



Advice in Community Settings (AiCS)


Key Findings from the Year 1 Evaluation

The Mayor of London launched the AiCS grant programme in 2022. It funds 11 advice partnerships to support Londoners experiencing, or at risk of, financial hardship. The programme works with organisations that are already embedded in communities. It is helping to widen access for many who might not reach traditional advice services, enabling them to access good quality support.

1 The programme has improved access to advice for a wide range of Londoners

 The programme has supported individuals from **3,884 households**, that is at least **6,646 individuals across London**

 The community-based model is **reaching Londoners who do not traditionally access advice services**

 **Over half** of those supported had **never accessed** advice services before


 **Compared to the London population**, the programme has been particularly successful at reaching **female** participants or those from a **Black/Black British** background




“
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.
”


Participant beneficiary


2 Embedding advice in community settings makes a real difference to Londoners' ability to access advice services


 Different demographic groups accessed the programme via different community settings, highlighting the **importance of embedding advice services in a variety of service settings**

 **76%** of advice seekers did not think the advice they had received could have been improved upon


3 AiCS brought positive financial benefits to a number of beneficiaries


 Generally all who gained financially, saw an average of **£2,321 per year**

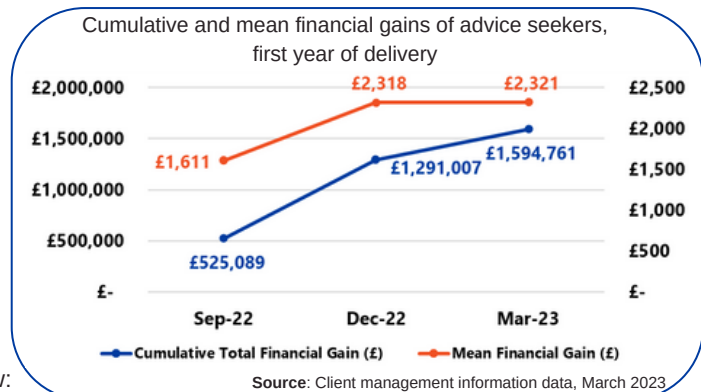
 **Grants** were the most common source of financial benefits

 **£7,691** was the average financial gain from debt relief/renegotiation

Advice seekers who were supported to access benefits saw:

 An average gain of **£4,522** and **£441,464** cumulative gain per year

 **Over a quarter (27%)** had support to access new benefits



4 The programme improved the health, wellbeing and confidence of advice seekers



67% of beneficiaries reported that the support and advice received helped their and their family's **physical and emotional wellbeing**



67% of beneficiaries reported that they felt more **confident managing their money** in the future



“I'm hopeful that on the back of this project we'll be able to continue our work with food banks. If we can secure funding to continue the work, that in itself should create a model for moving into other settings. [...] It's a learning process. This funding has enabled us to test and learn

Programme beneficiary



5 Longer term needs were not always met, requiring more support after engagement with the programme

The programme **successfully identified the needs of new advice seekers, often uncovering more challenging issues**. Even after seeing the advice worker, due to these **complex** needs:



81% indicated they **still needed support** in some form



60% had **ongoing unmet support needs** that arose from delays in case resolution, often **beyond the control of the advice partnership**



“...she really did listen to me, she didn't talk over me, or see me as another person who just wanted benefits. She talked to me about my mental health, she assured me it was a safe place to talk, she was very human [...] I needed someone to rely on, to tell me everything was going to be OK, I had really high anxiety and depression. She really helped me with that first and then helped me to tackle the applications. She wrote it all down so I wouldn't forget anything, she kept calling me to check how I was as well, she was very good.

Participant beneficiary

