

**Establishing an Alternative Advice Services Commissioning Model for Local Authority  
and Assembly Government Funding in Wales**

**Open Meetings**

*This briefing note has been created to provide details of the open meetings held recently by DG Legal to discuss the feasibility study and to launch the consultation paper. This note sets out the names of those who attended the meetings and provides details of specific questions raised by attendees about the consultation process. We have also provided a short summary of issues raised by attendees and discussed during the open meetings.*

*Some attendees also advised about the existence of reading materials which might be of interest to other participants in the consultation. We have provided details of those publications and, where available, a web link.*

**Mold - Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2009 10am**

**Attending:**

Phil Jew, Advice UK  
Margaret Hanson, Age Concern North West Wales  
Bryn Williams, Age Concern North Wales  
Alison Brebner, Allington Hughes Solicitors  
Sue Evans, Barnado's Compass Partnership  
Sarah Townsend, Barnado's Compass Partnership  
Barry Speake, Benefit Advice Shop  
Anthony Cheetham, Benefit Advice Shop  
Eleanor Hughes, Citizens Advice Cymru  
Lesley Powell, Denbighshire Citizens Advice Bureau  
Richard Jones Abbas, Denbighshire County Council  
Jackie Trommelen, Flintshire County Council  
Peter Kane, Flintshire County Council  
Patricia Evans, Flintshire County Council  
Tracey Harwood, Legal Services Commission  
Ian Jones, Scope  
Janet Loudon, Shelter Cymru  
D E Hathaway, Shelter Cymru  
Gaynor Roberts, Wrexham Citizens Advice Bureau  
Elizabeth Williams, Wrexham Borough Council  
Barbara Elwin, Wrexham Welfare Rights Unit, Wrexham Borough Council

## Questions Raised by attendees:

**Q.** When will DG Legal's final report be published?

**A.** *It is anticipated that this may be in late September 2009 but this is dependant on the number of consultation responses received by DG Legal and the ability to obtain clear legal opinions on the viability of the advice models. The final timetable will be made known in due course.*

**Q.** Has DG Legal taken any legal advice on how procurement law would impact on the models set out in the paper, in particular, with regard to sustainable commissioning?

**A.** *DG Legal has obtained a number of legal opinions on all the models set out in the paper and is continuing to discuss the models with lawyers and procurement specialists. It is a difficult and emerging area of law with limited case law and, as such, opinion is divided.*

## Issues discussed:

1. Pilots

*During the discussions, it was considered by attendees that the model(s) should perhaps be tested by means of pilots and that different models could perhaps be piloted in different geographical areas.*

2. Methodology

*During the discussions, it was considered by attendees that there should be clear methodology in any models adapted for Wales as this was a perceived omission in the LSC's CLAS model.*

3. Flexibility

*During the discussions, it was considered that there would need to be flexibility in the advice model to meet the needs of clients in different areas.*

4. Needs Analysis

*During the discussions, it was considered that it would be appropriate to carry out a detailed 'needs analysis'.*

5. Lack of providers in some areas

*During the discussions, it was stated that many providers have dropped out of the legal aid system and, as such, in some areas in North Wales there is insufficient supply. It was considered that the LSC CLAS model would further reduce the number of suppliers.*

6. Difficulty in encouraging providers back into marketplace

*It was noted that it was extremely difficult for providers to get a new legal aid contract, especially where they cannot show extensive experience or provide evidence of an extensive caseload in an area of social welfare law.*

7. Retention of existing services, especially where they work well and do not need to be changed

*It was considered that, in some areas of Denbighshire, the advice service provision is working well and rather than change the advice model, there was a need for adaptation to the existing advice services.*

8. Need for further funding

*It was considered that there will need to be more funding made available to develop the services provided and increase the number of clients advised.*

**Recommended Reading:**

- 'It's the System Stupid! Radically Rethinking Advice' - Advice UK  
<http://www.adviceuk.org.uk/projects-and-resources/projects/radical/ITSS>

**Bangor, Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2009 2.30pm**

**Attending:**

Felicity Wills, Aberystwyth Citizens Advice Bureau  
Celia Davies, Canolfan Cynghori Bro Ddfyi Advice Centre  
Gordon Hughes, Canolfan Cynghori Bro Ddfyi Advice Centre  
Brenda Hughes, Canolfan Cynghori Bro Ddfyi Advice Centre  
Eleanor Hughes, Citizens Advice Cymru  
Gwyneth Millington, Conwy Citizens Advice Bureau  
Barbara Jones, Conwy Citizens Advice Bureau  
Cathy Richards, Conwy County Borough Council  
Ifan Llewelyn Jones, Gwynedd and De Ynys Mon Citizens Advice Bureaux  
Sharon Warnes, Gwynedd Council  
Hywel James, Gwynedd Council  
Councillor Dyfed Edwards, Gwynedd Council  
Emma Jones, Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon  
Mark Sadler, Julie Burton Law  
Jackie Blackwell, Ynys Mon Citizens Advice Bureau

