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## The 12 Principles of the Scottish CAB Service: A short explanation

This document provides some background to each of the 12 principles of the Scottish CAB service.

1. **A free service** – The CAB provides information, advice and assistance (including representation) free of charge.

It does not withhold its services from any clients seeking help because they are believed to be able to pay for help from an alternative source.

The service is advertised to the public as being free of charge to ensure that members of the public are not discouraged from taking advantage of the service for fear of incurring expense.

2. **Confidentiality** – The CAB provides confidentiality to clients. Nothing learned from clients, including the fact of their visits, will be passed on to anyone outside the CAB service without express permission of the client.

Although it is a function of the CAB service to exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies concerning matters which have been brought to light in the course of assisting clients, no details will be made public which might enable clients to be identified without their express consent.

3. **Impartiality** – The service provided by bureaux is impartial, it is open to all, and is regardless of any subjective opinion as to whether or not the client is deserving.

CAB advisers are trained to provide information solely on the basis of its potential usefulness to the client, i.e. information will not be selected to conform to any particular point of view. Representations made on behalf of clients will faithfully attempt to express the client's personal intentions and points of view.

4. **Independence** – The service provided by bureaux is completely independent. The policies and practices of the service are decided solely by the member bureaux.

No other individual agency or individual, even if they are giving financial support or other aid to bureaux, will influence the decision making process of the CAB.



5. **Accessibility** – The CAB aims to make its services accessible to all by using premises which are centrally located, easy to enter, welcoming in appearance and open at times suited to local demand.

Each CAB will actively recruit a range of volunteers from the local community who are capable of gaining the confidence of CAB clients.

Bureaux will publicise the services they offer especially in areas and among groups where the service is apparently underused.

The CAB will seek to extend services to meet the needs of those for whom the service is not presently accessible.

6. **Effectiveness** – The CAB judges the effectiveness of its activities by the extent to which it meets its clients' needs. This is measured by the extent to which clients are helped to clarify problems and concerns, the accuracy and completeness of any information provided, the usefulness of any advice given and the appropriateness of any assistance provided to enable clients to carry out the course of action chosen.

An effective service depends on efficient management and administrative practices and particularly on the way in which bureaux make use of their most valuable resource, their volunteers.

7. **Community accountability** – The Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux is an association of autonomous member bureaux, each democratically accountable to the community that it serves. A bureau's autonomy is only qualified by the conditions it must accept to retain membership of the Association.

A bureau's committee of management should include people elected by the local public at its Annual General Meeting (AGM), or nominated by relevant local bodies giving financial support, organisations working in related fields and bodies representing potential clients.

8. **Client's right to decide** – The service recognises that those who come to the CAB have a right to set their own objectives and to decide whether or not to accept the advice and assistance offered to them.

The service seeks to avoid making assumptions about its client's objectives and identifies all the options available to the client and to present these options fairly so that the client can make a decision without any pressure.



9. **A voluntary service** – The service operates on the principle that first and foremost it is a voluntary service of advice and assistance provided by individuals serving their communities in a formal, unpaid capacity.

It is also an essential complement to advice from statutory and other agencies.

CAS advocates the employment of paid staff in member bureaux in order to maximise the contribution and effectiveness of the volunteers.

10. **Empowerment** – The CAB seeks to assist clients to help themselves. The CAB helps clients to understand their situation, to decide which course of action to adopt and to take steps themselves to tackle their problems.

It is the aim of the CAB that each client should have the experience and satisfaction of self help.

11. **Information retrieval** – The CAB Service seeks to use the evidence collected through experience in dealing with enquiries to exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services both locally and nationally.

In gathering such evidence, the CAB will respect the client's right to confidentiality.

12. **A generalist service** – The CAB provides information, advice and assistance on any topic; no one calling at a CAB will be turned away because the CAB does not deal with that type of problem.

Because bureaux provide a generalist service, a CAB can deal successfully with problems or groups of related problems that do not completely fit within the field of a single, specialist source of help.

Where bureaux do not supplement this generalist service with appropriate specialisms, clients will be put in touch with specialists as required and where possible.