

ITEM No ...11.....

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 27 JUNE 2022
REPORT ON: ADVICE STRATEGY FOR DUNDEE
REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES
REPORT NO: 164-2022

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report presents the Advice Strategy for Dundee for approval.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Policy and Resources Committee:

- a) Approves the Advice Strategy for Dundee 2022-2024.
- b) Notes the content of the initial Advice Strategy for Dundee attached as Appendix 1.
- c) Notes the intention of Dundee City Council Advice Services (DCAS) to partner with Brooksbank Centre and Services (Brooksbank), Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and SCARF to sign up to the advice strategy goals, with scope for more locally based advice agencies to commit to the advice strategy over time.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None at present although the collaboration work and projects within this action plan may generate reports and further actions that could have direct financial implications for the Council. As and when required, such reports will be considered by the appropriate Committee(s).

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Advice Strategy for Dundee - Partnership Draft

Dundee continues to face significant challenges related to increasing levels of income inequality, poverty and social exclusion. The Dundee Fairness Action Plan and Local Child Poverty Annual Report for 2021/22 underlined this whilst highlighting Child Poverty Action Group's confirmation that child poverty levels are still increasing across Scotland. Advice agencies in Dundee continue to see customers that present with insufficient income, face lower life expectancy and the prospect of higher household living costs. As communities emerge from the pandemic, with many of the impacts of lockdown, furlough and reduction in incomes yet to fully make themselves known, it is essential that mitigation services are in place to assist individuals to access the supports that they require. Over the last 12 years welfare reform, the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and latterly the emerging cost of living crisis present significant challenges to Councils, Health services, the Voluntary sector and most importantly Citizens' income and health.

In response to rising levels of income and health inequality, child poverty and fuel poverty, and following on from actions contained within the Dundee Partnership Fairness Strategy for Dundee and Action plan for Dundee to challenge poverty and promote inclusion, three separate organisations providing advice in Dundee (DCAS, Brooksbank and CAB) started to work together to formulate a draft strategy for Advice in Dundee in 2019. This was in order to co-ordinate delivery of advice in a mixed economy, (i.e. a mixture of both internal and external advice services) covering the following areas of provision.

- Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits advice (incorporating enquiries, casework, advocacy and tribunal representation)
- Money/Debt Advice (including enquiries, casework, negotiation with creditors, advocacy and representation)
- Energy advice (including enquiries, energy efficiency advice, fuel payment options, access to grant funding, casework and negotiation with energy companies)

Welfare Benefits and Money Advice is an important means to improve economic opportunities and outcomes for citizens. It can be a way to effectively tackle poverty and inequalities within localities through tools such as income maximisation, debt counselling and energy efficiency advice.

The intention of the initial group was to develop an Advice Strategy for Dundee and improve the existing advice sector's impact on poverty and inequalities across the city. It was agreed that by working in a more collaborative manner, pooling resources where possible and reducing duplication of effort this would further widen access to advice in Dundee in the face of increased demand for advice services.

- 4.2 Initially the three organisations were able to find considerable common ground in this approach however the Covid 19 pandemic unfortunately stalled development of the strategy as organisations were tasked with emergency responses to the needs of citizens across 2020 and 2021. All three agencies continued to provide traditional advice, albeit often remotely or via telephone whilst at the same time developing emergency responses including access to food, medicine and other supports (e.g., Fuel Well Dundee). Covid 19 also had a considerable impact on advice agencies' approaches to delivering advice and solutions were found in terms of how customers accessed advice. As a result, agencies adapted the ways they managed ongoing casework, represented at tribunals and negotiated with creditors and fuel companies at a time of tremendous upheaval. The impact of fuel prices, inflation and the overall cost of living in recent months presents a considerable ongoing challenge for customers and advice agencies going forward.
- 4.3 It is agreed there needs to be a more consistent, targeted approach to advice within the city in order to improve outcomes for an increasing number of customers at this time. By way of example Council Advice Services have seen a 12% increase in enquiries for advice in the last 3 months compared with the previous 3. In relation to requests for fuel support the increases are even starker with Dundee CAB recording an 85% increase in requests for utilities support in April and May 2022 compared to a 62% average increase across Scottish CAB's as a whole.
- 4.4 The experience of Fuel Well Dundee (2020/2021) and Fuel Well Dundee 2 (2021/22) has also demonstrated the advantages of partnering with other local organisations offering energy efficiency advice. SCARF (part of the Home Energy Scotland Network) has successfully worked with Council Advice Services and other partners throughout the period of Dundee Money Action (2016-2020) as well as the two Fuel Well schemes. As a result, they are also currently signed up to the advice strategy partnership and will complement the energy advice currently offered by Council Advice Services, CAB and Brooksbank.
- 4.5 In relation to money advice there has already been use made of Scottish Government Covid recovery funding (£200,000) to enhance advice and support services within Council Advice Services, Brooksbank and CAB (P&R Committee Report 126-2022). Together with some additional support to the Scottish Welfare Fund this funding is being used to extend Money Advice Workers in all 3 Money Advice teams who already work in partnership to meet demand across the city.

5. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality and Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no issues in this regard to report on.

5.2 This strategy and action aim to have a fundamentally positive impact on poverty by addressing the causes of income inequality and the effects it has on the lives of individuals and families who experience it.

6. **CONSULTATIONS**

All advice partners including Community Planning have been consulted in the development of the Advice Strategy for Dundee.

The Council Leadership Team were consulted in the preparation of this report.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

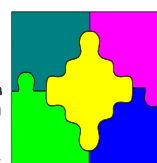
None.

Robert Emmott
Executive Director of Corporate Services

Date 2 June 2022

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Appendix 1



Brooksbank
Debt & Benefits
Advice Centre

Advice Strategy for Dundee.

2022-2024 v.1 (June 2022)

1. Introduction and agency commitment to an advice strategy

This document represents the Dundee advice sector's initial plan to map and plan services in line with Dundee's City Plan 2017-2026 and Dundee City Council's Plan 2017-2022. The services comprising of the following agencies (Brooksbank Centre and Services, Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau, SCARF and Dundee City Council Advice Services) have agreed to work and plan services in line with the strategic priorities contained within these two documents, in an effort to action activities which contribute to the outcomes set to make the biggest impact on Dundee and its people as a whole.

The City Plan in particular is Dundee's first Local Outcome Improvement Plan which aims to identify the biggest strategic priorities, opportunities and challenges ahead and galvanise all agencies and actions required to improve the City over the period running until 2026. In adopting this alignment with both the City Plan and the associated Council Plan the three advice agencies subscribing to this strategy are intent on ensuring that all operational actions, activity, future tests of change, identified gaps and funding bids commit to ensuring that all activity is in line with the overall strategic priorities set out in the aforementioned documents, particularly in the area of Fairness.

Dundee Partnership have also been instrumental in publishing its Fairness Strategy in 2012 and have convened 3 poverty commissions in Dundee since that date. Activity and actions have come from these commissions, in particular the report [For Fairness in Dundee: Action Plan to Reduce Social Inequalities and Child Poverty in Dundee published in June 2019](#). Within this report an Advice Strategy is viewed as a local action which will help to fulfil commitments to the national duties laid on it through its community planning partnership (the Dundee Partnership). The plan and reporting on it therefore incorporate the Fairer Scotland duty and the requirement for an annual Child Poverty Action Report.

Advice provided by the sector is specifically mentioned in the helping to contribute to two of the three key areas of the For Fairness in Dundee Plan, namely Costs of Living (through debt reduction through help from the financial advice sector) and Income from social security and benefits in kind (through a new Advice Strategy).¹

The weblink to the City Plan is available [here](#)

The weblink to the Council Plan is available [here](#)

The weblink to the 1st Fairness Commission is available [here](#)

The weblink to the recommendations of the 2nd Fairness Commission is available [here](#)

The intention is to set up a partnership [approach following on from agencies signing up to an Advice Strategy for Dundee.](#)

2. Agencies committed to the Advice Strategy

Since 2014 agencies within Dundee have been working steadily on developing closer partnership links in order to promote more efficient working and avoid duplication of effort in relation to benefits and money advice. The latest development of this work saw the creation of the Dundee Money Action Project, jointly funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and European Social Fund, which brought advice agencies closer than ever before. As a result, agencies currently signed up to this advice strategy at this present time (June 2022) are:

1. Brooksbank Centre and Services, Pitairlie Road, Dundee DD4 8DG (Tel: 013282 432450)

Manager: Ginny Lawson

2. Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau, Wellgate Centre, Dundee DD1 1DB (Tel: 01382 214636)

Director: Tracy McNally

3. Dundee City Council Advice Services, Floor 3 Dundee House, 50 North Lindsay Street, Dundee DD1 1FA (Tel: 01382 431190)

Senior Manager: Craig Mason

4. SCARF, Appin House, 6 North Isla Street, Dundee DD3 7JQ (Tel: **0808 129 0888**)

¹ DUNDEE PARTNERSHIP (2019) For Fairness in Dundee, Action Plan to Reduce Social Inequalities and Child Poverty in Dundee p11-12

Manager: Dave Mackay

It is hoped that further partner agencies will be encouraged to sign up to the Advice Strategy in the coming year in order that effort can be properly co-ordinated to meet the main priorities of the City and Council plans.

