stakeholder Interview)

Many stakeholders identified that the newest partnership connections had been made with food banks, supporting individuals attending with support and advice that may mitigate their need for food banks in the longer term. These connections also created a wider infrastructure of holistic support that these communities could continue to access to maintain support and advice provision.

These connections have also opened extra referral and signposting routes for specialist needs, enabling beneficiaries to be referred or directed towards support and advice outside of the partnership. This seems to be particularly the case for housing, where access to specialist help, including legal advice, to resolve accommodation issues and complex housing disputes has been a key focus of the development of connections by AiCS partnerships.

> "It means we can help a group we were seeing that we couldn't help before this project existed" (Stakeholder Interview)

> "The best thing about the advice was that it resulted in my daughter getting her PIP allowance and being able to get a place of her own and have some independence." (Beneficiary interview)

In addition to the interview evidence, several questions in the partnership survey focused on increased connection between partnerships and the impact of the AiCS programme on partnership working.

Almost all partnerships (nine out of ten) agreed or strongly agreed that partnership working had been strengthened by the AiCS programme and all ten agreed that the partnership would continue to work together, even once the programme had ended.

Something that was less clear was the impact of improved partnership working on the experience of advice seekers. Just four partnerships agreed or strongly agreed that working in partnership had reduced waiting times for service users. However, all ten agreed or strongly agreed that they had been able to reach new people because of the AiCS programme and nine out of ten believed that support was more integrated.

One area where partnerships were not able to work together effectively was in the sharing of resources between organisations. When asked if they had been able to share resources - such as administrative support or software - across the partnership, only three agreed.

In summary, there is evidence that the AiCS programme has enabled partnerships to expand their network and reach more people. While this may not have impacted waiting times, support for advice seekers is more integrated and organisations now have the ability to help those with more complex needs who require specialist services.

2. What were the barriers to increased connection?

When interviewed, stakeholders identified that there had been limited barriers to increased connection. Shared aims around the provision of advice had helped to drive forward connection.

Some barriers that did emerge as connections were established were the development of data sharing protocols. Stakeholders identified that they would have valued more training and support in this area, which could be facilitated or brokered by the GLA.

Challenges were also identified around the overlap of services, requiring work to agree protocols for the allocation of cases to partners who offered similar advice and support. These have been resolved with data sharing protocols put in place, that have enabled the sharing of data across partnerships.

F: Improvements to recruitment and funding

Introduction

The AiCS programme also sought to improve the capability of those organisations involved in the partnership to deliver support and advice. Examples of the outputs, outcomes and impacts under this objective are as follows:

- Number of further funding applications made because of their AiCS programme experiences
- Number of staff and volunteers trained by the programme in providing support around financial hardship issues

This section considers results from the stakeholder interviews showing where improvements have been seen around recruitment and funding.

Summary of Findings

Partnerships have faced challenges in recruiting advisors and retention and management of volunteers have also proved difficult. Additional resources have been added to partnerships and extra funds have been leveraged in a few limited cases. **Sustainability planning is yet to be a key focus for partner**s as they have been focussed on project implementation, but they are likely to turn their attention to this in the coming months.

Evaluation Findings

1. What was the impact on recruitment, and were there any barriers to successful recruitment?

Stakeholder interviews showed that the key challenge has been around securing enough advisors, whether employed or as volunteers. For volunteers, management and retention has been a particular area of focus, to ensure staff resourcing is sufficient to meet demand. Training and development was also needed, given the fast paced change seen from the cost of living crisis and the changing support arrangements from the UK government. Keeping up with these changes were a particular challenge for staff, who are often 'fire fighting' the sheer volume of demand. Often these are particularly challenging as lack of previous support has contributed to the complexity of need.

Of the ten partnerships who responded to the partnership survey, six had not recruited any new staff as part of the programme. Three partnerships reported recruiting one new member of staff and one partnership was able to recruit three new members of staff.

This variation may be due to the different demands placed on organisations by the AiCS programme. Some partnerships, for example, may not have required additional staff. However, there were also external barriers to recruitment. Two partnerships reported challenges with recruitment in their partnership survey. One partnership stated they had received a low number of good quality applicants while the other indicated that the salary expectations of applicants were too high.

These challenges with recruitment meant partnerships had less capacity than required or expected. While this is an ongoing problem in the advice sector, for some partnerships the lack of staff or volunteers delayed the commencement of delivery.

In summary, stakeholders identified recruitment as a key challenge. Reflecting this, there was relatively limited recruitment as a result of the AiCS programme funding. However, there were external constraints that contributed to the relatively low levels of recruitment.

2. What was the impact on funding, and were there any barriers to increased funding?

A key goal of the AiCS programme is to ensure partnership working can continue beyond the duration of the grant provided by the GLA.

Of the ten partnerships who responded to the survey, six had not applied for any additional funding. Of the remaining four partnerships, three had made just one funding application and the final partnership had applied for over five. The largest amount of funding applied for was over £67,000 and the smallest for just £500.

Stakeholder interviews revealed that sustainability planning has been limited to date. Partnerships are already concerned about moving onto new funding arrangements and how to do this given the level of demands for support and advice they are already supporting. This has limited their ability to begin developing new funding applications that will be critical if the programme is to have longevity. In other words, the key barrier to increased funding is the capacity of partnerships to look beyond direct delivery and identify future funding opportunities.

Process Evaluation

Introduction

This section provides a summary of the emerging findings from the process evaluation. This assesses how the programme delivery has been developed and rolled out, support for partnership development, and the added value being supported by the project funding. The findings here are drawn from the stakeholder interviews at scoping and delivery phases of the evaluation work[13] and include insights from managers and staff directly involved in the development and delivery of support.

