**Joint Report for Financial year 2017-2018 (Age UK, Equal Lives and NCLS) – Created by George Oakman, NCAN Volunteer**

**Age UK Norwich Report: Notes**

In the 2017-18 financial year there were 19 responses to the WEMWBS questions. This is a small set to analyse, and is therefore limited. There were more people who answered the First Stage than the Second Stage WEMWBS questions.

All 19 individuals received advice on welfare benefits.

Overall there was a 9.59% increase in average well-being before and after advice according to the WEMWBS score, across all seven of the criteria.

In each of the seven criteria, wellbeing improved, with “I’ve been dealing with problems well” seeing the most improvement. This is welcome considering the nature of advice given.

However, there was little to no change for the statement “I’ve been feeling useful”. In fact, fewer people answered they felt useful ‘all of the time.’ That being said, there is still an overall improvement for this statement, because a small proportion now feel of ‘little use’.

Comments from individuals regarding Age UK Norwich advice:

* “Would use the service again one hundred million per cent.”
* “Recommend to anybody.”
* “Very grateful for the help received.”

Overall, the results make for great reading. Individuals appear delighted with the advice they have received, and wellbeing scores on the WEMWBS has increased by nearly 10%. People are feeling better able to deal with their problems, which given the nature of the advice is fantastic. There was however very little change when asked if they feel more useful and about making up their mind about things. It is important to point out that the latter two may not have been priorities for the individuals seeking the advice.

**Equal Lives Report: Notes**

In the 2017-18 financial year there were 22 full responses to the WEMWBS questions. Many more answered the first stage than the second.

21 of these 22 respondents received advice on welfare benefits, with the other individual on equality issues.

There was a 23.5% improvement in wellbeing, although in general scores were still at a low level.

All seven WEMWBS criteria improved after the client received advice, with “I’ve been able to make my mind up about things” improving the most.

“I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future” was the second highest riser. In Stage 1, sadly nobody answered this question positively. Thankfully, after the advice, four people answered positively. Those feeling pessimistic about their future fell by 42%. These figures are welcome and the fact that both more people felt optimistic overall, and those who felt pessimistic fell by nearly half, indicates the long term benefits of receiving advice for these individuals.

Of all the WEMWBS increases, “I’ve been feeling close to people” had the smallest improvement, but given the type of advice that was given, I feel this would not have been the core focus, particularly as it was the highest scoring welfare determinant in the first stage. This was not an area that individuals were struggling with, in general.

The statement “I’ve been feeling relaxed” was not answered positively in either stage 1 or stage 2. No respondents stated they felt relaxed all the time, or often. This was the lowest scoring category in stage 2 and the second lowest in stage 1.

Since receiving advice more people felt positive about their ability to deal with problems, with there now being twelve positive responses, to the previous nine. However, we previously had five people who felt this way all of the time, and now, nobody. So, in this section, we find both good and bad news.

A few quotes used to describe the experience at Equal Lives:

* “The service was a lifeline when I needed it most. Without it, I and so many other disabled people would be lost, having no-one to fight our corner with us.”
* “Recommended the service to friends. Wouldn’t have been awarded [Personal Independence Payment] without it”
* “The service is definitely needed, to help people, as times are getting tougher. And rules are changing regularly.”

People speak very positively about the work Equal Lives have done. Many people spoke positively about the expertise Equal Lives have and the legal help they have given in some cases.

Overall, it was refreshing to see that Equal Lives have a net positive effect on every variable. Some were reported better than others, but with little improvement needed. It is clear that from the advice, individuals are better decision makers and more optimistic.

**NCLS: Notes**

In the 2017-18 financial year there were 322 people who filled in all or part of the stage 1 outcomes questionnaire, with a total of 62 people answering all seven WEMWBS-standard questions in both stage 1 and stage 2. We found a 13.6% overall increase in well-being with every single wellbeing statement finding positive results. This was on a variety of advice topics.

The two biggest improvements following advice were for areas that individuals felt worst about prior to advice: “I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future” and “I’ve been feeling relaxed”. The results for these two feelings were excellent across the board. Negative responses fell 28.6% for optimism and 31% for relaxation, meaning for both just under a third no longer feel negative about those factors. Similarly, we found a 112.5% rise in positive answers about optimism and a 100% rise in answers about relaxation. In both cases, the majority of answers were negative in stage 1, and positive in stage 2. This shows the standard of work done by NCLS in this period was outstanding with respect to these variables.

The smallest change was regarding the statement “I’ve been feeling close to people”. However, this still showed improvement of 0.21 WEBWMS points.

The highest scoring statement is “I’ve been thinking clearly”, with 61.3% answering positively to this, and only 8% responding negatively.

Below are some of the comments regarding the service that individuals received from NCLS.

* “Very good solicitors who gave me very helpful advice at a time when I needed it. - I would highly recommend you, - Thank you.”
* “Really appreciated help and would recommend it to people in similar situations.”
* “Thank you! for your help & advice when you do not know who to turn to!!!!”

Overall, NCLS seem to provide an outstanding level of advice. Every single variable had fewer negative responses after the advice and more positive ones. Individuals are more relaxed, optimistic and feeling more useful. Particular reference can be made to the level of increase in the relaxation and optimism felt by the clients, particularly as they have strong links to mental health.