

Communities and Culture Committee

CC(3)-09-10 : Paper 3

Inquiry into Financial Inclusion and the Impact of Financial Education - Response from Mid, South & West Wales Financial Capability forum

I manage Powys (CAB) Citizens Advice Bureau's Financial Capability Unit and have been delivering Financial Capability our local communities for eight years I have also lead the Mid, West & South Wales Financial Capability forum since 2007.

I compiled the Forum led response to the Financial Inclusion Strategy for Wales and have input evidence into Citizens Advice Cymru's submission to the Committees inquiry into 'Financial inclusion and the impact of financial education'

Opportunities for people in Wales to access appropriate financial capability training is rather ad hoc, this being the case for training provision to frontline workers, directly to service users or to individuals. The Financial Capability forums map provision of financial capability activities in their regions, but I believe more could be done to identify the need and access to provision in Wales to ensure that we reach those individuals who would most benefit from this Financial Capability training

There also needs to be some consistency and quality mark to training provided. When I began delivering Financial Capability work some eight years ago materials used were very much 'home made' now, I am happy to say there are many materials available but I do feel that there should be guidelines and checks on standards of training provided.

I think the financial education provided should be inclusive of subject areas such as accessing and using appropriate financial products and services - often subjects offered are restricted to budgeting and borrowing, I find that many people have concerns around financial products and services and don't know where to go for help. They are unlikely to have a financial adviser and distrust financial institutions. I am aware that we are not able to give financial advice but we able to give clear information using materials provided by FSA.

The Powys CAB's financial capability unit takes referrals from debt advice caseworkers - Casework evidences that debt advice and financial exclusion are inextricably linked and that there is a real and urgent need to ensure that there is there is free, impartial access to learning 'money-management' not only to avoid the recurring cycle of debt and to maximise income, but also to make our communities financially included and able and confident enough to use mainstream financial products and services.

Citizens Advice has been involved in delivering financial capability across Wales through many different projects, such as 'Energy Best Deal' (OFGEM) - to groups of individuals to help them choose the best energy supplier, 'Save Xmas' (OFT) to groups such as young Mums - looking at ways to save in response to the collapse of the Farepak hamper company, 'Tax for Older People' (HMRC) - to frontline workers from organisations such as Age Concern. Whilst evaluation of these projects show that the learners reached through these and other projects benefited from the financial capability training provided and that we managed to include the most hard to reach adults through our work with partner agencies, much of what we can deliver remains dependant and funding from outside agencies such as those mentioned above.