The following agencies will be approached in the coming year and it is hoped they will sign up to the strategy by April 2023:

- Dundee Law Centre
- Shelter

3. Sources for anticipation of future demand

The development of the advice strategy to date has agreed that advice continue to be delivered in a mixed economy, ie. a mixture of both internal Council and external Voluntary Sector services.

In order to ensure that resources are apportioned according to need, information looking at the make-up of each Dundee locality will be used to inform future development of the services across all three partner agencies.

The information used to inform this is as follows:

- Information contained within the Dundee City Plan 2017-2026
- Information contained within the Dundee Council Plan 2017-2022
- Metadata relating to the city plan, found [here](#)
- Local Authority Census statistical information,
- Child Poverty figures and demand of services across both Council and Voluntary Sector advice agencies.
- Recommendations of the Dundee Fairness Commissions and any subsequent reports commissioned as a result of the work of the Fairness Commission (e.g. A Menu for Change Report)
- Evidence informing models of service delivery; including post pandemic hybrid working, remote access channels, risk assessments and evidence from staff and customer feedback surveys.
- Lessons learned as a result of the pandemic, including new multi-channel improvements and their further development.
- Local Community Plans 2017-2022

[Strathmartine Local Community Plan 2017-22](#)

[Lochee Local Community Plan 2017-22](#)

[West End Local Community Plan 2017-22](#)

[Coldside Local Community Plan 2017-22](#)

[Maryfield Local Community Plan 2017-22](#)

[North East Local Community Plan 2017-22](#)

[East End Local Community Plan 2017-22](#)
[The Ferry Local Community Plan 2017-22](#)

- Annual Citizen Survey - [2019](#)
- About Dundee - [2021](#)
- Ward Profiles
 - Coldside - [2020](#)
 - East End - [2020](#)
 - Lochee - [2020](#)
 - Maryfield - [2016](#)
 - North East - [2016](#)
 - Strathmartine - [2016](#)
 - The Ferry - [2016](#)
 - West End - [2016](#)

4. Strategy Goals, Intended Outcomes

Any new activity undertaken will also be considered in the context of the City Plan's six key priority areas, namely:

- Children and Families
- Fair Work and Enterprise
- Health, Care and Wellbeing
- Community Safety and Justice
- Building Stronger Communities
- Fairness

All new activity should clearly correspond with at least one of these six key priority areas and in all cases with the key priority of fairness.

Aspects relating to Prevention and Early Intervention and Workplace Development will also be considered when undertaking new activity.

All agencies committed to the advice strategy listed at 2. above agree to meet on at least a quarterly basis to discuss trends in welfare benefits and money advice and consider service planning and changes to service provision in the city and/or new initiatives in the wake of any emerging need, policy impacts or relevant report recommendations.

Gaps in service provision will also be considered when agreeing new activity or future take up campaigns.

The objectives of the Partnership will be to:

1. Improve the delivery, scope and capacity of quality advice across Dundee to ensure a better reach of advice provision.
2. Share experiences and expertise, undertaking joint work and increasing collaboration and innovation across the advice sector.
3. Test creating an economy of scale by reducing inefficiencies across the advice agencies in Dundee and create more capacity to reach a wider customer base.
4. Improve access to training and development opportunities within advice agencies in Dundee and improve quality of advice in Dundee.

By taking this approach we believe this will engender:

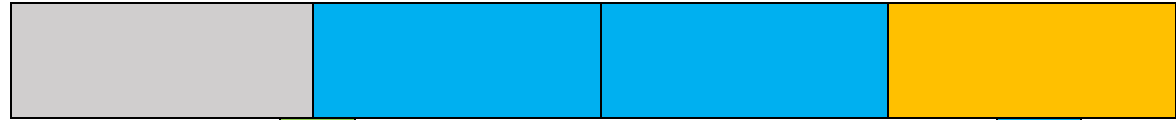
- More people getting access to quality advice in Dundee
- A get it right first-time approach with fewer onward referrals and clients becoming lost in the system
- More awareness and less stigma of advice. In turn we hope this will lead to fewer crisis interventions across the city

