

NETWORK MEETING



Thursday 10th July 2008

**Leicester Money Advice Service
Epic House, Charles Street, Leicester**

NOTES OF MEETING

Present

Clare Ashton	Clifton Advice Centre
Kathryn Burgess	Leicester Money Advice
Dorothy Dexter	Bestwood Advice Centre
Maria Jackson	Mosaic: Shaping Disability Services
Martyn Neal	Meadows Advice Group
Arti Riparelia	Loughborough University - Student Union Advice centre
Debbie Webster	St Ann's Advice Centre
Katherine Weston	De Montfort University - Student Union Advice Centre
Sarah Collins	AdviceUK
Savita Narain	AdviceUK
Len Simkins	AdviceUK (Facilitator)

Apologies

Sharon Batey	Shelter Nottinghamshire HAC
Mike Buckley	Sherwood Forest Money Advice Centre
Daphne Carter	West Bridgford Advice Centre
Bev Hall	Saffron Resource Centre, Leicester
Irving Hall	De Montfort University - Student Union Advice Centre
Julie Silver	Welfare Rights Advice Service, Northampton
Paul Stears	Release (Financial) Charitable Trust, Derbyshire
Chilli Reid	AdviceUK
Glenda Terry	AdviceUK

1. Welcome and introductions

Len introduced everybody to the meeting.

2. Update from last network meeting (12th March 2008)

There were two **corrections** to the minutes:

Item 4 - the example of very high interest rates (in Bestwood) was 160% (not 16%)

Item 5 (c) - it was the independent status of the smaller advice agencies in Nottingham that was threatened (not their funding)

The **matters arising** were:

Item 4 - Although leaflets about the Loan Shark Team had been circulated in Leicester, nobody had seen a Nottingham version of the leaflet. Len will contact Steve Ward about this as he had said there would be separate versions for Leicester, Nottingham and Derby.

Item 5(a) - A4E (the national provider that was part of the successful CLAC bid in Leicester) had won a major training contract for work with young people.

3. **AdviceUK Board (Update)**

Kathryn Burgess (Leicester Money Advice) represents the East Midlands Region on the Board. Kathryn gave an update from the recent Board meeting.

The main issues discussed were:

- **Advice Pro** - There were still some problems with the new system. It was agreed that the system developers need to consult directly with a pool of advisers to avoid further problems and complaints.

This was discussed at today's meeting and the comments made were:

- It would be good to develop an Advice Pro Users' Forum
 - Could any money from the Working Together for Advice project be used to develop a Users' Forum?
 - Agencies still need to be convinced that reports from Advice Pro will provide the information required by different funders. It would be better to be working towards a standard case recording system for the whole of the advice sector - although this would be difficult to achieve.
 - Student Union Advice Centres have their own systems - although Loughborough SU is considering Advice Pro.
- **Relocation of AdviceUK's national office** - Advice UK is searching for new premises in London as the lease at the current building will end soon
 - **Advice UK membership** - the Board discussed the membership application process, the complaints process, and the possibility of a new type of membership (e.g. non-advice providers)

This was discussed at today's meeting and the comments made were:

- AdviceUK should have some form of "policing" role with members. It would give the whole organisation more status and credibility. But it is not clear how this role could be funded
- AdviceUK could have associate membership for smaller, community agencies and full membership for larger agencies.

Kathryn will feedback the comments made by members today to the Board.

A query was raised as to whether the minutes of the Board meetings (or at least a summary of meetings) are available for members. Kathryn will check on this.

A query was also raised as to whether Advice Nottingham could become a member of Advice UK? Kathryn agreed to check on this.

4. Community Legal Service

(a) Update on CLAC in Leicester

Kathryn reported on the new CLAC in Leicester.

The CLAC had started operating on 1st April from temporary premises. However, there has been no publicity as yet. The official launch is on 14th July.

In Leicester the Law Centre has had to close. Also Shelter is no longer providing housing advice. Leicester Money Advice is still operating - it has a FIF contract and should be financially viable for the next 3 years.

