



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Advice Services: Debt Relief Volunteer Training Proposal
Date:	13 January 2010
Reporting Officer:	Tim Husbands, Acting Director of Development (ext. 3470)
Contact Officer:	Catherine Taggart, Community Development Mngr (ext 3525) John Nelson, CSAM East Belfast, (ext 3541)

Relevant Background Information

Due to the current and ongoing economic downturn, the advice sector is experiencing difficulties in responding to an increased demand in the numbers of people accessing their services particularly, but not exclusively, in relation to debt and money advice services.

The Belfast advice consortia have indicated that their capacity to address this increased demand is severely restricted because of the limited numbers of trained volunteers available to deal with these enquires. BCC received an application from the Citizens Advice Belfast (CAB) for financial support for their proposal to increase the capacity of the Belfast advice consortia by providing a debt training programme for an additional 30 volunteers across the city. The proposal, entitled 'Recession & Advice: Building Capacity to meet Increased Demands', covers the costs associated with 2 ATP training courses targeting approximately 15 volunteers per course. The proposal was tabled at the December meeting of the Committee when it agreed to defer a decision on the training proposal pending further information from CAB to verify the proactive involvement of the citywide consortia in the development of the proposal.

Key Issues

Mick McAtavey, Director CAB, has now confirmed that all consortia were informed of the proposal. They were involved in discussions on the provision of volunteers to undertake the training in order to ensure participants are selected from both Independent Advice organisations and CAB.

Each of the lead organisations of the Belfast consortia has confirmed this involvement

and subsequent support to BCC officers (either by phone or e mail).

Resource Implications

Resource is available within the existing budgets

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the request for financial support from CAB up to a maximum of £20,000 to coordinate and enable the training of an additional 30 advice services volunteers from across the 5 Belfast Advice Consortiums.

Decision Tracking

CDM will implement committee decision and if applicable will ensure citywide uptake and expenditure of funds.

Time-scale: March 2010

Responsible Officer: Cate Taggart.

Key Abbreviations

CAB – Citizens Advice Belfast

ATP – Accredited Training Proposal

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: CAB programme proposal