Summary of Findings

Thus far, **the logic and need for the AiCS programme and its approach is supported and understood by stakeholders**. Delivery on the basis of this logic has shown that providing support within communities is key in helping to provide support to those facing some of the greater challenges around poverty and deprivation. This need for support has been exacerbated by the cost of living crisis but also arises from the deep seated nature of poverty across the capital that predates the crisis and Covid-19.[14] The **key challenge is the long-term sustainability of this programme**, which to date has only had a limited focus.

Evaluation Findings

1. How is programme delivery proceeding and what have been the successes of this?

Stakeholder interviews show that projects have a good level of understanding of the aims of the AiCS programme and this has underpinned good progress in the set up and delivery of projects. However, this has occurred at differential levels across partnerships, with some partnerships proceeding more quickly than others. Those that have been slower have faced more challenges around:

- Establishing partnership agreements
- Recruiting managers and advisors
- Difficulties accessing some community settings and venues
- Establishing data sharing protocols
- Establishing referral and signposting agreements

[13] Scoping interviews with all 11 partnerships were completed between April and May 2022 with 26 stakeholders interviewed between September and November 2022.
[14] London Datastore, *Poverty in London 2020/21*

Some of these are expected 'teething troubles' for any new partnership development. Future pilot approaches in this area could build in a dedicated implementation phase where referral, triage, and delivery models and registration systems are fully tested before the programme goes live. This means that systems are fully tested and there is less chance these will act as barriers to project start. However, all partnerships had commenced delivery by the end of this interim evaluation period.

Most support delivery is occurring through face-to-face contact with beneficiaries, with more simple inquiries supported on the telephone. Stakeholders highlight that their preferred way of operating is via face-to-face contact, which is supported by the community focus of AiCS. By working in this way, connection and rapport with beneficiaries can be more easily established, enabling individuals to share more detail on their needs so that advisors can identify a more holistic support package or refer on as appropriate. This reiterates the important role that the community location plays in enhancing the reach and access of services to those in most need, and as earlier sections highlight, for many who have not accessed such support and advice previously.

Stakeholders note the high level of demand for advice that has been identified in the targeted community areas:

> "I have seen a significant increase in enquiries over the last 3-6 months due to the cost-of-living crisis and energy bills. I doubt the demand will drop anytime soon given the continued pressures on household budgets". (Stakeholder Interview)

The need for this support is unsurprising given that GLA analysis found Londoners' experience of inflation rates has been worse than national averages.[15] Cost of living polling conducted by the GLA in September 2022 – at the end of this delivery period – found that one in five Londoners (20%) were "financially struggling" and a third (33%) were "just about managing". This compares to just 10% who said they were "comfortable financially". This picture had improved somewhat by January 2023, with 17% of surveyed Londoners now stating they were "financially struggling" and 30% "just about managing".[16] Despite this slight improvement, this data still suggests that almost half of Londoners are experiencing financial difficulties.

This situation is likely to continue and has already prompted the GLA to develop a Cost of Living Working Group to advise the Mayor on steps that could be taken. The extent of demand already seen by stakeholders supports this policy development and the continued funding of the AiCS programme into a second year that is already underway.

The systems now in place through the programme suggest that the logic underpinning the AiCS model is showing early progress in supporting previously unreached groups but further data is needed to identify how well this is working for beneficiaries.

[15] Frank-Keyes, August 2022, *Cost of living crisis: Londoners worse hit than UK average, City Hall data shows*
[16] GLA, *Cost of Living Polling*

2. What have been the challenges of programme delivery?

While there has been early success, there remain challenges for stakeholders.

One key challenge is around referrals, as there have been delays in securing these from some kinds of community partners, particularly food banks. These cases have been delayed by the limited information provided about beneficiaries at referral, meaning that advisors have had to do more initial work to identify the needs of beneficiaries. More consistency in information provision at referral is needed, particularly in work with food banks, and encouragement to use a standard referral form across all partners could be beneficial here.

Another challenge has been that despite being referred, beneficiaries have not attended appointments with partnerships. Staff have highlighted that personal or health challenges such as childcare needs, mental health, or other physical illness act as a barrier to engagement to services. Partnerships will need to ensure regular review of referral mechanisms to ensure these barriers are addressed and that support is made as accessible as possible.

This is important particularly in relation to the observation from stakeholders that they were seeing a much greater complexity of need amongst those they were engaging. This was a complexity that wasn't just focussed around a need for support for debt, housing, benefits, immigration or other issues, but specifically in terms of the physical and emotional wellbeing of those the programme is working with.

These challenges are exacerbated by the difficulty accessing a GP and community mental health teams.[17] Links that can be established by partnerships with local social prescribing services to further supplement the holistic and multi-agency support or advice that could be provided are therefore essential. This would provide even greater opportunity for support and advice to address the complex needs beneficiaries have been presenting with.

3. What added value has been provided by the funding of the Advice in Community Settings programme?

All stakeholders are clear that the AiCS programme has brought significant added value both to their own organisations and the beneficiaries they are supporting. The range of support areas the programme has been delivering are, in the view of stakeholders, aligned with the needs beneficiaries are presenting with.

Primarily, the organisational value is focussed on the opportunity to provide a one stop shop model of support supplemented by a widening of support networks and community outreach in the provision of these advice services the programme funding has enabled:

> "It's helping to extend reach into traditionally under-represented communities and target specific groups such as care leavers/people at risk given current cost of living crisis" (Stakeholder Interview)

[17] BMA, *NHS Backlog data analysis*

It has also provided additional capacity to support beneficiaries and build partnerships to support this:

> "We've always been quite a small CAB compared to the need, we've always existed on really small resources. If we didn't have this opportunity we would be thinking about how we did community outreach anyway but this gives us the opportunity to understand that more and really get a handle on what the needs are out there" (Stakeholder Interview)

> "It is providing additional capacity but also freeing up time to develop relationships with partners, expand and strengthen our referral network and spend time understanding how to reach more diverse and underrepresented communities". (Stakeholder Interview)

Although early days, some stakeholders also identified that they were beginning to use the programme to help pilot new ways of working, to professionalise services delivery, and offer further training and development to advice staff. This included using advisors in new ways, supporting beneficiaries with applications to join housing lists, signposting to new services, and training on the cost of living crisis for advisors.