The local press in Leicester seems reluctant to talk about the loss of the traditional advice services in Leicester. Therefore Kathryn may need to publicise this through national media channels. She will also be trying to contact Radio Leicester.

Staff from LMA and LLC have been transferred to the new CLAC under TUPE arrangements. From LMA 6 staff transferred to the CLAC - and a further 2 advisers and 2½ admin posts were made redundant. From LLC 7 staff transferred to the CLAC.

The news from the CLAC is:

- They have recruited 4 new generalist advisers.
- They will be doing outreach sessions in local authority premises and will be running late evening and Saturday morning advice sessions.
- They will only be doing LSC eligible work.
- They have a target of 6,000 general help enquiries.
- The CLAC has passed its preliminary audit with the LSC.

Some questions were put to Kathryn.

Q. What are the eligibility rules for the CLAC in terms of client address?

A. All clients must live in Leicester.

Q. What does the public feel about the new service?

A. It is not clear yet. A suggestion could be to do some research with possibly some "mystery shopping". However, as most of the staff are experienced advisers from LLC and LMA, it is presumed that the service will be good.

(b) Update on Advice Nottingham

A meeting was held with the City Council in May and a good relationship is being built up. The Council is due to publicise a new strategy on advice services but this has been delayed.

Solicitors are currently setting up limited company and charity status for Advice Nottingham.

They are looking at what is happening in other areas. There seems to be a growing general resistance to CLACs and CLANs and there has been specific resistance in Hull and Cornwall.

Nottingham is not on the list of future CLACs recently issued by the LSC.

There have been changes within Nottingham Council in terms of responsibility for the funding of advice agencies. This is now linked with funding for community organisations and money from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is included in the pot.

Some additional funding (£168,000) for advice service in the city will also be available for the future.

(c) Update on CLAC in Derby

There was no news on this.

Sarah will investigate the situation in Derby and will report back at the next meeting.

(d) Other CLS issues

A recent report on CLACs and CLANs, produced by Advice Services Alliance, had raised a number of negative issues.

There was some general discussion on this at the meeting. General comments were:

- Should we also stress the positive effects of CLACs and CLANs?
- Is the voluntary sector really better than commercial providers in giving advice?
- Is the argument more about outside agencies coming into a local area rather than the quality of advice?
- The voluntary sector needs to be more positive and challenging when tendering for bids.

5. Working Together for Advice Project

(a) General

Sarah Collins introduced herself and gave an overview of the project. There are 8 work streams in the project delivered by different networks in the advice sector.

Almost all staff have now been recruited for the new project.

Sarah gave an update on some of the work streams.

(b) User and Stakeholder Involvement

Sarah reported that AdviceUK needed some frontline agencies to get 60 users to complete questionnaires as part of this work stream. £200 can be paid to agencies for their work. Contact Chilli Reid at AdviceUK for details. chill.reid@adviceuk.org.uk

(c) Workforce Development and Training

Work will involve mapping skills gaps and training needs across the country. The next AdviceUK network meeting could be partly used as a workshop to discuss this. The development workers from this work stream could also go to local network meetings to get the views of the wider advice sector.

(d) Enhancing Frontline Advice

Sarah is one of 4 new Development Workers across the country. She will be covering the East Midlands area.

Sarah gave out a handout giving details of the planned work. As part of the work they will be looking at partnerships and improving working together. Sarah went through the delivery targets for the work stream.

A different webpage for each region will be set up on AdviceUK's website. This will be re-launched in September.

The National Advice Sector Forum met for the first time last week. The structure of the forum will now be developed.

Some training on how to cost advice services will be planned.

Sarah will be the first point of contact for agencies in the East Midlands. She has been in post for 2 months and is full-time based in Manchester.

She will come to the AdviceUK network meetings and she will be able to report back on what is happening in other regions.

This project is the first example of real partnership working between the national networks.

One idea is to form a regional alliance in the East Midlands. A meeting has been arranged for September to discuss this. Representatives from Shelter, EMDA, Derby City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Citizens Advice, Law Society, Advice UK, and Law Centres Federation will be attending. They are also trying to get some input from BME networks. Len gave update on Advice Alliance East which is a similar network in the Eastern Region

Various questions were put to Sarah.

