



COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS PREVENTION ADVICE (COLCPA) PROJECT SUMMARY OF LEARNING & EVALUATION YEAR ONE

PHIL JEW CONSULTANCY LTD, November 2023

ABOUT THE CoLCPA PROJECT

- ▶ A strategic partnership funded by Greater London Authority (GLA) to support London Legal Support Trust (LLST) and Citizens Advice London (CAL) to increase the capacity of advice agencies to respond to the cost-of-living crisis and support more Londoners.
- ▶ Year one commenced September 2022 – total funding £2.3m. Funding of £2.5m awarded by GLA for second year.
- ▶ Via LLST and CAL, the Project funds 41 advice and community agencies across London to provide advice services and a programme of training known as ‘Advice First Aid’.
- ▶ The Project supports the GLA’s mission to build a “Robust Safety Net” so that by 2025, every Londoner is able to access the support they need to prevent or alleviate financial hardship.

PROJECT AIMS

- ▶ **Vision:** Increased advisor capacity across the wider London advice sector to deliver an advice model that responds to the needs of Londoners struggling with the cost of living and extends the sector's reach to support to more Londoners.
- ▶ **Desired impacts:**
 - ▶ Preventative advice and information provision, helping Londoners affected by the CoL crisis
 - ▶ Partnership between advice agencies is strengthened
 - ▶ Engagement and partnerships with faith and community groups, building capacity and extending reach and referral pathways
- ▶ **Addresses strategic issues:**
 - ▶ Rising, unmet demand, need to increase advice capacity
 - ▶ Under-served communities
 - ▶ Specialist advice capacity
 - ▶ Need for better referral pathways and links between agencies
 - ▶ Advice workforce issues

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

- ▶ **Advice Provision:** Crisis Prevention Advisers and Specialist Welfare Advisers employed at local Citizens Advice. Apprentices, Crisis Navigators, Casework Assistants, Paralegals, Supervisors, Advisers, Caseworkers and Solicitors employed by Law Centres and community advice agencies.
- ▶ **Advice First Aid (AFA):** training programme coordinated by Citizens Advice Wandsworth, delivered locally, to build capability of and links with community and faith agencies.
- ▶ **Extended reach:** Local Citizens Advice, Law Centres and other advice agencies funded under Project, encouraged to work closely with community and faith agencies and get involved with local CoL activity and events to extend their reach.

LEARNING & EVALUATION

- ▶ Conducted by Phil Jew, independent consultant.
- ▶ Analysis of data, feedback and case studies.
- ▶ Interviews and meetings with participating delivery agencies, faith and community groups, AFA attendees, clients and beneficiaries.
- ▶ Survey of participating agencies, conducted between July and early September 2023. 50 respondents representing 33 of the 41 delivery partners.

ADVICE AND INFORMATION PROVISION

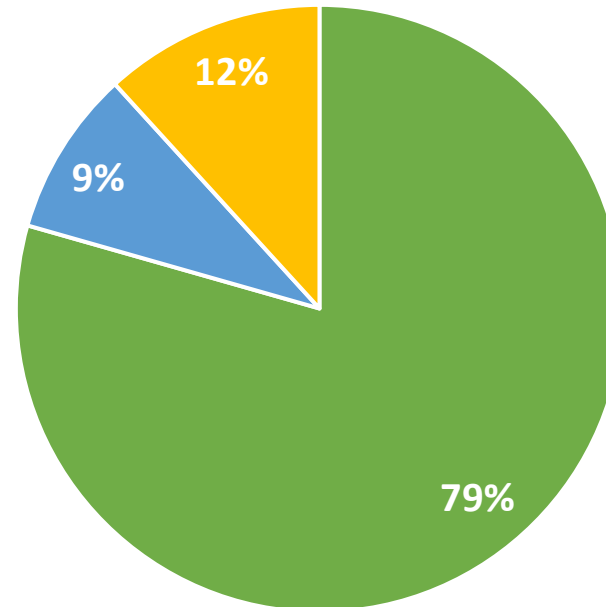
- ▶ In the first year of the Project (to end August 2023), **31,677 Londoners were helped: 19,479** with generalist or specialist advice (24% specialist), 4715 supported at CoL events and 7483 attending CoL events.
- ▶ The **financial improvement** for Londoners as a result of advice provided under the project was **£9.5million**.
- ▶ Against the £2.3 million invested in the Project by GLA, there was a 1:4 gain for Londoners: **For every £1 invested by GLA there was a £4.13 financial improvement for Londoners**.
- ▶ On average, each client who benefited from generalist or specialist advice saw their finances improve by **£488**.
- ▶ Agencies reported reducing levels of CoL income support as the Project progressed and many clients with **negative budgets**.
- ▶ The project has boosted advice agency capacity, but the advice sector is still only dealing with a **fraction of need and demand**.