For beneficiaries, stakeholders identified that the key value of the programme was the increased community-based access to advice and support it provided.

> "Enabling people who wouldn't ordinarily know that the service exists to access this service as well as providing that safety net" (Stakeholder Interview)

Stakeholders also identified that the breadth and range of services available to beneficiaries had also been increased through AiCS delivery, particularly through the partnerships the programme was being delivered through.

> "By working through a range of partners, we have been able to achieve stronger reach". (Stakeholder Interview)

These services included access to specialist housing support related to temporary accommodation or disputes with private landlords including legal advice, specialist support around immigration and asylum issues, and provision of specific advice around the Government's cost of living support packages including Council Tax rebates.

Finally, stakeholders are also clear that there are new services and support that have been developed through the AiCS funding.

> "We didn't have a programme in place before this (funding), we wouldn't have been able to run a signposting and guidance programme". (Stakeholder Interview)

4. What progress has been made in securing the sustainability of the Advice in Community Settings programme?

Progress on sustainability has been limited to date, with stakeholders focussed on the establishment and implementation of their projects. Confirmation of Year 2 funding arrangements have been welcomed. Stakeholders do identify that the level of unmet demand that has already been highlighted by the programme shows that the GLA needs to continue its ongoing work around AiCS continuity funding.

A couple of partnerships have begun conversations around partnership bids with non-AiCS partners. Access to funds to recruit and train more advisors has been a key focus given the levels of demand for support highlighted above.

Considering this, stakeholders were also questioned about how they felt the GLA could support them further through the programme delivery. In response, stakeholders showed that there was limited awareness and participation in the support that has already been made available for them by the GLA. This meant that only a few stakeholders had participated in the networking and monitoring sessions. Most commonly stakeholders wanted more opportunities to network on a more regular basis, ideally quarterly, with other AiCS partnerships to share experiences and best practice to help deliver the programme. However, this needs to be considered alongside the significant demands they already face for the provision of support and advice through the programme.

They were also keen to see the GLA utilise its own strategic and policy links to:

- Provide further expert input and insight on the cost-of-living crisis and the range of emerging support available, including where policy developments may be underway that could provide further funding opportunities
- Broker links with social prescribing connections within the GLA to support local connection for partnerships
- Lobby local authorities to offer continued funded support and resources to advice services and staff, whilst also encouraging them to consult with such advice services on the impacts of practice and delivery change

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

While there have been both methodological challenges and external barriers to delivery, the current data has allowed for a robust initial evaluation. This has found the following:

- Delivery of the AiCS programme since June 2022 has demonstrated that its central logic remains relevant and is well understood by all partnerships delivering support and advice. Early data suggests that partnerships have been effective in reaching those who have not previously accessed advice and groups of Londoners who do not traditionally access advice services.
- Beneficiaries that have been supported identify that the support and advice has been easy to access and they have valued the contact with the programme. Early results on the experience of advice seekers are positive, with a majority of beneficiaries stating they are satisfied with the support and advice received.
- It remains relatively early in delivery to see marked changes in the financial circumstances of supported households. This is particularly the case for debt reduction and housing issues where the complexity and nature of some of the needs being addressed mean external support is needed and longer timescales for resolution are likely. However, early evidence from management information data found that the total financial gains across the entire cohort totalled £525,089.
- The AiCS programme is having a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of beneficiaries and, indeed, this is one of the impact areas most noted by stakeholders. This has been accompanied by improvements to resilience with beneficiaries reporting that they were more confident to deal with similar issues in the future.
- Stakeholders highlight that partnership development has gone well to support the roll out of delivery. This has tended to build on existing partnerships, which are then refined as needs are identified and specialist support provided.
- A key challenge to delivery identified by stakeholders is the complexity of issues faced by beneficiaries and needs are often identified across a range of advice areas. Many beneficiaries are already at crisis point on reaching out to the programme and this has further complicated the issues they are dealing with.
- This focus on delivery and the levels of demand seen have meant partnerships have focussed primarily on support and advice provision and there has been limited focus to date on sustainability and future funding. The Year 2 funding for AiCS has been welcomed, given the continued increase in demand for support and advice.

Recommendations for ongoing AiCS programme delivery

1. Partnerships should continue to expand into new types and locations of community settings. This will allow partnerships to identify new organisations for referral as well as maximise outreach opportunities, since different groups of Londoners are accessing the programme in a variety of settings. The GLA should ensure both that partnerships are adequately resourced for this continuous expansion, as well as leveraging its networks to connect organisations where appropriate.
2. If partnerships are to effectively reach their identified target groups, they should endeavour to work with organisations and settings that are already embedded in these communities. The GLA should support partnerships in these outreach activities, particularly in helping them forge connections with relevant organisations from across their network.
3. Where possible, continuous improvement of services should focus on increasing the availability of face-to-face advisors, reducing waiting lists and providing more follow-up. Due to rapidly changing advice needs and government support available, partnerships should continue to review their structures and support portfolios.
4. Early analysis of financial gains and improvements to health, wellbeing and confidence are positive. However, demographic differences are emerging in the analysis of outcomes. Ongoing evaluation work should further investigate these differences and partnerships should be aware of how this applies in their setting and take any appropriate action. This evaluation work should incorporate longitudinal data to investigate longer term impacts.
5. The GLA should continue to provide opportunities for inter-partnership collaboration and sharing of best practice. This may be either formal or informal opportunities for discussions across partnerships where common problems can be shared and solutions suggested.
6. Partnerships should be further supported by the GLA to identify future funding opportunities and plan for the future resourcing of their advice services. This support could include providing access to evaluation data and analysis, providing support and guidance and using existing networks to connect potential funders with partnerships.