Q. There is an advice forum in Nottingham. Can Sarah get involved?

A. Yes – it is possible.

Q. How will Sarah prioritise the support she gives?

A. Sarah and her colleagues are currently doing lot of research and will also be developing tools etc. in first year. The main support work will be provided in Year 2. In some areas they might encourage agencies to join existing networks. In other areas they might help start a new network.

Other comments made included:

- There is a big need for a case recording system that is acceptable by everybody – this would be a good partnership tool.
- NAWRA (National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers) are funding some research into advice 'outcomes'.

(e) Developing Discrimination Advice

Savita Narain (new Development Worker for this work stream at AdviceUK) introduced herself. The Law Centres Federation will be leading the work stream with Citizens Advice and AdviceUK as partners.

The aim is to increase the capacity of the advice sector to give discrimination advice.

They will be running training and will also be giving support to networks.

Examples of agencies in the East Midlands that have been providing discrimination advice include:

- Nottingham Law Centre
- Leicester Law Centre – with this work now being taken over by Leicester Money Advice under an EHRC contract
- Chesterfield Law Centre
- Disability Derby
- Northampton REC

Discrimination advice work can cover:

- Employment
- Goods and services
- Hate crime
- Human rights

There will be further changes in this legal field through the new Equalities Bill. The aim is to simplify the current complex legislation by bringing it all into one act. The new act will extend protection for age discrimination in goods and services, and will extend the Public Sector Duty.

Savita gave details of a number of resources that will be useful for advisers:

- *How to recognise cases of age discrimination*. Copies are available from Savita at savita.narain@adviceuk.org.uk
- *Changing Lives* (Booklet on Human Rights Act). Available from www.bihhr.org.uk or contact Savita for a hard copy.
- *Guide to Equality and Diversity in the 3rd sector*. Savita gave out a press release from LVSC on this guide which will help organisations develop strategies and policies. Copies can be downloaded from www.olmec-ec.org.uk/publications

Some questions were put to Savita:

Q Can agencies be sent a resume of the forthcoming changes?

A Savita will try to do this for AdviceUK members.

Q Will there be any training?

A Yes – but nothing has been planned yet. They will be doing some mapping of discrimination advice training needs.

The comment was also made that there is a need for a national helpline to help with discrimination advice issues - as there is for many other subject areas.

(f) Developing a Quality Mark

Glenda Terry, who is Advice UK's Development Worker on this work stream, was unable to attend the meeting today. However, she had sent a handout giving details of the work. This was distributed.

6. Update from AdviceUK (National)

Sarah gave an update on:

- **RADICAL** – AdviceUK had commissioned some research into a 'bottom-up' approach and model for advice work. The report on this is due in September.
- **Bareng Fund** – A bid had been submitted to the fund for some pilot work in Manchester and/or Coventry. If awarded they will be looking at how to influence funders in the development of advice services.

7. Information exchange

- (a) Triage systems** - If any agencies have experience of using triage systems to initially assess clients, please contact Martyn Neal (Meadows Advice Group) at meadows_advice@btconnect.com

Sarah will send a copy of ASA's report on reception systems to circulate with the minutes.

- (b) Environmental Policy** – If any agencies have a good example of an Environmental Policy, please contact Martyn Neal (Meadows Advice Group) at meadows_advice@btconnect.com

Mosaic and Loughborough University agreed to send their policies.

- (c) Diversity policy** – If any agencies have a good example of a Diversity Policy, please contact Kathryn Burgess (Leicester Money Advice) kathryn.burgess@leicestermoneyadvice.org.uk

A suggestion was made to contact ACAS for their model policy.

8. AOB

Len thanked Kathryn for hosting the meeting at LMA.

9. Date of next meeting

Len confirmed that there would be two more networks meetings in 2008/09. The situation would then be reviewed for next year.

The next meeting will be at 10.30am on **16th October 2008** in Nottingham – venue to be confirmed.

Meeting Facilitator: Len Simkins (Tel. 01234-360607)

East Midlands network meetings are funded by AdviceUK (National)