THE STORY BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Supporting our communities
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Introduction

Gateshead Advice Centre (GAC) is the largest provider of social welfare law advice in Gateshead. With over 50 years experience in providing independent, impartial, confidential and free advice from a team including over 100 volunteers who are paramount to the success of the service. GAC exists to serve all individuals and groups that live or work in Gateshead and surrounding areas; through its work is committed to ensuring the promotion of equality and the redress of inequality of opportunity.

Reducing health inequalities requires a focus not only on the prevention of physical illness but also the wider determinants of health which include: deprivation, employment, education and environment and using intelligence to identify the neighbourhoods to target.

This report details the current work of Gateshead Advice Centre against known baseline statistics for disadvantage, health and wellbeing in the communities of Gateshead. The report provides examples of where Gateshead Advice Centres work contributes directly to the strategic priorities for 2012-2017 of the Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning Group.

Protecting and improving our health is a huge responsibility, one which we are all responsible for from Governments to local communities and ourselves as individuals.

Department of Health, January 2012

The Indices of Deprivation 2010 (ID 2010) is the collective name for several separate indices measuring deprivation within England. The most well known IMD 2010, measures multiple deprivation for each local authority area as a whole and also for smaller areas known as Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA). Gateshead is ranked 43rd out of 326 local authorities in England, where 1 is the most deprived (rank average score).

The health of the people in Gateshead is worse than the England average. Deprivation is higher than average and about 8,700 children live in poverty.

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1 Gateshead Council
2 Gateshead Health Profile 2012
Background

Gateshead has a variety of landscapes, urban and industrial areas including the town itself, Felling and Blaydon, with more semi-rural and rural locations in the west including Ryton and Rowlands Gill. Whilst the area has large areas which are described as rural it suffers from high levels of deprivation. The 2011 census shows a population of 200,214 people an increase of over 9,000 since the census in 2001.

The area was once dependent on heavy industry such as steel making, coalmining and shipbuilding. The people of Gateshead have suffered the immediate consequences of unemployment since the decline of these traditional industries. This legacy has resulted in some of the worst levels of health deprivation in England with especially high levels of chronic illnesses such as coronary heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cancer.

Life expectancy is 11.8 years lower for men and 7.8 years lower for women in the most deprived areas. The last 10 years has seen all cause mortality rates fall and a reduction in early death rates from cancer, heart disease and stroke but rates remain worse than the England average.

34.8% of Gateshead communities have very high levels of deprivation compared to the national average of 19.9%. Gateshead has higher numbers of children living in poverty or in low income families. Levels of adult “healthy eating”, smoking, physical activity and obesity are worse than the England average. Gateshead is very disadvantaged in relation to employment and disadvantaged in income, education, skills and training. The Government report “Skills for Life” found that 7 million adults in the UK have poor literacy and numeracy skills. In Gateshead 22% of adults need support with literacy and 63% with numeracy.

The map above shows the differences in deprivation based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation by LSOA. The darker coloured areas are some of the most deprived in England.

Local Data

Around 30,700 (16%) of Gateshead residents live within the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in England. There are 89,154 households in Gateshead with over 13,000 of these being single parents or an individual under the age of 18 with responsibility for at least one child. 28% of households are owned by social landlords including local authority stock. 28,000 households are classed as deprived in at least one deprivation dimension (Employment, Education, Health or Housing).

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3 Gateshead Social Fund Evaluation 2008  
4 http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk  
5 Ibid  
6 Gateshead Health Profile 2012  
7 Ibid  
8 DFES Readwrite Plus 2005  
9 Neighbourhood Statistics Census 2011
22% of Gateshead residents have a long term health problem restricting their day to day activities. Over 56,000 of the working age population (148,079) are not in employment and 31% of these haven’t worked in over 10 years. The map below shows the scale of health and disability deprivation.

The Local Authority Plan 2012-2017 focuses on: People, Place and Equality and the Clinical Commissioning Group targets: Reducing premature deaths, Enhancing quality of life for people with long term conditions, Helping people to recover from illness or injury, Ensuring a positive experience of care, treating people in safe environments and protecting them from avoidable harm.

**Plugging the Gaps**

Gateshead Advice Centre provides services which are free, confidential and impartial and which contribute to our aims of:

- Providing the advice people need for the problems they face
- Improving the policies and practices that affect people’s lives.
- Valuing diversity, promoting equality and challenging discrimination.

Gateshead Advice Centre deals with thousands of enquiries annually covering a range of issues including: debt, finance, fuel poverty, income maximisation, housing, homelessness, employment, aids and adaptations, consumer, legal, family law, relationships, immigration and welfare benefits. Our clients are often the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in society, 38% tell us they have a physical disability and around 1/6th tell us that they suffer from mental ill health.