Recommendations for future grant programmes

1. Funders should recognise the value of embedding advice services in community settings to reach new groups of Londoners.
2. Any future multi-partnership programme should embed cross-partnership data collection at the beginning of delivery to ensure any evaluation work is efficient, effective and timely.
3. Future grant programmes should ensure partnerships are connecting with a wide range of community settings and organisations from the commencement of delivery. Resource should be allocated to ensure this is an area of continuous development.
4. Identifying target groups at the beginning of the programme is not sufficient to widen access and reach these groups. Partnerships should identify specific outreach activities and organisations they can connect with, which are already embedded in these

communities. Funders should ensure that any outreach plans are likely to be effective and are adequately resourced.

5. Future programmes should build in opportunities for cross-partnership support and sharing of best practice. This might take the form of structured workshops or more informal drop in sessions that allow partnerships to share any challenges or barriers and learn from how other partnerships have tackled similar issues.
6. Future programmes that involve the development or strengthening of partnership working should embed an implementation phase. During this time, partnerships can recruit the required staff or volunteers and establish agreements, data sharing protocols and referral pathways.

Next Steps

Both delivery of the AiCS programme and its evaluation is ongoing and will extend beyond this initial evaluation period. Further data will be collected, including repeat interviews with advice seekers to understand the longer term effects of the programme. This data will inform future reporting on the delivery and impact of the AiCS programme.

Appendix 1 – Management information data provided by partnerships

	Any Demographic Data	Core Demographic Data*	Complete Demographic Data	Any Activity Data	Any Outcome Data
All	81%	45%	21%	91%	54%
Citizens Advice Barking and Dagenham	100%	100%	94%	97%	26%
Community Links	100%	45%	40%	85%	40%
Ealing Mencap	100%	93%	0%	100%	7%
Fair Money Advice	100%	96%	63%	100%	41%
Help 4 Hillingdon	100%	23%	23%	100%	100%
Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Association	0%	0%	0%	79%	100%
Little Village	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%
Peabody Community Foundation	100%	100%	99%	100%	100%
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	100%	28%	0%	100%	100%
Salusbury World Refugee Centre	100%	97%	0%	0%	0%
Citizens Advice Waltham Forest	100%	91%	0%	100%	19%

**Core demographic data is data on age, gender, ethnicity and disability status*

Appendix 2 – Demographic make-up of interviewed advice seekers compared to all advice seekers

	Interview Participants	All Advice Seekers	Difference
Male	30.9%	**37.1%**	-6.2%
Female	68.0%	**62.9%**	5.2%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3.3%	**4.0%**	-0.7%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	3.3%	**2.0%**	1.3%
Asian or Asian British - Any Other	6.6%	**3.7%**	2.9%
Black or Black British - African	26.4%	**23.9%**	2.4%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	16.5%	**9.6%**	6.9%
Black or Black British - Any Other	4.4%	**6.0%**	-1.6%
Mixed or Multiple - White and Asian	1.1%	**0.3%**	0.8%
Mixed or Multiple - White and Black African	1.1%	**0.4%**	0.7%
White - British	19.8%	**16.2%**	3.6%
White - Any Other	12.1%	**11.9%**	0.2%
Any other ethnic group	5.5%	**10.0%**	-4.5%
First Language: English	49.5%	**60.8%**	-11.3%
First Language: Other than English	50.5%	**39.2%**	11.3%
Disabled	50.5%	**36.4%**	14.2%
Not Disabled	49.5%	**63.6%**	-14.2%
British National / Citizen	69.9%	**64.8%**	5.1%
Indefinite leave to remain	6.5%	**6.9%**	-0.5%
Asylum Seeker	5.4%	**1.9%**	3.4%
EU / EEA National	7.5%	**2.8%**	4.8%
Limited leave to remain	10.8%	**10.0%**	0.8%
Not working – retired	7.1%	**7.1%**	0.0%
Not working – long term sick or disabled	18.6%	**26.0%**	-7.4%
Unemployed	35.7%	**34.8%**	1.0%
Student studying for a recognised qualification	2.9%	**0.7%**	2.2%
Working part-time (9 to 29 hours per week)	14.3%	**11.2%**	3.1%
Working full-time (30+ hours per week)	17.1%	**19.4%**	-2.2%
Other	4.3%	**0.0%**	4.3%
Social housing or local authority tenant	55.7%	**41.5%**	14.1%
Private tenant	22.7%	**34.7%**	-12.0%
Home owner	6.2%	**2.9%**	3.3%
Other	15.5%	**16.9%**	-1.4%

Appendix 3 – Theory of Change

ADVICE IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS PROGRAMME

GOAL / VISION

"To facilitate the creation/strengthening of partnerships to support Londoners to maximise their income, reduce debt or other outgoings, and resolve immigration or other social welfare issues through the provision of community-based access to information, advice, guidance, and/or advocacy/case work to enable them to mitigate the impacts of poverty/financial hardship"

INPUTS

- £X total budget and £Y grant funding from the GLA.
- Partnership staff time and resources to develop and deliver project information, advice, guidance, and/or advocacy/case work.
- Existing organisational and individual experience/expertise of partnership staff.
- External stakeholder and partner referrals into project.
- GLA staff programme management.
- GLA staff building and brokering strategic contacts and partnerships for projects to engage with.

ACTIVITIES

- Development and delivery of project marketing and communications activity.
- Development and delivery of programme inward referral and registration approach.
- Development and delivery of programme outward referral and signposting approach.
- Development of comprehensive support programme including delivery of information, advice, guidance, and/or advocacy/case work.
- Partnership development activity and relationship management work.
- Ongoing workforce development and training to support delivery of information, advice, guidance, and/or advocacy/case work.

