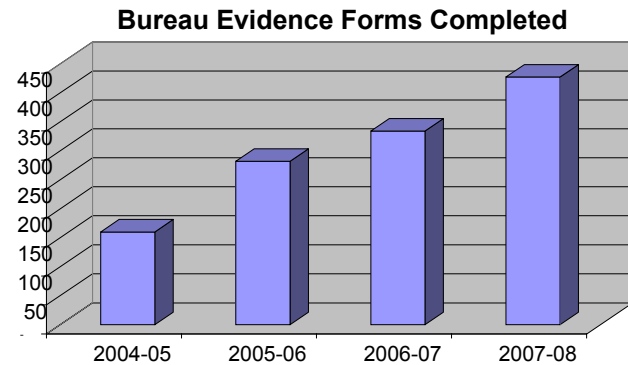


Hillingdon Citizens Advice' contributions to national social policy work have continued to rise for the third year running with a total of 427 Bureau Evidence Forms sent to Citizens Advice in 2007-8 compared to 334 in 2006-7.



**Our current National Campaigns include:**

- [End child poverty](#) – bureaux' evidence is helping hold the government to account on its promise to halve child poverty in Britain by 2010.
- [Education Costs](#) – encouraging best practice initiatives on school uniforms, specialist equipment and school trips.
- [Tenancy deposits](#) – campaigning to promote the tenancy deposit protection scheme to landlords.
- [Letting agents](#) – bureaux are forwarding evidence on how good a service they provide to Citizens Advice
- [A right to justice](#) - drawing attention to the shortage of civil and family legal advice.

**Your current local concerns are.....**

Do you have any issues or concerns you would like us to monitor or campaign on?

Are there any areas in which we could work together in order to improve local policies and services? If so;

Contact us at [socialpolicy@hillingdoncab.org.uk](mailto:socialpolicy@hillingdoncab.org.uk)

# Hillingdon Citizens Advice Social Policy Newsletter

October 2008



## *Campaigning for Change*



## *Nationally our aims are:*

**To provide the advice people need for the problems they face**

**AND**

**Improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.**

**Citizens Advice collects evidence of CAB clients' problems and uses this to campaign for changes in national and local policies and services.**

***Locally we aim to give a voice to the experiences of people in Hillingdon and help to solve the problems we see recurring...***

Alison White, our volunteer Social Policy Co-ordinator explains, "Dealing with over 21,000 enquiries a year we are in a prime position to keep an eye out for social policy issues.

I chose to be involved in this area of CAB work because I want to help change unfair policies and practises for everyone in society, not only those who come to the bureaux for advice".

"I enjoy helping the advisers to gather high quality evidence that will be of use to policy makers and help them to improve the quality of important services and the lives of many of our citizens".



**Since March 2008 our evidence from Hillingdon has been cited 5 times in government submissions and debates:**

- **Social Security Advisory Committee: Proposals to introduce increased lone parent obligations from Nov 2008.** *A lone parent had been living on reduced income for three years but Jobcentre Plus could give no explanation as their 'notepad' only went back 14 months. She was told to make an appointment via the Belfast office and spent £7 in phone calls, only to be told her local office could also make appointments.*
- **Cost of Living Opposition Day Debate – Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> June.** *A lone parent with two teenage children had her pay decrease significantly as a result of the abolition of the 10p tax rate.*
- **Home Affairs Select Committee: Inquiry into Domestic Violence.** *A victim of domestic abuse with a disabled adult son was told there was no point putting in a homeless application as she jointly owned a property with her husband.*
- **Equality and Human Rights Commission: Human Rights Inquiry.** *A 21 year old unaccompanied asylum seeker from Somalia discovered he had rent arrears of £711 because the council's housing benefit dept had not been informed of a rent increase the previous year. He was then issued with a possession order.*
- **Citizens Advice response to Phonepayplus' consultation on 'Mobile phone - paid services and their Marketing' – Sept. 2008.** *A lone parent of Somali/Finnish origin had been receiving unwanted text messages for 6 months. She was then charged for 'Services collected for others'. On contacting her network operator she was told these were premium rate SMS to which she had subscribed. Despite many attempts to get the subscription cancelled, the client has yet to receive a refund.*

**In addition our evidence has been used in the Citizens Advice monthly Social Policy Bulletins:**

- For example, our evidence was used in August 2008 regarding a Somali client who had missed out on over £400 of Housing Benefit and fallen into rent arrears. Neither the Jobcentre nor the housing benefit dept had advised him that he could claim extended benefits.