



**Health Justice
Partnership**



The Impacts of Health Justice Partnerships

How service design
contributes to impact

Health justice partnerships are collaborations between health services and organisations specialising in welfare rights. They integrate welfare rights advice with patient care, supporting people with issues such as welfare benefits, debt, housing and employment. Health justice partnerships tackle social and economic circumstances that are strongly harmful to health and are root causes of health inequality.

Our research analysed how different ways of delivering partnerships may influence the impacts they can achieve. The findings are summarised below.

The benefits of service links

Some of the benefits of the partnerships came about because the advice service was present in the healthcare setting, patients were being referred and welfare rights issues were being sorted out. These included:

✓ **Having a valuable resource to meet patients' welfare needs:**

Working with a dedicated welfare rights service enabled care teams to address welfare rights issues that were impacting on patients' wellbeing, but were complex to manage and outside their realm of professional expertise.

✓ **Allowing care teams to focus on caring:**

By making referrals to advice teams, care teams were freed from needing to manage time-consuming welfare rights issues and could focus on their caring roles. The convenience and support from in-house welfare rights advisors was greatly appreciated.

✓ **Providing easier access to legal assistance for individuals:**

Being physically present in the healthcare setting, patients could see the welfare rights service and access it unprompted. Others were signposted or referred directly by care teams.

✓ **Achieving positive welfare outcomes for individuals:**

The welfare rights advice services were highly successful in achieving improvements in financial circumstances, living conditions and other socio-economic outcomes for patients.

✓ **Supporting and improving mental health:**

Welfare rights problems caused significant mental distress, and receiving assistance provided immediate relief and reassurance for people. The improvements in financial position and living circumstances also improved mental wellbeing and quality of life. Some patients could engage better with their care once the welfare issues had been addressed.

✓ **Providing a more positive patient experience:**

Patients were grateful to have welfare advice available to them at a time of need and without having to seek help from unknown external services. They appreciated the trusted support, convenient access and expert assistance.

The added value of closer collaboration

There were also a range of benefits which occurred due to the healthcare professionals and welfare rights teams working together more closely in their day-to-day roles. These included

✓ **Ensuring more consistent and timely access to advice:**

When teams proactively identified and referred patients with welfare needs, this meant welfare rights issues were identified more consistently and referred at an early stage.

✓ **Facilitating access to medical evidence for welfare casework:**

Working with healthcare teams enabled welfare rights advisors to source essential medical evidence. This was only possible due to trusting personal relationships and internal communication between teams.

✓ **Producing better success rates for welfare claims:**

By working with healthcare teams, welfare rights advisors could source medical evidence and discuss the needs of individuals. This allowed them to prepare a much stronger legal case, which improved the success rates of welfare claims.

✓ **Providing more seamless support for service users:**

Coordination and discussion between teams meant that patients received help that was more seamlessly integrated with their care, and ensured staff members were fully informed about their needs.

✓ **Improved staff knowledge of individuals' needs:**

By communicating and working together on individual cases, staff gained a better understanding of the person's needs and situation. This meant both health and welfare teams were able to provide more efficient and effective support.

✓ **Improved staff skills and expertise:**

By working together and consulting each other, both healthcare and welfare rights teams broadened their professional knowledge and became increasingly able to assist patients with related issues.

For further information:

ucl.ac.uk/health-of-public/health-justice-partnerships