OUTPUTS

Clients/Beneficiaries

- Number of individuals registering with projects (by demographic group – including household characteristics, employment status) by referral source .
- Number of beneficiaries (by demographic group) completing need assessments with project partners.
- Number of beneficiaries (by demographic group and sector) and households accessing/utilizing project support by type of support.
- Number of beneficiaries (by demographic group) exiting services.
- Number of beneficiaries (by demographic group) signposted to other services
- Number of beneficiaries (by demographic groups) referred to other services
- Number of training courses provided to beneficiaries to support self-management of household finances.

Partners/Sector

- Volume/duration of support provided by type and location of advice.
- Number of partners engaged by project (new and existing).
- Number of local signposting and outward referral options identified.
- Number of training courses provided to staff and volunteers to support beneficiaries around financial hardship issues.

OUTCOMES (SHORT TERM)

Clients/Beneficiaries

- Number of beneficiaries new to advice services reached by the programme (by demographic group) and households
- Beneficiaries reporting that their advice needs have been met
- Beneficiaries reporting satisfaction with support received by volume/duration and 'quality/relevance' of support provided.
- Beneficiaries reporting satisfaction with outcomes to date attained against identified needs
- Number and value of benefit claims/reassessments made.
- Number and value of debt/income reviews completed.
- Number of other social welfare reviews completed (Housing / Immigration /Other).
- Number of beneficiaries who received training in self-management from the programme.

Partners/Sector

- Number of staff and volunteers in partnership organisations trained by the programme in providing support around financial hardship issues
- Number of new community settings providing identified support through the programme.
- Reduction in average waiting times for receipt of support by beneficiaries'
- Number of partners identifying strengthened partnership work due to programme.
- Number of partners identifying better integration of support provision through the project.
- Number of partners identifying learning or new practice arising from project delivery.
- Total value of match funding accessed/secured by partners.

OUTCOMES (MEDIUM TERM)

Clients/Beneficiaries

- Number of beneficiaries (by demographic group) and households taking up other services they have been referred to.
- Number and value of successful benefit claims/reassessments.
- Number and value of successful debt/income reviews and debt written off.
- Reported impact by beneficiaries on their:
  - Benefits
  - Debt reduction
  - Household income (increased or stabilised)
  - Housing
  - Immigration
  - Other social welfare issues
  - Poverty (mitigated/reduced)
  - Wellbeing – physical and emotional
  - Financial hardship (mitigated/reduced).
- Number of beneficiaries identifying greater resilience around financial hardship.
- Number of beneficiaries identifying 'other' impacts (positive/negative) from support receipt.
- Number of beneficiaries identifying they are using the financial self-management skills provided by the programme.

Partners/Sector

- Number of partners working with new community settings providing support through the programme.
- Number of partners identifying sustained partnership work due to programme.
- Number of partners identifying sustained integration of support provision through the project.
- Number of partners applying learning or new practice arising from project delivery.
- Number of further funding applications made because of their Advice in Community Settings programme experiences.
- Number of staff and volunteers trained by the programme providing support around financial hardship issues.

IMPACTS

Contributing to objectives in the following GLA strategies:

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy (2018) supporting approaches:

12. To work with government, businesses, transport providers, voluntary groups and all relevant partners to help ensure our approach to tackling fuel poverty...is inclusive.

13. To work with government, boroughs, early years and childcare providers and businesses to help address the root causes of child poverty. These include affordability of housing, childcare and transport, low pay and lack of flexible working as well as the welfare system.

London Recovery Board – Robust Safety Net Mission (2021) facilitating the delivery of support that:

- Reduces and reverses increases in poverty and destitution
- Maximises Londoners' disposable incomes and cut costs of living
- Enables all Londoners to access a strong safety net and tools to develop personal resilience.
- Ensures Londoners are not pushed (further) into problem debt.

ASSUMPTIONS

- Community based provision of information, advice, guidance, and/or advocacy/case work is the best way of delivering the programme to tackle financial hardship amongst Londoners.
- Londoners want additional community-based access to information, advice, guidance, and/or advocacy/case work.
- Community based settings are visible to, and accessible for, families facing financial hardship.
- Clients/beneficiaries are happy to share detail of their financial circumstance to advice providers.
- Selected community settings are the right ones to be delivering information, advice, guidance, and/or advocacy/case work services to Londoners.
- The advice sector in London wants involvement in the programme, has capacity and adequately trained staff to support its delivery, and will be able to support identified needs.
- Needs assessment practice and process will correctly identify the right support needs.
- Advice workers have the capacity and skills to support the needs of beneficiaries
- Funded partnerships can deliver the project/programme as designed.