EXTENDED REACH

- ▶ Survey responses and information from delivery partners show the majority feel reach is extended, due to outreach and engagement with faith and community agencies.
- ▶ New clients being reached include carers, older people, vulnerable people, disabled people, single parents, street homeless people, members of Muslim and Eastern European communities.

“As well as reaching clients through our partners, the project has significantly increased our capacity to help more clients in more depth.”

Is your organisation / service reaching clients that it may not otherwise have reached under the project?

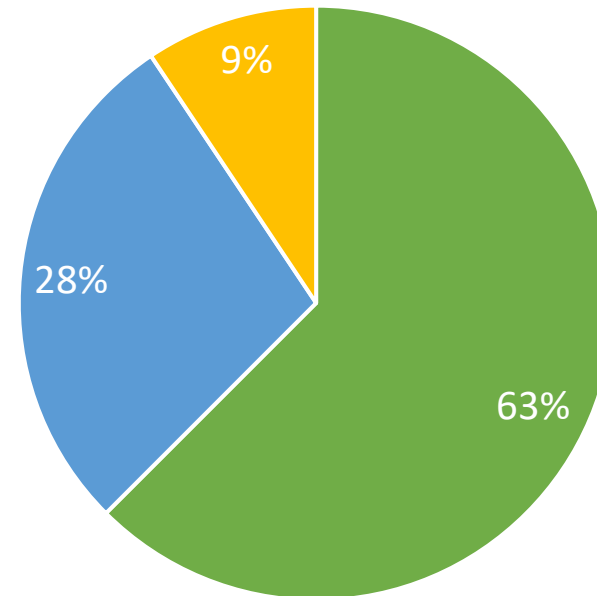


■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

ENGAGEMENT: FAITH/COMMUNITY GROUPS

- ▶ Majority of delivery partners have enhanced engagement with faith and community agencies. It's continually evolving.
- ▶ At least 210 groups engaged with: 89 (42%) of these were new engagements.
- ▶ Helps:
 - ▶ Regular meetings
 - ▶ Senior management/leadership involvement at both ends
 - ▶ Workshops and training (Advice First Aid)
 - ▶ Outreach sessions
 - ▶ Building relationships, trust and confidence
- ▶ Hinders: lack of capacity, KPIs, territorialism, mistrust, staff turnover

Has the project enabled your organisation / service to engage / work with faith or community groups that it wouldn't have otherwise engaged / worked with?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

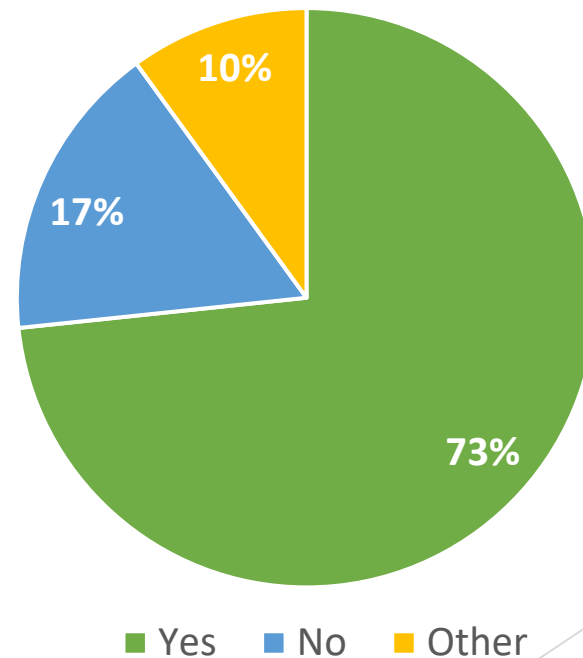
“...having a project like this is great and motivates others to engage with us or at least raises our profile and the likelihood of future engagement.”

REFERRAL PATHWAYS

- ▶ The majority of delivery partners have created new referral pathways and facilities – between advice agencies and with community and faith agencies.

“We have expanded our referral pathways to new trusted partners especially working with hard-to-reach communities for inbound referrals. We are aligning our local information system to reflect updated information on services around the borough and include new partners. We also have strengthened our relationship with our local law centres, Cambridge House and Southwark Law Centre to make referrals to their team.”