The deprivation index measures how deprived an LSOA is in comparison to other areas in the same country. At LSOA level there are separate deprivation indices for income; employment; education, skills and training; health; barriers to housing and services; the living environment; and crime. These are combined to form the "Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)".

The following charts the LSOA’s in Gateshead, their ranking on the 2010 IMD and the % rate of access to Gateshead Advice Centre services based on the usual resident population of each LSOA aged 18+. The higher the % IMD figure the less disadvantaged the area, the lower the %IMD the more disadvantaged.

The scatter chart shows that the correlation between rate of access and deprivation is very strong with a Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient score of 0.65 ($R^2$) where 0 indicates no relationship and 1 indicates a very strong relationship. In the areas ranked highest on the IMD the Advice Centre has the highest number of contacts.

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10 Ibid
The scatter chart clearly shows that the Advice Centres services are reaching those who are most disadvantaged within our communities.

The chart also enables us to track communities who do not fit the expected pattern e.g. high rate of deprivation but low access rates. The points plotted on the chart above the line show levels of access above the expected rate for the level of deprivation.

People
To address the urban deprivation that exists in this area, and to provide appropriate services and support to some of the most disadvantaged people in our community, we have developed a range of specialist services geared at specific client groups such as hard to reach young people, offenders, people with a physical, mental, or sensory impairment; members of minority ethnic communities and people affected by leukaemia and other cancers.

Financial Inclusion
The economic climate has become more challenging in recent times. Benefit cuts, increased unemployment and higher house hold bills are putting already hard-pressed Gateshead residents under considerable financial pressure. In October 2013, a new benefit, to be known as Universal Credit, is lined up to replace all existing income-based benefits such as Working Tax Credits, Job Seekers Allowance and Housing Benefit. These changes will impact on more than half of Gateshead’s 84,000 households, with many seeing reductions in their benefit entitlement.  

Supporting the Financial Inclusion Agenda
Gateshead Advice Centres supported the Financial Inclusion agenda in Gateshead by:

- Providing financial capability training - enabling people to develop the skills to manage house hold budgets more effectively. Research tells us participants are on average £10 per week better off after attending the training;
- Welfare Reform training for frontline staff in other agencies. Evidence shows where frontline worker receives Financial Capability Training they will cascade that training to at least 15 more people in one year.
- Providing advice and guidance on debt, benefits, rent and homelessness issues.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS:

- £9m gained on behalf of 4,163 Gateshead residents including £5.8m in benefits and £2.3m debt written off;
- 75 financial capability training sessions delivered to over 700 people;
- Savings to the communities of £6m through management of 3023 debt issues;  
- Dealt with 2,692 housing enquiries with our Specialist Housing Team preventing 204 complex cases of homelessness - a saving of over £400k  

11 Financial Inclusion Strategy 2012-2015  
12 Financial Capability – 10 Key Facts & Figures Citizens Advice  
13 Financial Capability Reach & Impact 2013  
14 “The legal services research centre calculated the cost to the community of each debt as £1000 by considering a variety of costs to communities, including a £270 cost to local authorities of providing temporary accommodation to people who lose their homes and the stress caused by ‘difficult to solve’ debt problems, which cost National Health Service around £50.

15 “Shelter calculates the cost of an eviction and the subsequent re housing as being up to £20,000
Child Poverty

Nearly 4 million children are living in poverty in the UK (after housing costs) and we have the worst rates of child poverty in the industrialised world. 40% of children live in a household headed by a lone parent and 38% are born into families with 3 or more children. In 2011 End Child Poverty UK’s figures, published in February 2013 estimate that around 28% of children in Gateshead live in poverty.

Supporting the Early Intervention Agenda

Gateshead Advice Centre help families to have the best start in life by providing advice which enables them to attain a stable and financially secure home for themselves and their children. We are helping parents to keep their children healthy by providing debt prevention advice and support to get out of existing debt. Welfare Benefits advice increases income and allows families to make healthier choices when cooking, it gives them money for recreational activities such as swimming and other sports. We are Improving chances for the most vulnerable children by ensuring that the parents of those most in need are supported to prevent and manage issues around debt, housing, relationships and benefits and to access services which will make the most difference. We are contributing to children having the best start in life and leading active, happy and healthy lives by supporting expectant parents to reduce the risks associated with stress during pregnancy by increasing income through benefit entitlements, setting up or securing stable housing or by signposting to other support services such as breastfeeding or smoking cessation.