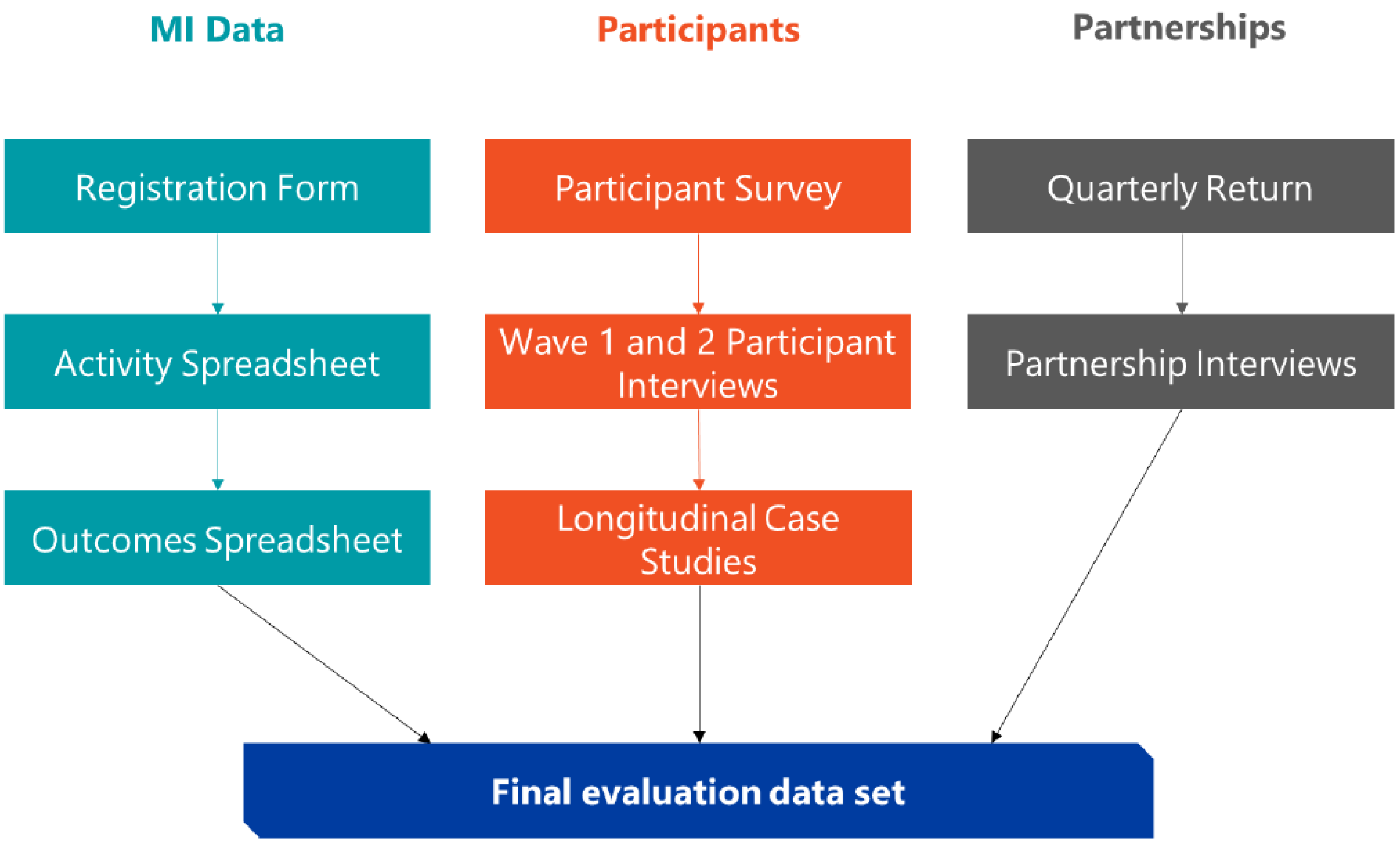
BARRIERS

- Some financial hardship issues are influenced by national and local Government policy which cannot be changed by the actions of programme/project staff.
- Clients/beneficiaries may expect too much of, or resolution to, cases, that is not possible in the timespans available to projects.
- Beneficiaries face language barriers that prevent them engaging with services.
- Clients/beneficiaries are reticent in engaging with services because of previous poor experiences with such services, are unclear of the nature of support offer, or worry that existing benefits might be negatively affected by working with the programme/projects.
- Some clients/beneficiaries may believe their case is too complex to be dealt with by the programme/projects.
- Some clients/beneficiaries may believe there is a stigma attached to them engaging with the support provided by the programme/projects.
- Some clients/beneficiaries may be reticent to visit some community settings (e.g. schools, cultural centres) because of previous poor experiences in them, or lack of understanding or knowledge of those settings.
- Some clients/beneficiaries may not share full details of their circumstances preventing programme/project staff from fully understanding their needs.
- Advice workers may not have the capacity or skills to support the needs of beneficiaries.
- Recruitment challenges and inflationary wage pressures mean partnership organisations, particularly smaller organisations are unable to recruit appropriately skilled staff to support their project delivery.
- Uncertain future funding beyond existing funding agreement
- Current economic circumstance creates additional demand that partnerships are unable to support
- Cases supported are more complex than initially planned for meaning project see lower volumes of clients.

ENABLERS

- The diversity of experience, skills and resources programme partners provide.
- Marketing and partnership development work by funded partnerships.
- Consistent and rigorous needs assessments undertaken.
- Clear menus of support provision available for prospective clients/beneficiaries.
- Partnership development and stakeholder engagement work.
- Holistic needs assessment work to identify clear areas where projects can support needs and pinpoint where outward referrals/signposting might be needed.
- Skilled advice workers to tailor delivery to the needs of particular groups and sectors.
- The programmes' links to the London Recovery programme
- Partnership services are given extra legitimacy by use of Mayoral branding in publicity material and the greater trust the current Mayor has from some service users.

Appendix 4 – Evaluation Framework Overview



Appendix 5 – Partnership / stakeholder survey

Questions for discussion

1. **Can you explain how you are involved in the Advice in Community settings project at your organisation?**

Project design and approach

2. **Can you tell me how the project was designed?**
    a. What aspects of it were new?
    b. What aspects continued work you had done before or were already doing?
    c. Tell me about the community settings you are delivering the project through?
3. **How is delivery going so far?**
    a. How does this compare with your intended delivery model?
    b. Any successes you'd like to highlight?
    c. What have been the main challenges so far and how have these been overcome?
4. **What added value do you think the programme funding is providing for the beneficiaries your project works with?**
5. **What added value do you think the programme funding is providing for your organisation/project?**
    a. Are you providing any new activities/advice/support because of the funding or does it allow you to maintain or continue existing services?

