

Summary

Increasing uptake of benefits and welfare advice among entitled individuals and households has been identified as a key strategy by the NHS in addressing low income and poverty. Demand on GPs from patients for support related to benefits claims and social problems associated with low income and debt has been estimated to account for a considerable proportion of consultations. This is predicted to rise with current and future changes to welfare provision and conditionality. Provision of welfare support services from within healthcare settings has been promoted as a means to maximise income among certain low income groups; reduce anxiety and stress associated with financial related social worries; and, to reduce GP time spent managing non-clinical issues.

From our initial evaluation, we know that co-locating welfare advice in GP surgeries has resulted in additional income for patients. Now we are investigating if having welfare advice in GP surgeries improves mental health and reduces how often patients attend the GP. We are assessing whether financial strains are reduced, financial capabilities of users improved and if the people receiving help cope better with their financially difficult circumstances. We are using practices not hosting welfare advice services as a comparison.



“The research input is brilliant. It’s helping to develop robust evidence on the effectiveness of advice hubs in health settings to secure future funding and maybe scale up this initiative across the borough.”

Tamara Djuretic, Assistant Director of Public Health,
Haringey Council

Principal Investigators: Professor Rosalind Raine, UCL and Dr Tamara Djuretic, Haringey Council

Embedded Researcher: Dr Charlotte Woodhead, Haringey Council

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Partner organisations: Haringey Council Directorate of Public Health, Haringey CCG, UCL, Citizens Advice Bureau.