Our Achievements:

- 4,129 Families supported with a range of issues;
- 877 relationship enquiries
- £500,000 in benefits secured for families;
- 111 education enquiries

Carla is a recently separated lone parent, aged 29 living in social housing in the top 10% most disadvantaged areas nationally. With two young children and suffering from long term depression Carla was continuing to work in minimum wage employment. Prior to separating from her partner Carla had accumulated unsecured debts of over £25,000 and her current situation meant that she was struggling to pay these debts, keep up to date with rent payments and feed and clothe her children.

Gateshead Advice Centre provide a range of financial capability workshops around the Gateshead area and Carla heard about the sessions via her local Community Centre. Carla was able to attend a free workshop around “Money Saving” and access the full range of services provided by Gateshead Advice Centre.

The Difference we made:

- Changing energy suppliers (saving £196 per year)
- Getting a new phone contract (saving £15 per month)
- Changing to a cheaper TV package (saving £36 per month)
- Cutting down call rates using cost reducing online tools
- Access budgeting tools to enable her to clear arrears and debt

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16 End Child Poverty (2013) Key Facts
THE ROBERTSONS: a family of 3 living in one of the most disadvantaged ward in Gateshead in rented accommodation. With neither parent working the family were struggling to live from week to week. The family came in as they had no money left and were not due any further benefits for 13 days.

The client said that they have been struggling since April when they had to pay for under-occupancy, before this they were just about managing. However, the client received a letter regarding their TV License and got a bit confused so paid the full amount.

This has left them with no money and they have very little food remaining. Despite the cold and wet weather, the clients had walked in to see us (in flip flops) as they had no suitable clothing and no money for travel.

The clients wanted to know if we could provide their bus fare home and food. During the interview they told us they may not have enough electricity to last them until they get their benefits.

**The Difference we made:**

- **Food Parcel:** resolved immediate crisis
- **Transport costs from the Crisis Support Team**
- **Support to apply for discretionary housing payments**
- **Help to reduce fuel debt and future bills**

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**Health Inequalities**

Reducing health inequalities requires a focus on the wider detriments of health including deprivation, employment, education and environment as described by Dalgren and Whitehead. Gateshead suffers long term illness and early death more often than the national average. Worklessness, family poverty and deprivation all contribute to these inequalities.

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**Supporting the Health Inequalities Agenda**

*Working Better together:* In 2013 GAC secured £350k from "Big Lottery" to collaborate effectively with other agencies to improve service outcomes, advice services in Gateshead are resilient and well equipped to meet future needs, with enterprising business models and diverse sources of funding.

"Ensure children have the best start in life and lead active, happy and healthy lives: advice for parents to increase income set up/secure stable housing or signposting to other support services (e.g. breast feeding, smoking cessation, etc)."

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18 Dalgren and Whitehead, Social Model of Health (1991)
19 Health & Wellbeing Strategy Gateshead 2013/14 – 2015/16
Tackling major causes of ill health/early death, focusing on prevention and high quality treatment: specialist services including: Home Visiting referral service for GP’s for patients unable to travel, support for those suffering from mental health issues and expert advisors working with Leukaemia patients.

Promoting choice and empowering people to have more control over their health and social care and remain independent for as long as possible through for example: advice and support to secure aids/adaptations for the home, joining the Blue Badge scheme, choosing a care home and securing the necessary financial resources.

Improve mental health and wellbeing for all members of our community: Personal finances, housing issues and mental health often have a strong impact on each other. There is a well established link between debt and mental health. People in debt are twice as likely to consider suicide.  

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS:
1. Over £1m in support for those with health issues
2. Supported to 144 clients suffering with severe mental health issues.
3. 28% referrals from secondary care
4. 78% of clients self report an increase in wellbeing following the intervention of a GAC worker

Meg contacted our Young Persons Advice Service in a state of distress. Meg is 24 years old and had recently found out that she was pregnant. Meg lived alone and was currently only receiving £56.80 per week income and was naturally very worried about what would happen when the baby was born. Having already accumulated a number of arrears for rent and council tax Meg was dealt with by one of our Specialist Young Person.

Following a Telephone Gateway session Meg’s current income was assessed as being £56.80 per week with rent and council tax arrears of £75.45. Our Young Persons Advisor supported Meg to apply for Child Tax Credits, housing benefit and completed an application form to a charitable organisation on her behalf. Additionally with the support of our Young Persons Advisor Meg was successful in claiming backdated Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit payments from the date of her child’s birth – claimants are not always successful in obtaining payment in arrears, especially if there is a delay in submitting the claim or the form is completed incorrectly.