Delivery to date

6. **Can you tell me a little bit about the specific things you have provided support/advice around whilst working on the Advice in Community Settings project?**
7. **Where and how do you usually provide advice/support for AiCS project beneficiaries?**
    a. Have you been working in any new community settings because of the project?

Referral

8. **Can you tell me a little about how beneficiaries are referred into your project?**
    a. Who have been the main source of referrals to date?
    b. Once referred to your project how are beneficiary needs assessed?
    c. To what extent has the project been able to address these needs so far?

Groups worked with

9. **Which community groups have you been working with on the project?**

10. **How many of these are new to your organisation/work, can you provide some detail on these groups?**
    a. How would you describe the support needs of those you have been working with on the AiCS project? Are many of these beneficiaries already at crisis point when you/colleagues start working with them?
11. **Why do you think you have been able to reach these new groups?**
    a. To what extent do you think that the link to the Mayor of London/GLA because of the project funding makes a difference in being able to reach these groups?
12. **What do you think you have learnt from working with these groups?**
    a. How has this led to any changes in the way you are delivering your AiCS project?
    b. How do you think this will influence how you will work in the future?

Partnership and Collaboration

13. **Thinking about the other organisations involved in your project's partnership, have you previously worked with any of these partners before?**
    a. If so how long have you worked with them?
    b. Has your working arrangement changed at all in the AiCS project?
14. **If working with new partners, how have you developed your working arrangements with these new partners?**
15. **How do you think the partnership working is progressing for your AiCS project?**
    a. Have there been any particular challenges to the partnership working you have been involved in and how have they been overcome?
16. **How well integrated is the work of different partners?**
17. **What added value do you think these partners have brought:**
    a. The Project?
    b. Your organisation's activities?

Outcomes and Impacts

18. **How easy has it been for you to provide the right kind of advice/support to the beneficiaries you have worked with?**

19. **To what extent do you think the project has been able to intervene early in cases to help reduce the number of beneficiaries reaching crisis point?**

20. **Is there any way that you think that the advice/support could be provided in a better way in future? [Probe: opportunities to intervene earlier]**

21. **What is the main benefit you think the advice and support you have provided to beneficiaries you have worked with?**

22. **What have been the main impacts your advice/support has had on those you have worked with?**

23. **To what extent do you think these impacts will be sustained and how might that be best achieved?**

24. **To what extent do you believe the support/advice you have provided has helped the physical and emotional wellbeing of beneficiaries?**

Project sustainability

25. **How might the project and work in the community settings be sustained in the future?**

Support from the GLA

We're also interested in the views you have about any support you/your organisation has received from the GLA – for example they arranged training on data protection.

26. **How have you/your organisation found the support received from the GLA?**

27. **Are there any areas where you/your organisation would have valued more support from the GLA?**

28. **Is there anything we haven't spoken about your project that you think is important for the evaluation to consider?**

Appendix 6 – Beneficiary survey

Introduction

1. **Can I take your name please?**

2. **Do you remember working with project or people that work for them?**

   Yes (Go to Q3)
   No – are you sure, our records show you worked with them in [date from contact sheet] – if Yes Go to Q4; if still no, thank and end interview.

3. **Are you still receiving support or advice from people at project?**

   Yes (Go to Q5)

   No (Go to Q4)

4. **Why are you not still receiving support or advice from people at project?** (Go to Q5)

Accessing Support

5. **When you began working with people at project which of the following were you looking for help/support with? (Please tick all that apply)**

   Debt

   Benefits

   Immigration/Asylum Issues

   Employment Issues

   Housing Issues

   Other (please specify)

6. **Can you tell me a little bit about the specific things you wanted support/advice around?**

7. **Had you ever had support on any of these issues before? (Put a tick or cross in the boxes that apply to you)**

	Yes, from this organisation	**Yes, from another organisation**	**No**

	Over a year ago	Only in last 12 months?	Over a year ago	In last 12 months?	
Debt					
Benefits					
Immigration/Asylum Issues					
Employment Issues					
Housing Issues					
Other (please specify)					

8. **If no, are there any reasons why you have not had support on these issues before? (Put a tick or cross in the boxes that apply to you)**

	Reason
Debt	
Benefits	
Immigration/Asylum Issues	
Employment Issues	
Housing Issues	
Other (please specify)	

Experience

9. **How did you first hear about [project name] from [delivery partner name]?**

10. **How easy was it to access the advice/support from project?**

    Very easy

    Easy

    Difficult

11. **Can you tell me why you say that?**

12. **Is there any way that you think that the advice/support could be provided in a better way by project in future?**

    No
    Don't know
    Yes [please give me a few details of how]

Outcomes and Impacts

13. **At the time you received the support how satisfied were you with the advice/support you received from the project? (Put a tick or cross in the boxes that apply to you)**

	Very satisfied	**Satisfied**	**Neither**	**Dissatisfied**	**Very Dissatisfied**	**N/A**
Overall advice/support received						
Debt						
Benefits						
Immigration/Asylum Issues						
Employment Issues						
Housing Issues						
Other (please specify)						

14. **If satisfied, can you tell me why you were satisfied?**
15. **If dissatisfied, can you tell me why you were dissatisfied?**
16. **To what extent do you feel you received the support you were hoping for from project? (Put a tick or cross in the boxes that apply to you)**

	A great extent	A little	Not at all	Too early to say	N/A
Debt					
Benefits					
Immigration/Asylum					
Employment					
Housing					
Other (please specify)					

17. **To what extent do you feel you understand how to prevent or resolve issues with the following areas in the future because of the support/advice you've received from project? (Put a tick or cross in the boxes that apply to you)**

	A great extent	A little	Not at all	Too early to say	N/A
Debt					
Benefits					
Immigration/Asylum					
Employment					
Housing					
Other (please specify)					

18. **How confident do you/your family feel about dealing with issues in the areas below in the future following the support/advice you've received from project? (Put a tick or cross in the boxes that apply to you)**