Has your organisation / service created new referral pathways, facilities or systems as a result of the project?

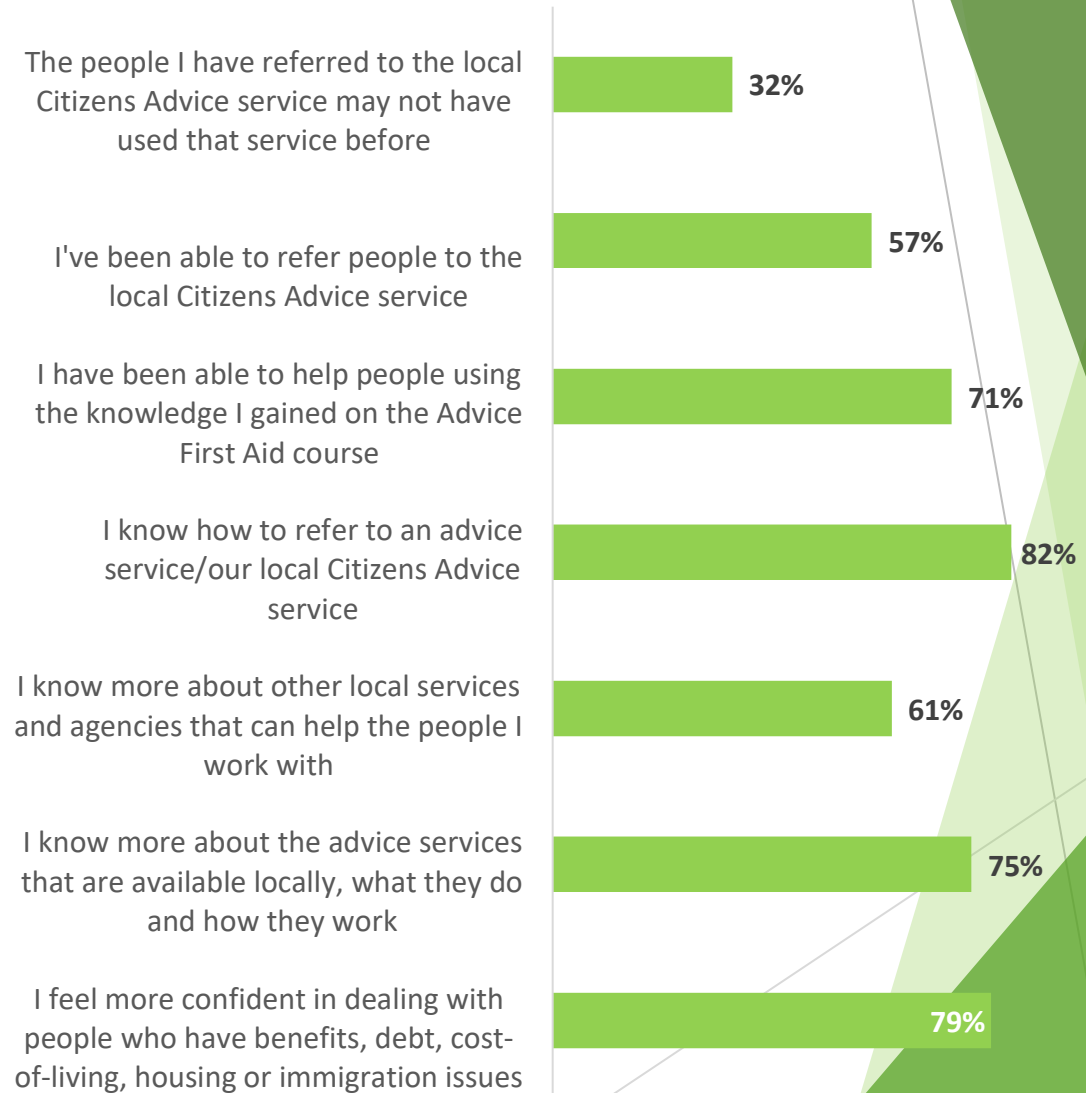


ADVICE FIRST AID

- ▶ 39 AFA training sessions for 508 attendees 21 London boroughs.
- ▶ Improves capability for majority of participants and their agencies.
- ▶ Enhances referrals, relationships, understanding.

“Attending the AFA training was a game-changer for our charity. We set up the outreach team, but external training was too expensive for our charity. So, AFA training was free and the exact right information for an advice first aider. Plus, I got the slides so I could make sure my team was trained and up to date with their knowledge.”

