

## **2011 Recession and Advice: Building Capacity to meet Increased Demands**

In 2009 Citizens Advice Belfast put forward a proposal to increase the capacity of the organization and the wider advice sector in the city to meet the rising demand for services in the city arising out of the recession. This was subsequently agreed in February 2010 by the Development sub committee. Since that time a first training course was held and completed this summer. The second course started this autumn and is currently ongoing.

The two courses have proved popular, with both being filled, and there has been good take-up by both CAB and Advice NI members across the city. Feedback has proved very positive so far, although it is too early to provide a full evaluation of the impact, but certainly clients of advice services in the city seem to have benefited from the introduction of advisers following the first course, as have the participants themselves.

The recent developments in Welfare reform with regard to Mortgage Interest Support, and the migration of Incapacity to ESA in the New Year, alongside spending cuts and a worsening recession threaten to increase demand with a large volume of complex issues. To that end we would therefore request the support of the City Council in providing further support by way of the Development sub committee to address these issues in 2011 by providing resources to allow us to run two further training programmes.

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 would ask that BCC provide support in the area of 18k towards this. We believe that it would give us the ability to significantly add to volunteer adviser infrastructure, and greatly increase the capacity of our service

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and that of our partners in advice consortia across the city to deliver advice services in 2011 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 will do an evaluation of course 1 in June 2011)

We believe that each volunteer trained will on a conservative estimate generate a further **£8-10,000 pounds** 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.

With regards to using the accredited training programme the ATP covers the following:

Interviewing skills

Income support/Income based JSA

Pension Credit

Housing Benefit

Disability Benefits (Disability Living Allowance/Attendance Allowance/Carers Allowance)

ESA/Incapacity/Social Fund

Tax credits

Consumer Legislation and Rights

Employment Legislation

Money Advice

Accessing Information and case recording

Benefit case studies (including Better off calculations)

Immigration and Nationality

Social Policy and client centred services

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### Costs

### **COSTINGS - BELFAST ATP 2009/10**

<b>ATP per course</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Cost per day</b>	<b>Total</b>
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
<b>TOTAL COST PER Year</b>			<b>16,783.18</b>
<b>VAT @ 15%</b>			<b>2,517.45</b>
<b>Sub TOTAL</b>			<b>19300.63</b>
<b>CABelfast co-ordination</b>			<b>500.00</b>
<b>Volunteer Travel and Subsistence</b>	26	£90	<b>2,340</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£22,140.63</b>

We will arrange for all groups to pay for their own volunteers travel and subsistence, and will look to cover any shortfall through applying for matched funding for course two.

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**Timescale**

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

2011

Course 1: March- June 2011

Course 2: Sept-Dec 2011

We believe that we will again have support across the city in terms of advice consortia and a spread of applicants.

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

Mick McAtavey

Citizens Advice Belfast

29<sup>th</sup> November 2010