The Difference we made:
- Generated £10,169 of income for a young, single parent
- Reduced levels of anxiety therefore improving mental health and wellbeing
- Supported reintegration into full time education in a controlled and supported manner
- Supported local Health Care services by adding value to their existing support

20 Royal College of Psychiatrists – Debt & Mental Health, What do we Know? What should we do?
21 Research by Howard Meltzer
JEAN is a single woman in her mid-fifties living in one of the most disadvantaged wards in Gateshead. She has significant physical mobility problems and serious mental health issues. Referred by her GP following an increase in her anxiety levels due to financial worries she was extremely vulnerable and had been having suicidal thoughts. With Employment Support Allowance as her single source of income, she was very concerned about an unsecured debt and was surviving by eating out of date food and handouts from friends. Following a benefits review Jean had been declared capable of work and was asked to attend a work programme. Jeans low income meant that she could not afford the bus fares so she walked to the premises - severely affecting her existing mobility problems.

The Difference we made:

- **Home Visit** – due to her circumstances and issues with mobility;
- **Food Parcel** – **immediate crisis support**;
- **Benefit Review** – Employment Support Group rather than attendance on the work programme;
- **Increased income**: Personal Independence Payments: £79.15 per week for the daily living component (£4,115.80 annually), £21.00 per week for the mobility component (£1092.00 annually);
- **Support to manage unsecured debt** of £25,000 written off due to mental and physical ill health.
- **Self reported improvement in mental health and reduction in anxiety**
- **Self reported better able to cope** on a day to day basis

Older People

For many getting older is not a positive experience, it can be a time of poor health, poverty, social isolation and exclusion. There are now more people of pensionable age than there are children. While the fact that most of us are living longer is a cause for celebration, it brings many opportunities, it also brings many challenges. Gateshead’s population is aging; predictions show steep increases in the number of elderly people over the next 10 years. Nearly 69% of older people have a limiting long term illness, much higher than the England average of 51%. Whilst around 18% of Gateshead households are occupied by single, older people. So while life expectancy is increasing there are many parts of Gateshead where there can be as much as 12 years difference in life expectancy between the most affluent and the most deprived areas.

Supporting the older peoples agenda

Gateshead Older People Strategy 2011-2014 identifies four key areas of work:

- Making a positive contribution
- Being Informed
- Living Well
- Keeping Healthy and Active

**OUR ACHIEVEMENTS:**

- Gateshead Advice Centre has **10** volunteers who are over sixty providing advice and support to the residents of Gateshead;
- We informed **5,000 over 60’s** about benefits and other issues such as housing and adaptations;
- We supported **70** older people to get out of fuel poverty contributing to reducing Winter Deaths

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22 Our today, Our Tomorrow, Gateshead’s Strategy for Older People 2011-2014
2013 and Beyond

In March 2013 funding was secured to ensure that advice services in Gateshead collaborate effectively, with each other, and other agencies, to improve service outcomes for clients. This funding will ensure that Gateshead advice services are resilient and well equipped to meet future needs, with modern and enterprising business models and diverse sources of funding. Gateshead Advice Centre looks forward to the future with a range of initiatives to support the communities of Gateshead when they’re most in need.

Attract More Volunteers

GAC’s vision for volunteering is to provide inspirational volunteering in Gateshead enabling people to make a difference and to feel the difference. We will do this by:

- Providing 1st Class opportunities
- Improving volunteer experience with enhanced support and training
- Access to accredited training to support volunteers to move closer to the labour market
- Working with the wider community to diversify our volunteer base

Support our Young People

GAC is committed to supporting young people and enabling them to develop the skills and knowledge to lead long, healthy and happy lives. We will continue to improve our services to young people by:

- Develop our existing young persons advice service
- Providing good quality work experience
- Employing and supporting apprenticeships
- Delivering financial capability sessions to schools and colleges

Supporting Residents with Universal Credit

Welfare Reform and Universal Credit will continue to effect residents in Gateshead throughout 2013 and beyond, GAC is committed to providing:

- ICT support and guidance for online claims
- Financial Capability Training
- Benefit Checks
- Budgeting Advice and Support
- Support to complete forms

Employability

Promote the importance of Social Welfare Advice as a tool to remove barriers to employment by:

- Providing work and apprenticeship placements
- 1st class volunteering opportunities 1/3 of our volunteers move to employment/further education
- Providing an alternative training venue through our “Advice Academy”

Accessibility

GAC will continue to develop it’s presence in Gateshead and will work to improve accessibility by:

- Protecting our opening ours
- Extending our outreach programme
- Delivering Community Based Training
- Supporting partners to deliver from the Advice Centre providing a “one stop” shop
- Encouraging community groups to make use of the Advice Centre at evenings and weekends
- Improving and extending our telephone service to answer more calls and support more people.
OUR ACHIEVEMENTS 2012-13

15,296 enquiries

52,197 issues resolved

62,000 separate contacts

100 active volunteers