**Issues discussed:**

1. Funding over boundaries  
*During the discussions, it was evident that there is concern about how services would be funded across regional boundaries. It was pointed out that clients do not always want to seek advice from providers in a particular area and may not want to seek advice from a provider in their local authority.*
2. Rural areas  
*It was considered that any advice model will need to be adaptable for rural communities. It was considered that the same advice model would not necessarily be appropriate for all areas in Wales.*
3. Welsh Language  
*It was considered that provision of advice in the Welsh language was a necessity. It was considered that it is not merely of cultural importance but that there is a real, day-to-day need. This would need to be adequately funded.*

4. Reduction in funding

*There was concern that about a reduction in the amount of funding made available. In particular, some attendees were concerned that funders do not reduce the funding, especially if cross-funding is introduced.*

## **Cardiff, Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2009 10am**

### **Attending:**

Chilli Reid, Advice UK  
Simon Johnson, Advice UK  
Bob Chapman, AJTC Welsh Committee  
Jeff Hawkins, Age Concern Cardiff & the Vale of Glamorgan  
Chris Beaumont, Age Concern Cymru  
Steve Howarth, Age Concern Cymru & Help the Aged in Wales  
Rachel Rowlands, Age Concern Morgannwg  
Davina Davies, Ammanford Citizens Advice Bureau  
Patrick Tiddy, Ammanford Citizens Advice Bureau  
Saz Willey, Bridgend Citizens Advice Bureau  
Peter Crocombe, Bridgend Citizens Advice Bureau  
Michael Wightman, Caldicott Citizens Advice Bureau  
Bridgett Barnett, Cardiff Citizens Advice Bureau  
Lucy Osafo Cardiff and District Citizens Advice Bureaux  
Natalie Southgate, Cardiff Council  
Gail Weaver, Cardiff Council  
Peter Farley, Chepstow Citizens Advice Bureau  
Eleanor Hughes, Citizens Advice Cymru  
Jonathan Edwards, Citizens Advice Cymru  
Richard Bundy, Gofal Cymru  
Tom Jones, Legal Services Commission  
David Gill, Legal Services Commission  
Rosemary Martin, Maesteg Citizens Advice Bureau  
Roy Morgan, Morgans Solicitors  
Jenny Simmons, Neath Citizens Advice Bureau  
Annie Cadman, Newport Citizens Advice Bureau  
M Javed, Pakistan Welfare Association  
Sally Matthews, Passmores Solicitors  
Cheryl Thomas, Port Talbot Citizens Advice Bureau  
Howard James, Port Talbot Citizens Advice Bureau  
Erika Helps, Rhondda Taff Citizens Advice Bureau  
Barbara Kerridge, Riverside Advice  
JJ Costello, Shelter Cymru  
Andrew Jones, Shelter Cymru  
Denise Inger, SNAP Cymru  
Warren Palmer, Speakeasy Advice  
Jackie Preston, Swansea Citizens Advice Bureau  
Kay Powell, The Law Society  
Sheila Hendrickson-Brown, Torfaen Citizens Advice Bureau

Jane Clay, Vale Citizens Advice Bureaux  
Emily Forbes, Voluntary Action Cardiff  
Graham Benfield OBE, WCVA  
Lynne Schofield, Welsh Assembly Government  
Naomi Alleyne, Welsh Local Government Association

### **Issues discussed:**

1. Provision of services in different areas  
*It was considered that the same advice model would not necessarily be appropriate for all areas in Wales.*
2. Sustainable commissioning does not automatically protect the third sector  
*Sustainable commissioning was discussed in some detail. It was noted that this form of commissioning does not go so far as to offer an unconditional guarantee of protection to the third sector. However, it was considered that it does allow for innovation and may allow the third sector to participate on a level playing field.*
3. Provision of advice in rural areas  
*It was noted that examples provided in the paper (in particular, the models adapted in Tower Hamlets and Greenwich) were models used in urban areas. There would need to be consideration as to the suitability of the models for rural areas in Wales.*
4. 'Systems Thinking' approach  
*There was a discussion about funders taking a 'systems thinking' approach and rather than simply providing funding to solve existing problems, looking at the root cause of those problems. An example was given of systems thinking approach currently being taken by Nottingham City Council.*
5. Local authority future engagement with providers  
*It was considered by providers that there would need to be a willingness on the part of local authorities to engage in further discussions. It was considered that different authorities will have different viewpoints and requirements depending on the demand for advice services in their region.*
6. Funding over boundaries  
*As with Bangor, there was clearly concern about how services would be funded across regional boundaries.*

### **Recommended Reading:**

- 'CLACs – Are they Worth It?' – Adam Griffiths, Advice Services Alliance  
[http://www.asauk.org.uk/fileLibrary/pdf/CLACs\\_are\\_they\\_worth\\_it.pdf](http://www.asauk.org.uk/fileLibrary/pdf/CLACs_are_they_worth_it.pdf)
- 'It's the System Stupid! Radically Rethinking Advice' - Advice UK  
<http://www.adviceuk.org.uk/projects-and-resources/projects/radical/ITSS>