5. Next steps

- a. A full audit of existing provision will be undertaken with all partner agencies contributing to the process. As a starting point figure 1. below gives a flavour of the breadth of some of the work currently undertaken within the four partner agencies.
- b. A steering group to be set up with a rotating chair. This group will consist of the managers of the main advice and stakeholder organisations connected with advice in Dundee. The steering group will meet quarterly to discuss any necessary changes to both the strategy and the business plan (see Appendix 2 below).
- c. Partners to agree the operational Dundee Advice Strategy Business Plan for 2022/23 which outlines specific asks of each partner to the advice strategy. This sets out the main commitments of each organisation linking activity directly to the 6 key priority areas at 4. above.
- d. The steering group will report annually to the Policy and Resources Committee on the frontline advice service outputs, developments and outcomes within the Dundee Advice Sector each year, highlighting shifts in priorities and any innovations put in place to tackle particular emerging needs.

Figure 1: Advice Service Map of Dundee June 2022 (Incorporating Brooksbank Centre and Services, Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau, Dundee City Council Advice Services and SCARF)

Children & Families	BB Children and Families Activities drop in advice	CAB Camperdown Primary School Outreach	DCC Adoption & Kinship Support Service	CAB: Money Talk Team 1:1 client sessions and awareness sessions (for agencies)	DCC: Maternity Pathway Referrals from NHS Midwives/Health Visitors	GAP Cost of the school day.			
Fair Work & Enterprise	Child Poverty Pathfinder test of change	CAB: Specialist Employment Advice	CAB/BB: Volunteers Training Leading to Employment Opportunities	All: Specialist Debt & Money Advice					
Health, Care & Wellbeing	DCC/BB: Health Pathways GP Co-Location Service	CAB/DCC:Advice Centre Ninewells*	Pass CAB Project (Patient Advice)	CAB: Maggie's Outreach for cancer sufferers	CAB: Direct Help for Veterans Debt, Benefits Housing(ASAP)	DCC: Health and Social Care Income Maximisation	BB: Fairfield Full Initiative (Holistic income max/smoking cessation test of change)	CAB: Scotgem project for fast track GP placements.	DCC: Corporate Appointeeship service
	CAB Pension Wise Guidance	BB: Carseview advice clinic	DCC Macmillan Project	CAB: Dundonald Day Care Centre	CAB: Art Angel CAB	Rosendale (Veterans) Outreach CAB	BB: Carseview Patient Advice Service	BB: Safe Zone Bus Outreach Service	
Community Safety & Justice	BB: Kiddie Kare child safety equipment	CAB/DCC Scam Awareness	CAB: In – Court Advice (Simple Procedure)	CAB: Taught by Muhammed outreach	BB: Stobswell Street Worker Drop In service	All: Access to Advice at Outreach	DCC: Asylum seeker outreach at Central Library	CAB/DCC/SCARF: Energy Advice	SCARF: Dundee City Advice Project
Building Stronger Communities	BB: Service Delivery: Advice Services Stobswell	BB: Community Events and Activities	DCC: Connect Outreach Service*	BB/CAB Volunteering Opportunities	All: Free PC & Internet Access				
Fairness	All: Fairness Commission Recommendations: City wide tel advice number	CAB/DCC: EU Settlement Scheme advice and support for those with pre-settled status	DCC: No Recourse to Public Funds Corporate Operational Guidance	DCC Older Peoples Assessment Team	All: Home Visiting Service*	All: Drop in emergency service	CAB: Social Policy work	CAB: After Hours & Weekend Appointments	CAB: Older Peoples Advice Service
Prevention Early Intervention	BB: Financial Education materials 14-17 year olds	All: DMA Information Sharing Protocols	All: Consideration of Dundee Advice Gender based Single Point of Contact (Face to Face). Need identified in relation to VAW.	All: Menu for change recommendations around food insecurity	BB: Dundee Thegither Food Insecurity/Money Advice partnership	CAB: Universal Credit help to Claim Service.	DCC: Fuel Well Holistic Firmstep questionnaire	All: Lack of financial capability activities following end of DMA	All: Consideration of Dundee Drug Commission recommendations
Workplace Development	All: Training to External Organisations	CAB/BB: Volunteering	DCC: Scottish Welfare Fund ongoing holistic development						



	Ongoing established advice activity		Ancillary non welfare benefits/money advice provision	BB	Brooksbank Centre and Services
	New developing service/test of change		Social activity to combat social isolation	CAB	Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau
	Gap in service provision/future development	All	All 3 agencies providing this service	DCC	Dundee City Council Advice Services
*	Was suspended due to Covid 19. Pending or restarted			SCA RF	

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