

Recession and Advice: Building Capacity to Meet Increased Demands

Citizens Advice Belfast wishes to put forward a proposal to increase the capacity of the organization and the wider advice sector in the city to increase capacity in order to meet the rising demand for services in the city arising out of the recession. We would welcome any support that the City Council may be able to provide by way of the Economic Downturn sub committee to address these issues.

Our ability to meet the demand from the public is hampered by the lack of spaces available on Citizens Advice NI Accredited Training Programme. Often we have only one place available per bureau on the programme. The delays in getting people trained are leading to potential advisers dropping out, reducing our capacity to deal with the public, and in the medium term having negative consequences for the wider community by restricting access to training, work experience, active citizenship and limiting future access to employment and education. We are also aware that many of our partners in delivering advice provision across the city would welcome an opportunity to increase their own capacity through the training of their own volunteers.

Aim

Addressing training and capacity issues arising in Citizens Advice Belfast and the wider advice sector in Belfast through training an additional 30 volunteers to meet demand.

We would request that Belfast city council consider funding two ATP training courses for approximately 15 volunteers per course. Whilst this would cost in the region of £22,000 we believe that it would give us the ability to significantly clear the backlog of volunteer applicants, and greatly increase the capacity of our service and that of our partners in advice consortia across the city to deliver advice services in 2010 and beyond

Outcomes

This would have positive multiplier effects on local communities in terms of enhanced skills, pro-active citizenship and future employability for the participants on these courses.

We would also estimate that these volunteers will collectively deal with a minimum of **6600 additional client contacts and circa 12,000 enquiries** in the 12 month period following completion of training.

We believe that each volunteer trained will on a conservative estimate generate a further **£8-10,000 pounds** per annum in additional income generated for clients through additional benefits gained and lump sum payments for clients. This would bring approximately £250,000 to £300,000 of additional benefit to the local economy, or 13.63 for each pound invested.

Clients in debt will also receive additional support through initial advice and the ability to make appropriate referrals to money advice specialists funded by DETI and other funders across the city.

The advice sector in the city will benefit from increased co-operation and partnership working, which will have longer term advantages as we look to respond to the DSD advice strategy.

COSTINGS - BELFAST ATP 2009/10

ATP per course	Days	Cost per day	Total
13 days room hire x 2 courses	26	175	4,550.00
14 days direct delivery x 2 courses	28	130.00	3,640.00
Update of materials	2	130.00	260.00
Prep for course (1.5 hours per delivery day)	5.6	130.00	728.00
Admin prep (2 hours/delivery day)	8	117.00	936.00
OCN course admin	1	166.79	166.79
Assessment (6 hours/30 x portfolio)	24	130.00	3,120.00
Moderation (2 days per course x 2 courses)4	4	186.79	747.14
Moderation (2 days per course x 2 courses)4	4	£130.00	520.00
Materials (2000 sheets/course)	2	160.00	320.00
OCN Student registrations 2 courses x 15 students	30	40.00	1,200.00
Hire of Computer suite	2	250.00	500.00
Financial Management: CANI	0.75	£127.00	£95.25
TOTAL COST PER Year			16,783.18
VAT @ 15%			2,517.45
Sub TOTAL			19300.63
CABelfast co-ordination			500.00
Volunteer Travel and Subsistence	26	£90	2,340
TOTAL			£22,140.63

Timescale

If possible we would like to complete this within the following timetable

Course 1: Dec09 /Jan- March 2010

Course 2: March-April 2010

We have already being in contact with the members of the North Belfast Advice Partnership, Ballynafeigh, EBIAC , CWA and the West Belfast Advice Forum and have had several positive responses where they would wish to avail of such an opportunity i.e. The Vine, LNBBCC etc as well as the demand for take up within Citizens advice Belfast's own offices.

We trust the council will find merit in our proposal. Thank you for your consideration.

Mick McAtavey

Citizens Advice Belfast