



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Consultation: DSD - Guidance Document on provision of Local Generalist Advice
<b>Date:</b>	22 February 2011
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Barbary Cook, Policy & Business Development Manager, ext 3620

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	On the 7 January, the Council was asked to respond to the Department for Social Development's (DSD) draft guidance document for Councils involved in the provision of voluntary advice services. This guidance supports the wider DSD strategy for advice provision, 'Opening Doors', The Strategy for the Delivery of Voluntary Advice Services to the Community.
1.2	The draft guidance was produced in response to many Councils requesting such a document. The guidance will act as a tool to support Councils in making informed decisions about resourcing local generalist voluntary advice provision. The guidance does not seek to replace any requirements in relation to voluntary advice the Council already has in place nor is it intended to replace any legal advice that Councils feel they should seek in respect of any aspect of their relationship with local voluntary advice organisations.
1.3	There is little specific detail in the draft guidance. The approach taken is to provide a basic framework that lists key considerations and then points to good practice where it exists.

1.4	<p><u>SUMMARY of the draft guidance</u></p> <p>The guidance has 4 main sections.</p>
1.5	<p>Section 1: Method for allocating funding</p> <p>The business case for funding should be explained within the Council's Community Support Plan. It is recommended that advice services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- accessible to all, and targeted at those most in need;</li> <li>- can be sustained in the long term;</li> <li>- can demonstrate value for money; and</li> <li>- can demonstrate appropriate quality of provision.</li> </ul> <p>This should be achieved through a network of Area Advice Centres backed up by appropriate outreach provision, to be determined by Councils, along with the use of technology to ensure access to the greatest number of disadvantaged communities.</p>
1.6	<p>Section 2: Overarching principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Independence - Be independent of political parties, statutory organisations and free from other conflicts of interest.</li> <li>- Impartiality - Provide an impartial service open to everyone regardless of race, religion, politics, age, sex, sexual orientation or disability.</li> <li>- Accessibility - Provide a free and accessible service to all members of the community which it serves.</li> <li>- Confidentiality - Provide a confidential service to all its clients and meet all data protection legislative requirements.</li> <li>- Effectiveness - Provide an effective service to all of its clients and the community which it serves. The advice centre should be able to show its effectiveness through demonstrable and measurable outcomes.</li> <li>- Accountability - Provide a service which is accountable to users and others who work with the advice centre.</li> </ul>
1.7	<p>Section 3: Quality of advice</p> <p>The framework suggests measuring quality in 5 areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishing the facts and diagnosing the problem</li> <li>- The advice</li> <li>- Action or support</li> <li>- Signposting and referral</li> <li>- Advice records</li> </ul> <p>Councils are advised to discuss with their local voluntary advice organisations how their documentation and recording systems evidence that the criteria are being met. Consideration can also be given to any other quality schemes they may use to meet the standards.</p>
1.8	<p>Section 4: Organisational frameworks</p> <p>This section covers the governance arrangements that should be in place for a well run advice organisation. This includes, finance, planning, people management, and client care. Most of the section refers to existing guidance on good practice such as that from Investors in People, Volunteering NI, Investing in Volunteers, and DSD's earlier guidance on finance and governance in the voluntary and community sector. Reference is also made to legal requirements that apply to the provision of debt and immigration advice.</p>

1.9	<p>The full proposal is available at:  <a href="http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/consultation-provision-of-local-generalist-voluntary-sector-advice.htm">http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/consultation-provision-of-local-generalist-voluntary-sector-advice.htm</a>, also see Appendix 1.</p> <p>The 'Opening Doors' strategy is available at:  <a href="http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/voluntary-and-community/vc-publication/vc-strategy-for-voluntary-advice-services.htm">http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/voluntary-and-community/vc-publication/vc-strategy-for-voluntary-advice-services.htm</a></p>
1.10	<p>The consultation document has been passed to all Departments within Council as well as to the Development Department Management Team to gather feedback.</p>

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>On Friday 28 January Community Services are attending a briefing from DSD to better understand the proposals and their implications for Belfast.</p>
2.2	<p>We suggest that Members may like to have a fuller briefing from officers and a discussion of these implications.</p>
2.3	<p>The deadline for a response is Monday 7 March 2011. We will ask for an extension to the deadline so that a provisional consultation response can be considered by committee on the 9 March.</p>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<p>There are no resource costs associated with this consultation response.</p>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	<p>There are potential equality and good relations issues associated with providing advice services however it is unlikely that the guidance would have an adverse impact. A better understanding of any issues will be possible once officers have attended the DSD briefing session.</p>

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	<p>It is recommended that Committee is :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve a briefing session by officers on the draft guidance; and</li> <li>2. Raise any issues about the draft guidance that they wish to be considered.</li> </ol>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Further to approval a briefing will be arranged	
Timeframe: April 2011      Reporting Officer: Barbary Cook	

<b>7</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1: DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT "Consultation document on Guidance on the Provision of Local Generalist Voluntary Advice" JANUARY 2011.	