	As confident as before	More confident	Less confident	Too early to say	N/A
Debt					
Benefits					
Immigration/Asylum					
Employment					
Housing					
Other (please specify)					

19. **To what extent do you feel the issues you received advice/support on have been resolved? (Put a tick or cross in the boxes that apply to you)**

	A great extent	A little	Not at all	Too early to say	N/A
Debt					
Benefits					
Immigration/Asylum					
Employment					
Housing					
Other (please specify)					

20. **What has been the best thing about the advice and support you have received from project?**

21. **What is the main thing you think the advice and support you have received from project has brought you and your family?**
22. **What impact has the advice/support you have received from project had on the following areas of you and your families' lives? (Put a tick or cross in the boxes that apply to you)**

	A strong positive impact	A little positive impact	No change	A negative impact	Too early to say	N/A
Debt reduction						
Benefit receipt						
Household Income						
Immigration/Asylum Issues						
Employment Issues						
Housing Issues						
Other (please specify)						

23. **[If reporting impact (positive/negative) on debt, benefit or household income please ask] how much do you estimate that on average per month the advice/support has brought your household?**

	Average change per month (£) +	Average change per month (£) -
Debt reduction		
Benefit receipt		
Household Income		

24. **To what extent do you believe the support/advice from project has helped you and your family's physical and emotional wellbeing?**

A great extent	A little	Not at all	Too early to say	N/A

25. **Why do you say that?**

26. To what extent do you believe the support/advice from project has helped relieve some of the financial pressures you/your family have been facing?

A great extent	A little	Not at all	Too early to say	N/A

27. Why do you say that?

28. How confident do you feel managing your money following the support/advice you've received from project?

Answer on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'not at all confident' and 10 is 'completely confident'. Please circle one number that best represents your answer

0 - Not at all confident

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 - Completely confident

Don't know

29. Following the advice/support you've received from how likely would you be to seek help from the following if you were facing financial difficulties? (Put a tick or cross in the boxes that apply to you)

	Very likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Don't Know	N/A
Information and advice organisations (e.g. Citizens Advice, Age UK)						
Government departments (e.g. Gov.uk, DWP, Pensions Credit)						
Local council						
Food banks						
Consumer websites (e.g. Moneysavingexpert)						
On-line search						
Charities and other organisations (e.g. church, temple or mosque)						
Friends and family for views and advice						
Friends and family for direct help (e.g. a loan)						

30. **Which of the following do you most need more information on? Please tick up to three.**

Support in a crisis (e.g. run out of food, eviction, homelessness, debt)

Wellbeing and mental health support

Managing energy costs

Managing rent or mortgage costs

Managing other household charges (e.g. water, phone, council tax, insurance, service charge)

Managing other living costs (e.g. health, essential travel)

Budgeting

Managing debt well

Understanding credit options

Understanding benefit entitlements

Employment rights (e.g. pay entitlements, paying the right amount of tax)

Training and education opportunities

Increasing income through paid employment

Changing or applying for jobs

Something else (please specify)

Could we just ask you a few questions about yourself?

To conclude the survey, could we just ask you a few questions about yourself? These questions help us check that the experiences of project are not different for some groups of beneficiaries compared to others to help support project to be as inclusive as possible.

31. Which of the following best describes your gender?

- ○ Man
- ○ Woman
- ○ Non-binary
- ○ Prefer not to say
- ○ Other (please specify)

32. Could I take your date of birth?

33. Do you have any physical, sensory, learning, or mental health conditions, or illnesses that have lasted, or are expected to last, 12 months or more?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Unknown/Prefer not to say

34. Which one of the following best describes your ethnic group or background?

- ◯ Asian or Asian British - Indian
- ◯ Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
- ◯ Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi
- ◯ Asian or Asian British - Chinese
- ◯ Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian background
- ◯ Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African - Caribbean
- ◯ Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African - African
- ◯ Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African - Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background
- ◯ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean
- ◯ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African
- ◯ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian
- ◯ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - Any other Mixed or multiple background
- ◯ White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- ◯ White - Irish
- ◯ White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- ◯ White - Roma
- ◯ White - Any other White background
- ◯ Other ethnic group- Arab
- ◯ Other ethnic group- Any other ethnic group (please specify)

○ Prefer not to identify

35. Is English your first language?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Prefer not to say

36. What is your immigration status?

- ○ British National / Citizen
- ○ EU / EEA National with pre-settled or settled status
- ○ Asylum Seeker
- ○ Refugee status
- ○ Limited leave to remain
- ○ Indefinite leave to remain
- ○ Unknown / Prefer not to say
- ○ Other (specify)

37. How many other adults (aged 18 and over) live at your home address?

38. How many children (aged under 18) live at your home address?

39. How long have you lived at this address?

- ◯ Less than 12 months
- ◯ 12 months but less than 2 years
- ◯ 2 years but less than 3 years
- ◯ 3 years but less than 5 years
- ◯ 5 years but less than 10 years
- ◯ 10 years or more

40. In which of these ways do you occupy this accommodation?

- ◯ Home owner
- ◯ Private tenant
- ◯ Social housing or local authority tenant
- ◯ Other (please specify)
- ◯ Unknown/Prefer not to say

41. What is your current working status?

Working full-time (30+ hours per week)

Working part-time (9 to 29 hours per week)

Unemployed and looking for work

Unemployed and not looking for work

Not working – retired

Not working – carer

Not working – long term sick or disabled

Student studying for a recognised qualification

Other (please specify)

42. As part of our work, you may be invited to participate in a short telephone interview in 9-12 months' time to follow up on your experiences of project, are you happy for us to contact you?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If yes, what's the best telephone number to contact you on?

____

When would be a better time to ring?

____

43. Do you have any final comments about the advice/support you've received from project?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey