

Copy for Cllr Alan Beal in Whaplode and Moulton his local magazine.

Citizens Advice both locally, and over the entire country, helps people with mental health problems on a daily basis. It is well known that people's mental health problems can be made worse by practical issues such as losing a job or facing eviction, and help with these issues alongside treatment stops mental health problems from getting worse and improves recovery rates.

8 in 10 mental health staff reported that helping with practical issues means they have less time to focus on treatment. A small section of the NHS is acting on this evidence, and there is huge potential to do more. At a time of significant pressure on local government budgets, and rising demand for local services, there is a renewed call for integrated services in health settings. Integrated advice can:

- **Reduce pressure on local services by stopping people's practical problems from escalating, and building resilience**
- **Support people into work, by removing practical barriers to employment, and helping people resolve workplace problems.**

On average, Citizens Advice clients with mental health problems need advice on more than 5 issues each – this is significantly more than for clients in general.

One issue is that people with mental health problems are more likely to struggle with their essential services – whether it is an issue with their energy supply, a mobile phone contract, or paying rent. Also, access to safe secure housing is crucial for people to maintain good health. This can be hard to find for people with mental health problems, and there has been an increase in people needing advice about rent arrears – the increase is particularly large for clients with mental health problems.

Research up in Gateshead by the Northumbria University, and CA Gateshead, showed that people who used the service felt less stressed and anxious after doing so. It also showed the important role the service has in helping clients navigate through complex systems and processes in gaining access to services that can help them.