

Advice Guidance Document - Stakeholder Consultation
Event
Community Relations Council, Dungannon
28 January 2011

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Workshop 1

Is there anything that should be added to this draft guidance?

- Recognise the flexibility 'tool kit' rather than prescriptive.
- Differences in stats – include guidance on a 'standardisation' of these for comparison would be useful.
- Core performance indicators – there are interpretation issues (CARMA would require IT).
- Actual models of procurement practices & allocation of funds would be useful.
- Commitment to resource.
- Acknowledge rural areas.
- Quality standards already developed in Advice Sector.
- Council's would require some form of bench-marking or quality assurance for all advice providers. Statistics required.
- Need for guidance on match-funding for Councils, proportional by Council size and taking into account area need – measures of deprivation.
- Government Depts need to inform of funding streams re: DARD that are offering Advice funding in addition to Council funds. Joined up working is necessary.
- Guidance on funding - need to formalise funding from DSD on a 3yr basis.
- Indication of costs and an analysis of cost.
- Audit:
 - Who is external?
 - What are standards?
 - Minimum reporting requirements.
 - Sanctions for failing.
- Review of standards & allocation of funding.

- ASA need to set agreed quality standard.
- Partnerships – should this be required.
- Support for new needs service development.
- Link in local authority between advice providers & community planning.
- Client satisfaction.
- Responsibility of Council's to ensure quality, value for money, needs are being met.
- Council's need guidance on implementation of standards & repercussions.
- Providing a single set of guidelines to all Councils regards commissioning of Advice Services.
- Potential involvement of the private sector in the delivery of contracts – clarification is required as to whether they can be involved or not.
- Clarity about funding (para 2.3)
- Social Context:
 - Welfare reform.
 - Expenditure cuts.

Is there anything that should be removed from this draft guidance?

- We acknowledge references to other sources to read!
- Nothing to disagree with that it should be removed, since it is not prescriptive.
- A lot more clarity is required on the Area Advice Centres.

Workshop 2

Do you think the implementation of this guidance will be beneficial? – if yes, what benefits do you envisage from the implementation of this guidance?

- Yes it will be beneficial:
 - Better quality service for customers.
 - Easier to monitor performance/effectiveness of service.
 - Transparency of what is being delivered.
 - Potential for better continuity of advice provision across NI.
 - Training required will be beneficial for staff.
 - Ensuring that there is a standard of advice across NI to provide consistency of service.
 - Providing guidance to Councils.
 - Adopting a professional approach.
- Provides confidence for funders and client users.
- Encourage joint working & partnerships reflect on value for money & best practice models.
- Provides structure.
- Standardisation.
- Quality benchmark
- Makes sector accountable.
- Funding accountability for Councils.
- Outcome focused for service users/advice delivered in a professional and measurable way.
- V.F.M in terms of service being delivered.
- Uniform/universal standards for advice providers.
- Welcome guidance – flexibility of approach / prescriptive Vs structure.

Would the implementation of any of this draft guidance result in new costs being incurred?

- If implemented in full there would be additional costs eg: quality standards, training costs.
 - Councils don't have additional money to spend (additional monitoring and Admin costs).
 - External peer review costs money.
 - Does seeking other sources of funding need to be included? (& expertise to do this).
- Potential for leveraging additional funding.
- Additional costs to those who do not already meet standards (eg: training for advice providers).
- Disproportional costs for smaller agencies.
- Audits required to be completed.
- Potential capital refurbishment costs.
- Peer group review of advice.
- IT costs / Data protection.

Do you have any concerns about the implementation of this guidance? – if yes, please specify.

- Bar set too high but does not meet community needs.
- Volunteering;
 - Some areas don't have enough.
 - Not the right type of person to deal with customer groups.
- Risk losing continuity of service delivery if funding provided to one organisation.
- Commissioning arrangements.
- Councils have different approaches to the Community Support Grant.
- Financial concerns regarding resources for implementation (funding currently available is insufficient to adhere to guidance)
- The variation in terms of implementation.

- Timescales for implementation
- Funding – move away from yearly to 3 yearly funding allocation to allow for financial/organisational planning.
- Concerns re: any delay in implementation.
- If this guidance is used across all council areas it would provide consistency – universal guidance?
- Not a lot of guidance in it.
- Comparison issues – bench-marking not possible.
- Measuring guidance - a robust method 'singing from the same hymn sheet'.
- Look to DSD to lead this or guidance (clarification).
- Uniformity of Standards across CAB, Advice NI etc.
- Increased competition. –
 - Needs appropriate terms of reference for 'voluntary sector'
- Procurement legislation.
- Quality needs to remain the foremost importance.
- Too much flexibility and could lead to inconsistencies across Council as it is only guidance.

Workshop 3

How useful is this draft guidance for supporting discussions between local councils and local advice providers about the quality of advice services?

- Starting point -
 - Very vague.
 - In some areas implementation may require additional resources depending on no. of advice providers.
- Would be useful if Councils worked together / discuss issues.
- Need for discussions between Councilors, Council Officers and Advice Providers.
- Sets agenda for discussion.
- Document established that there is no consensus of reporting.
- Working group to establish performances indicators.
- Common quality standard – has to be agreed minimum quality mark standard.
- Standard methods of measuring qualitative outcomes and statistics
- Additional response from DSD / Councils to needs for additional resources.
- Differs in areas.
- Great in providing framework for consistency.
- Will implement more regular contact which will be valuable.
- Highlight breadth of service provided.
- Gives benchmark for quality of advice services.
- Discussions are already taking place.
- Guidance provides transparent consistency across NI.
- Need more guidance on measurement to assist with monitoring – this isn't consistent at present.
- Should be reviewed after 3 years to see how useful it should be.
- A lot of guidance is already in place so it will continue to be used.
- The guidance has been beneficial in bringing us all together in this room, learning about what is being delivered in areas. How can this be developed?

- Added value from the service – YES.
- Buy a quality service?
- Clarity on what is being purchased?
- Measurable standards?
- Verification & validation of service delivery?

Would you use this draft guidance?

- Broadly Yes -
 - Safety.
 - Recognises the professionalism of the Advice sector.
- Needs to be common framework for monitoring and evaluation.
- Sets minimum standards – there to be built on.
- Planning between local authority and advice providers – link to community planning.
- What happens to those who do not use the guidance?