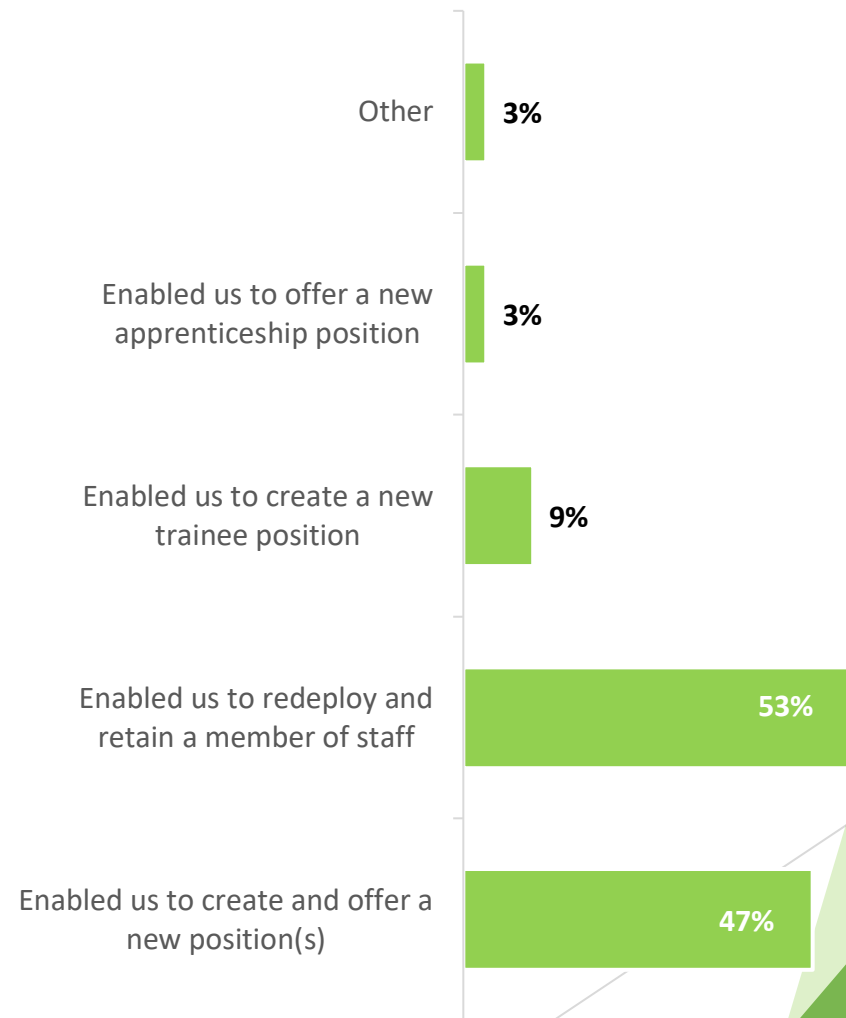
Impact on attendees



STAFFING

- ▶ Project has enabled the creation of new positions, redeployment and retention.
- ▶ Trainee positions and apprenticeships also created.
- ▶ Dealing with clients in crisis takes its toll on workforce wellbeing

What impact has the project had on your organisation's / service's staffing?



OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ The Project has provided much needed support for Londoners through the cost-of-living crisis.
- ▶ It is contributing to the Robust Safety Net mission and providing good return on investment for GLA.
- ▶ The funding partnership has enabled more effective mobilisation and collaboration than individual/competitive grant rounds, but challenge for agencies is the single year funding cycle.
- ▶ Its concepts of work with community and faith agencies, advice first aid training and cross borough work between advice agencies have been proven to be effective.
- ▶ New engagement, relationships, outreach, capacity building and referral routes have improved services and have extended reach to Londoners who may otherwise have not accessed advice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Create more opportunities to bring all delivery partners together
- ▶ Make KPIs for the Project realistic and flexible
- ▶ Gather further evidence of the impact of Advice First Aid
- ▶ Extend Advice First Aid to other boroughs and agencies
- ▶ Increase specialist advice provision, particularly for housing matters
- ▶ Quantify levels of unmet need for welfare advice
- ▶ Look after the wellbeing of the Project's workforce.
- ▶ Develop joint policy and systemic change work – create a pan-London social welfare policy forum
- ▶ Secure funding to sustain the project beyond year two

NEXT STEPS: YEAR TWO LEARNING

Shift in focus from proof of concept to:

- ▶ Client outcomes
- ▶ Estimating levels of unmet need
- ▶ Policy issues arising from Project work and services
- ▶ London-wide advice strategy
- ▶ Evidence to support the case for new/increased/extended funding